



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

CONSTRUCTION ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA
CON5023Z MSC PROJECT MANAGEMENT DISSERTATION

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DISSERTATION

**ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL
DIVERSITY ON STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN
MULTINATIONAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS.**

DATE OF SUBMISSION: July 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In contemporary construction enterprises, the identification, prioritization, and engagement of stakeholders is an important practice. The concept of stakeholder management has evolved from its initial emphasis on shareholders to encompass a broader understanding that acknowledges the intricate global supply chains and growing networks of multinational construction enterprises. Numerous methodologies have been proposed to ascertain and categorize stakeholders, underscoring the systematic nature of stakeholder engagement. The field of project management encompasses intricate stakeholder classifications that undergo transformation in response to technological advancements and growing consumer requirements. Effectively engaging project stakeholders from diverse country cultures continues to provide a significant obstacle for project managers involved in multinational construction projects. The efficacy and suitability of projects and project management are heavily contingent upon the proficient and suitable engagement with project stakeholders across cultural frontiers.

The primary objective of this study is to analyse the influence of cultural diversity on stakeholder engagement within multinational construction projects. Following a brief introduction matter and the establishment of foundational definitions in section 1, the subsequent section discusses the literature evaluation. Section 3 delineates the chosen methodology employed by the author, while the subsequent section, namely the 4th section, will expound upon the research results derived from the imperial study. The last component of the report will encompass the findings, as well as a discussion on potential supplementary aspects and an analysis of the obtained data. The field of study pertaining to intercultural project management has been the subject of much investigation.

DECLARATION

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Numerous individuals have aided and encouraged me while composing this dissertation. I am immensely thankful to my supervisor, Amanda Filtane, for her excellent assistance in formulating the study topic and methodology and for her support throughout this journey. I appreciate the unwavering support I received from my colleagues at eThekweni Municipality during the whole process. You consistently offered unwavering assistance and gave immense encouragement. Furthermore, I want to convey my appreciation to my spouse, Zola Ndlovu, and my relatives, who gave unwavering support.

Furthermore, I want to convey my appreciation to my employer, who has consistently demonstrated benevolence and generosity by providing the necessary financial resources to pursue my studies successfully. Furthermore, I want to convey my appreciation to my parents for always providing support, offering wise counsel, and attentively lending an ear. I am immensely grateful for your steadfast support, which has been of immeasurable value.

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CHAPTER 1 : BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

Opportunities in multinational projects attract construction companies due to the diversification of the risk across markets and the possibility for economic growth in the countries where they operate (Ye et al., 2018). Even though a multinational construction environment is associated with a high level of complexity, uncertainties, and hazards beyond those found in local projects, large construction firms typically join these sectors to fill a void and expand their operations. Businesses must adapt their operations to operate effectively across cultural boundaries and realize the benefits of international joint ventures and partnerships (Thamhain, 2011). Multinational engineering projects are developments that span national borders; they play a crucial role in the multinational generation of wealth and prosperity (Raval and Kaya, 2020). When roads are constructed, communication networks are installed, power plants and other infrastructure are erected, the potential for economic growth increases, especially in developing nations (Aaltonen, 2010).

Expanding markets, local competition, and trade liberalization have forced owners, contractors, and investors to actively explore business opportunities and projects in countries other than their own (Walewski et al., 2006). Seymour (2019) states that even though multinational projects may appear lucrative ventures, they often include high degrees of risk and unpredictability, thereby requiring a high degree of stakeholder engagement. The stakeholders, such as product owners, customers, or sponsors, are typically the first point of contact for gathering requirements for multinational construction projects. However, there are a variety of stakeholders with diverse cultures that, when not engaged, the project risks failure (Kerzner, 2022).

The research explores the impact of cultural diversity on stakeholder engagement in multinational construction projects.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The high complexity of multinational initiatives results from the project's scale, the many cultures, and the various stakeholders involved. The growth in multinational projects, directly attributable to technological advancements, has increased (Miković et al., 2020). The corporate world has shrunk in recent years because of market consolidation, new technologies, and the multinational outsourcing of essential business tasks. According to Horner and Nadvi (2018), businesses that were previously required to prioritize proximity may now consider regions and potential business partners outside borders and time zones. Multinational construction projects have become a staple in today's company portfolios, exposing organizations to a diversified environment.

Bouroutzopoulos (2022) states that the engagement of stakeholders is the most crucial aspect of a project's success and the most susceptible to change because of multinationalism. Changes in stakeholder behaviour are directly attributable to regional and continental cultural differences (Mbalyohere and Lawton, 2018). This reduces the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement tools, necessitating modifications. Currently, tools for stakeholder engagement are more conducive to domestic projects; they disregard the cultural diversity prevalent in multinational construction projects. This increased the complexity of multinational construction projects. The lack of research on the engagement of stakeholders in multinational construction projects exacerbates the situation. Hence the research is being undertaken to close the gap in the existing literature.

1.3. Research Question

How does cultural diversity impact stakeholder engagement in multinational construction projects?

1.4. Research Aim

The purpose of the study is to examine how stakeholder cultural diversity affects stakeholder engagement in multinational construction projects, as well as to evaluate the efficacy of stakeholder engagement tools, verify their effectiveness on multinational

stakeholder engagement, and develop the hybrid stakeholder engagement framework for multinational and domestic projects.

1.5. Research Objectives

- To analyse the cultural aspects of multinational projects and categorize the cultural diversity of stakeholders in multinational projects.
- To analyse the effective stakeholder engagement tools and techniques.
- Assess stakeholder engagement methods, tools, and techniques with the most significant impact on managing cultural diversity in multinational projects.

1.6. Significance of the Study

In addition to constructing structures that increase productivity and quality of life, the multinational construction sector is expected to play a significant role in multinational economic growth (Agenda, 2016). The construction industry is susceptible to the needs of its stakeholders due to the high number of people employed in the sector and the complexity of its procedures. Engaging the stakeholders enables project managers to anticipate the needs and desires, resulting in stronger relationships, increased trust, confidence, and support for the project's strategic objectives (de Oliveira and Rabechini Jr, 2019).

Effective stakeholder engagement mitigates risks and conflicts within stakeholders, such as ambiguity, discontent, misalignment, disengagement, and change resistance (Mysore et al., 2021). The understanding of the stakeholders underpins a proper stakeholder engagement plan. The most distinct multinational stakeholder diversity is culture. The significance of comprehending stakeholder culture must be balanced. The accurate identification of stakeholders and their diverse cultural backgrounds enables the project team to effectively manage and engage them, potentially leading to the conversion of certain stakeholders into advocates and supporters of the project. Understanding stakeholder diversity and culture will aid in developing the most influential stakeholder engagement tools, which is the study's primary objective.

1.7. Structure of Research

1.8.1 Chapter One: Introduction

The first chapter of the thesis encompasses several key components, including an introductory section that outlines the research problem, a concise review of pertinent literature, a clear statement of the problem, a declaration of the research objectives, an articulation of the research inquiries, and a comprehensive analysis of the study's significance. This section would also encompass a concise overview of the anticipated outcomes expected from the study.

1.8.2 Chapter Two: Literature

The second chapter will undertake a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the subject matter of the study, discussing culture theory, multinational project environment and impacts of cultural diversity. This section will additionally encompass the definition of crucial concepts and the examination of the correlation between our findings and previous research conducted within the same academic domain.

1.8.3 Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The third chapter of the study extensively examines various components of the research process, including methods, population, data analysis, sampling, and the comprehensiveness of the interview. Additionally, other aspects of the study are thoroughly discussed. The chapter will also provide a comprehensive overview of the data analysis process, including the methods used for compiling, processing, and presenting information.

1.8.4 Chapter Four: Data collection and analysis

The fourth chapter of the research study is devoted to analysing the data collected from the participants selected through a random sampling method for the survey. This section will present the statistical analysis of the collected data, including reliability analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and a summary of the findings.

1.8.5 Chapter Five: Conclusion and recommendations

The final chapter of this study will present a conclusion and provide recommendations for enhancing stakeholder management tools and techniques in multinational construction projects to align with diverse cultural contexts. This chapter will additionally offer recommendations for future research in the subject matter.

CHAPTER 2 : LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

Different authors agree that the success of multinational projects is said to be affected in many ways by culture (Brett et al., 2020a); (Avgousti, 2018). Understanding what culture is will help plan for impacts that may cause threats to multinational projects. Culture significantly shapes how individuals from various backgrounds respond to and understand complex situations (Howard, 2019). People have various perspectives on problems, so their responses vary. Cultural differences may affect project teams' structure and functioning (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020). As a result, knowledge of culture is essential for project managers and project teams.

A comprehensive review of relevant literature has been conducted to establish a solid basis for the research methodology. The literature review thoroughly examines the impact of cultural diversity on multinational initiatives, stakeholder theory, and cultural theory. The research strategy will ultimately integrate these three components to conclude the study.

2.2. Culture Theory

2.2.1 Culture Definition

The basic knowledge is that human beings are remarkable because of their diverse cultures (Kerzner, 2017). Culture reflects the uniqueness of humans and members of the animal kingdom. The cultural framework in which human behaviour develops is the site of a tremendously intricate learning process (Matsumoto and Juang, 2016). According to Zein (2012), culture is not a personal trait; instead, it is shared by a group of individuals who share everyday learning and experience. Culture, in the context of a group, a tribe, an area, a national minority, or a nation, is the shared conceptual framework that defines its members and distinguishes them from those of other groups, tribes, regions, minorities, or majorities (Al-Haj, 2019). One of the most widely accepted definitions of culture in anthropology is that proposed by British anthropologist Edward Taylor in the

nineteenth century; according to Rambo and Liu (2010), Taylor defines culture as the sum of a person's knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other abilities and habits he acquires as a member of society.

2.2.2 National Culture

According to Carneiro (2018), national culture stems from the beliefs and practices that people carry with them from childhood passed down through the generations. Baumeister and Bushman (2020) state that culture evolves with time due to several factors, each with its own logic, and cannot be manipulated to conform to anyone's will. Cvetkovich (2018) agrees that a person's upbringing and development as a citizen of a particular nation form a shared cultural programming of the mind. According to Halder et al. (2020), preserving national cultural traditions is the work of national culture and collective memory. Language, religion, cuisine, and customs are the cornerstones of any national identity (Edensor, 2020).

The cross-cultural field has adopted Hofstede's method of extracting measures of culture from self-reported values, beliefs, ideologies, and self-construal as standard practice (Minkov and Kaasa, 2022). Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory analyses cross-national cultural variations and identifies regional disparities in business practices (Gerlach and Eriksson, 2021). The framework identifies and categorizes cultural diversity, acknowledges and measures cultural characteristics, and evaluates cultural influence (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017). Human nature is innate, whereas culture is acquired; nonetheless, there is still diversity among people of the same cultural background due to personal tastes, beliefs, and life experiences (Vaughn, 2019). Hofstede (2011) highlights universal cultural elements that may be seen in every facet of society, from family dynamics to educational and occupational preferences to health care delivery.

Below are cultural dimensions as discussed by (Hofstede, 2011):

- Individualism – collectivism

According to Triandis (2018), the objective in this regard is the homogenization of cultural practices; people in individualistic societies tend to be less interdependent and more likely to adopt an "every man for himself" mentality. Individuals are obligated to provide for

themselves and their families before anything else. In collectivist societies, "we" is valued over "I" because people tend to form close-knit communities and cooperate (Burton et al., 2021). Priority is given to the benefits to the group, with secondary benefits accruing to the individual.

- Power distance

This metric illustrates a culture's approach to inequality, especially regarding wealth and authority (Winterich et al., 2018). Inequality and social stratification are accepted norms in certain civilizations. The caste system is one type of power gap that scores higher on the 1-to-100 scale (Shao et al., 2020). People in a caste society understand that they will always remain in the social class in which they were born.

- Masculinity vs. feminism

According to Ma and Turel (2019), culture's values for accomplishment, competitiveness, and consumerism are compared against its choices for collaboration, harmony, and empathy on a masculine vs feminine scale. This factor, according to Lee et al. (2022), considers whether a culture places greater emphasis on the pursuit of material success and the pressure to win at all costs or on helping others and discovering meaning in one's quality of life and the pursuit of what brings each individual the most joy.

- Uncertainty avoidance

This criterion evaluates cultures based on how they handle novelty, ambiguity, and change (Kucharska and Bedford, 2019). According to Al-Okaily et al. (2020), some people may be terrified by the prospect of future change, while others may welcome it with open arms. Uncertainty avoidance tends to be higher in cultures where rituals and traditions are well ingrained because people there tend to perceive change as threatening.

- Long-Term Orientation vs. Short-Term Orientation

Culture will either innovate to meet the present and future difficulties or look to the past for guidance (Gallego-Álvarez and Pucheta-Martínez, 2021). High levels of long-term orientation are associated with a culture that values the status quo over innovation (Hallikainen and Laukkanen, 2018). People living in societies with short time frames tend to view change more positively. Cultures with a long-term emphasis are more likely to

make long-term plans, whereas cultures with a short-term focus are more inclined to prioritize the here and now.

- Indulgence vs. Restraint

Ruiz-Equihua et al. (2020) state that all civilizations agree that satisfying one's goals is a primary human drive. However, each culture will uniquely satisfy this desire, whether excess or restraint. As tougher morality and social regulations are imposed on the public, the overall mood of restricted societies shifts towards pessimism and cynicism. In contrast, indulgent societies teach their members to relax and take advantage of their spare time to fulfil their basic desires.

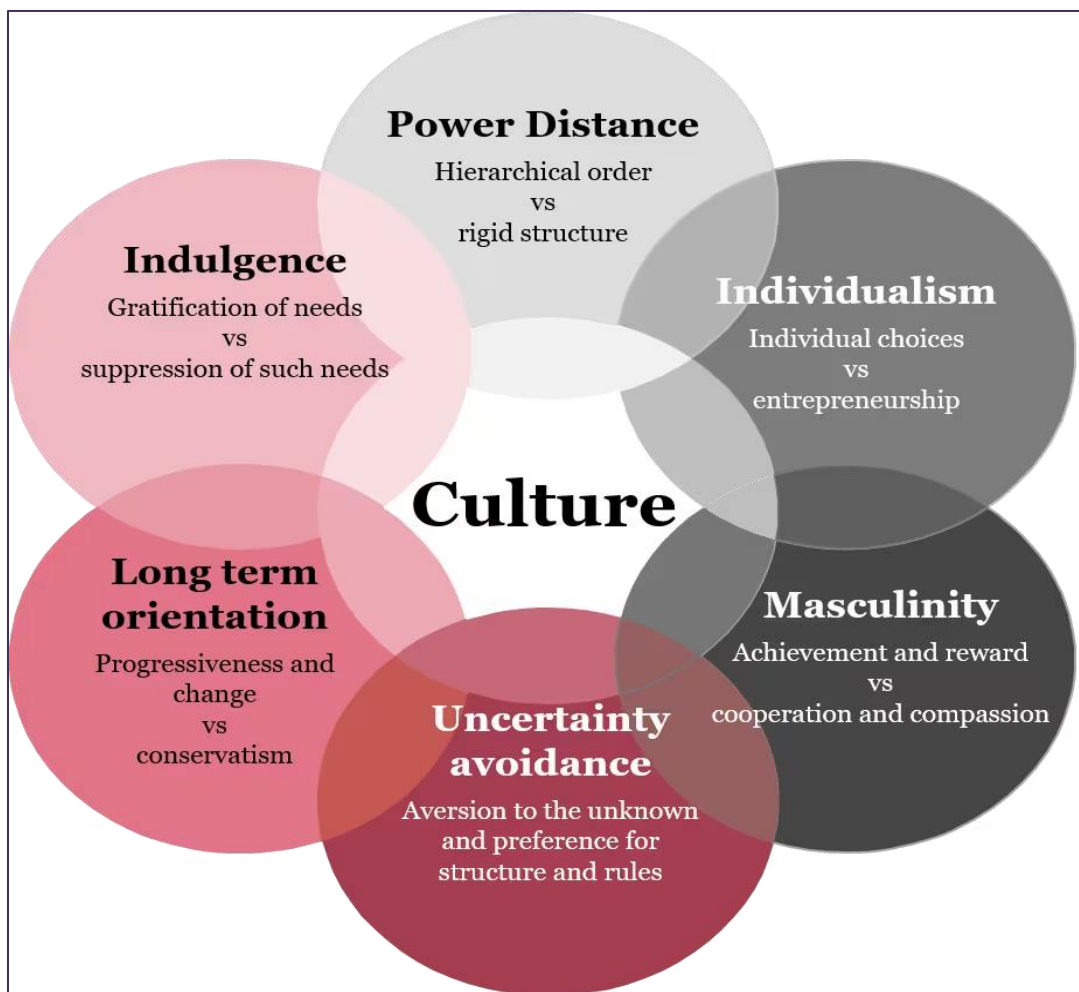


Figure 1: Figure 1. Hofstede's cultural dimensions (PwC, 2023)

According to Sermontyte-Baniule et al. (2022), the values of culture along these six categories are dynamic; they can change and develop through time. Moreover, all cultural

factors impact and are influenced by one another. Since both long-term orientation and uncertainty avoidance center on a culture's commitment to established norms, there is typically a correlation between the two.

Recent studies follow varying theoretical frameworks, revealing significant knowledge gaps in national culture (Srivastava et al., 2020). According to (Tian et al., 2018), a more formalized understanding of culture is being established because of the connection between national culture and multinational projects. Drawing connections between national culture and multinational projects, (Ergashev and Farxodjonova, 2020) investigate its many facets. Similarly, (Luthans and Doh, 2018) examine the relationship between national culture and international business, arguing that the importance of culture cannot be reduced to the individualistic factor. It demonstrates that enterprises associated with a dominantly male society are less likely to be individualistic and more inclined to invest in innovation. Delivering projects on a multinational scale requires in-depth knowledge of the issue due to the influence of different country cultures. Learning a new culture takes time. According to Schein (2022), there are two modes through which this kind of knowledge is acquired. The first is the trauma model, in which groups learn to deal with a threat by building defences. The second paradigm is positive reinforcement, which is based on the idea that what works tends to stick. People learn when they adjust to new situations and circumstances, creating strategies for overcoming internal obstacles and using new tools and technology.

2.2.3 Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is defined as what people share: their values, beliefs, goals, attitudes, expectations, understandings, and standards (Cohen, 2020). According to Widarko and Anwarodin (2022), individuals' roles and performances are directly and indirectly governed by the habits and routines formed over time in various organizations. Therefore, the above highlights that the practice is accepted from one generation of workers to the next, and it persists despite efforts to change it to conform to more modern standards of professionalism. Farrell (2018) also agrees that the company's culture outlines the expected behaviours of employees. According to Campuzano (2019), leadership plays a crucial role in establishing and perpetuating a collective system of

beliefs and values within an organization. Its cultural framework inherently influences the actions and operations of a company. Consequently, the absence of a universally applicable cultural model can be attributed to the significant variations observed across industries and environments (Helmreich and Merritt, 2019).

Dasgupta and Gupta (2019) state that the values, conventions, artifacts, and management style are all aspects of an organization's culture.

- Values

Values are opinions about what is most beneficial to and desirable by the company. An organization's 'value set' may be understood solely at the highest levels, or it may be "value-driven" if all employees communicate and understand it (Lutz and Nummer, 2023). Just as individuals' values enter the system without much validation or explanation, organizations' values are the beliefs and truisms that lead the organization in everyday conduct. The values of an organization are the same as those of its employees taken as a whole (Al-Swidi et al., 2021). Each worker is responsible for fostering and maintaining the company's distinctive culture by bringing their own genuine beliefs to the workplace and acting on them consistently. According to Fitria (2018), a company's culture consists of shared beliefs, norms, and customs that serve as a basis for everyone's behaviour. According to Gorton et al. (2022), these are the company's core beliefs that form the basis of its unique culture. While it is essential to outline a mission statement, it is even more critical to put corporate values into practice by incorporating them into everything you do.

- Conventions

According to Taylor (2021), conventional thinking emphasizes explaining and justifying one's behaviour to others. Convention theory offers a more sophisticated understanding of how actors present rationales for their actions throughout everyday performances (Riisgaard et al., 2020). According to Ivaldi et al. (2022), conventions and organisation structures are two types of opportunity or constraint for economic actors. Conventions can be viewed as the norms of social and economic behaviour shared by society. Lam et al. (2021) agree that an organization's learning culture comprises its norms, beliefs,

practices, and procedures. The above emphasizes that conventions can push individuals and businesses to become more knowledgeable and skilled. Conceptualizing cultural differences as customs is thus based on various theoretical assumptions. According to Morrison-Smith and Ruiz (2020), conventions for both speech and work can be distinct in international project teams.

Culture has a significant impact on how an organization's structure is designed. Culture is the set of shared values, beliefs, and conventions that define an organization (Polychroniou and Trivellas, 2018). These characteristics influence how coworkers interact, make decisions, perform tasks and has a profound impact on the structure and operation of an organization. It is critical to examine the organization's culture while developing a structure, and to ensure that the structure complements it. An organization's norms and practices shape and reflect its culture (Olan et al., 2019). Companies with strong teamwork and cooperation cultures are more likely to have a flatter organizational structure that encourages participation and communication.

- Artifacts

Artifacts can be seen, touched, or described in a multinational project context. Architecture, workplace decoration, thoughtful design, layout, fitting, maintenance, built-in room for mobility, functionality, attractive visuals, elegance, and furniture make a space feel good to be there (Tan, 2019). According to Indiya et al. (2018), explicit dress requirements are one type of artifact that may reveal a lot about a company's culture. The first step in developing and establishing a dress code varies depending on the company's character. Materials, structures, symbols, names, pictures, logos, and catchphrases all have significance to the many parties involved in an organization. Organizational artifacts reveal the values, beliefs, and customs of the company's employees and external constituencies (Liu and Lin, 2020). It is a way to get the word out to both insiders and outsiders of the organization.

- Management style

In the realm of personnel and resource management, "management style" encompasses the approaches to planning, arranging, making decisions, assigning tasks, and overseeing operations (Akpoviroro et al., 2018). The characteristics and significance of leadership styles in organizational change are crucial for the formation of organizational culture (Kalkan et al., 2020). Management is the process through which an individual motivates others to act toward a common goal and guides a group toward greater harmony and efficiency by managers who use their management expertise. Organizational culture and management style have been linked in several studies. However, there is much disagreement over where cultures come from and whether top executives have any say (Mansouri et al., 2018).

Culture in the workplace matters because it is a potent, underlying, and sometimes unconscious collection of influences that shape not just our individual but also our group-level actions, perceptions, ideas, and values. An organization's culture is crucial because it shapes its direction, priorities, and methods of operation. Leaders' and upper-level managers' shared and individual experiences shape their beliefs and thinking.

Edgar Schein developed the system of organizational culture in the 1980s. According to Schein (2020), the system has three levels: explicit symbols and actions, implicit values and beliefs, and explicit principles. Values are enduring principles that have a significant impact on the members of a group. Edgar Schein's definition of organizational culture states that the implicit aspects of a company's culture are its inherent assumptions, while the explicit aspects are its values, practices, and behaviours. Culture in the workplace does not occur spontaneously; instead, it progressively develops as employees learn from their errors and incorporate those lessons into their daily lives.

Artifacts are the observable elements of a company's culture, such as its structures and operations. An organization's axioms are the unquestioned beliefs held by its members who have never been tested or independently verified. Values, also known as declared values, are less tangible than tangible objects.

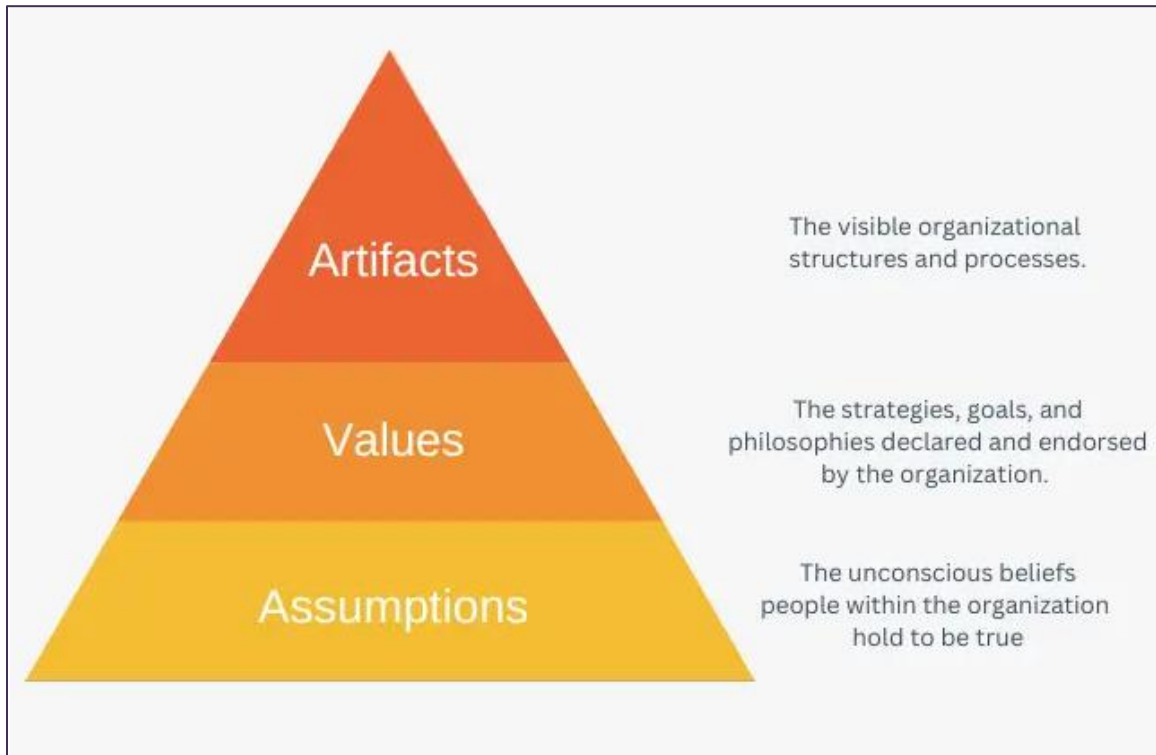


Figure 2: Shein's organizational structure model (Expert Program Management, 2022)

These are the organizational strategy, objectives, and guiding principles that have been announced and approved.

2.2.4 Cultural Diversity

According to Fylkesnes (2018), cultural diversity is a set of attitudes and practices that welcomes and celebrates the participation of people from various backgrounds and cultures within an organization or society while appreciating the unique contributions these individuals and groups bring. What we mean by "cultural diversity" is the wide variety of ways in which individual cultures and societal norms are manifested from one community to another and across cultures (Diller, 2018). In comparison, Hunt et al. (2018), describe "cultural diversity" as a term used to describe the many different ethnic and racial communities that makeup teams or stakeholders, highlighting many other factors, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and religion, which serve as the basis for such classifications. Our shared cultural experiences determine who we are, why we hold the

beliefs we do, and how we behave. The term "cultural diversity" refers to the presence of individuals from a variety of cultural origins (Beaulieu and Jimenez-Gomez, 2022).

Understanding and respecting cultural diversity requires realizing that people belong to various demographics and possess many personal characteristics. It also implies accepting that certain members of society may hold religious or sexual views contrary to your own. According to Hunt et al. (2018), cultural diversity in the workplace has several advantages. Employing people from many different walks of life is what we mean when discussing workplace diversity. Employees within an inclusive work setting encompass a diverse range of characteristics, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation, linguistic background, physical and cognitive abilities, and educational attainment. Cultural diversity promotes the view that everyone is valuable to society, not despite their uniqueness but because of their uniqueness. According to Obikunle (2002), the goal of cross-cultural training is also to equip project managers with the communication skills necessary to deal with cultural differences effectively.

Watts et al. (2020), state that when project stakeholders come from different cultural backgrounds, the management of the project needs to adjust its structures and procedures to accommodate these disparities. Communication is one of the most obvious ways in which culture manifests itself. Project managers in multinational projects must overcome linguistic, contextual, and interpersonal barriers to effective communication (Järvenpää et al., 2021). An argument favouring cross-cultural teams is that their more significant number of unique perspectives makes them more effective at solving complex challenges (Chen et al., 2018). However, according to Chevrier (2003), diversity can be highly detrimental to a team's efficiency because it increases ambiguity, complexity, and miscommunication in group activities. In addition to cross-cultural team composition, it is necessary to examine contextual and intermediate factors to explain these divergent outcomes.

All cultures may be broken down into three categories: linear-active, multi-active, and reactive, as described by sociologist Richard Lewis. The triangle formed by these three culturally diverse groups is known as the Lewis Model. The Lewis Model was developed

during the time when businesses were becoming increasingly internationalized, making it a good fit for predicting how well an individual will do in a business setting (Castañeda-Miranda et al., 2019). Countries are frequently arranged along lines between two vertices of a model's triangle. No nation appears to excel simultaneously in all three categories. Those whose climate is frigid appear to be home to linear actives. In contrast, those with warmer climates are home to multi-actives more likely to be emotionally activated.

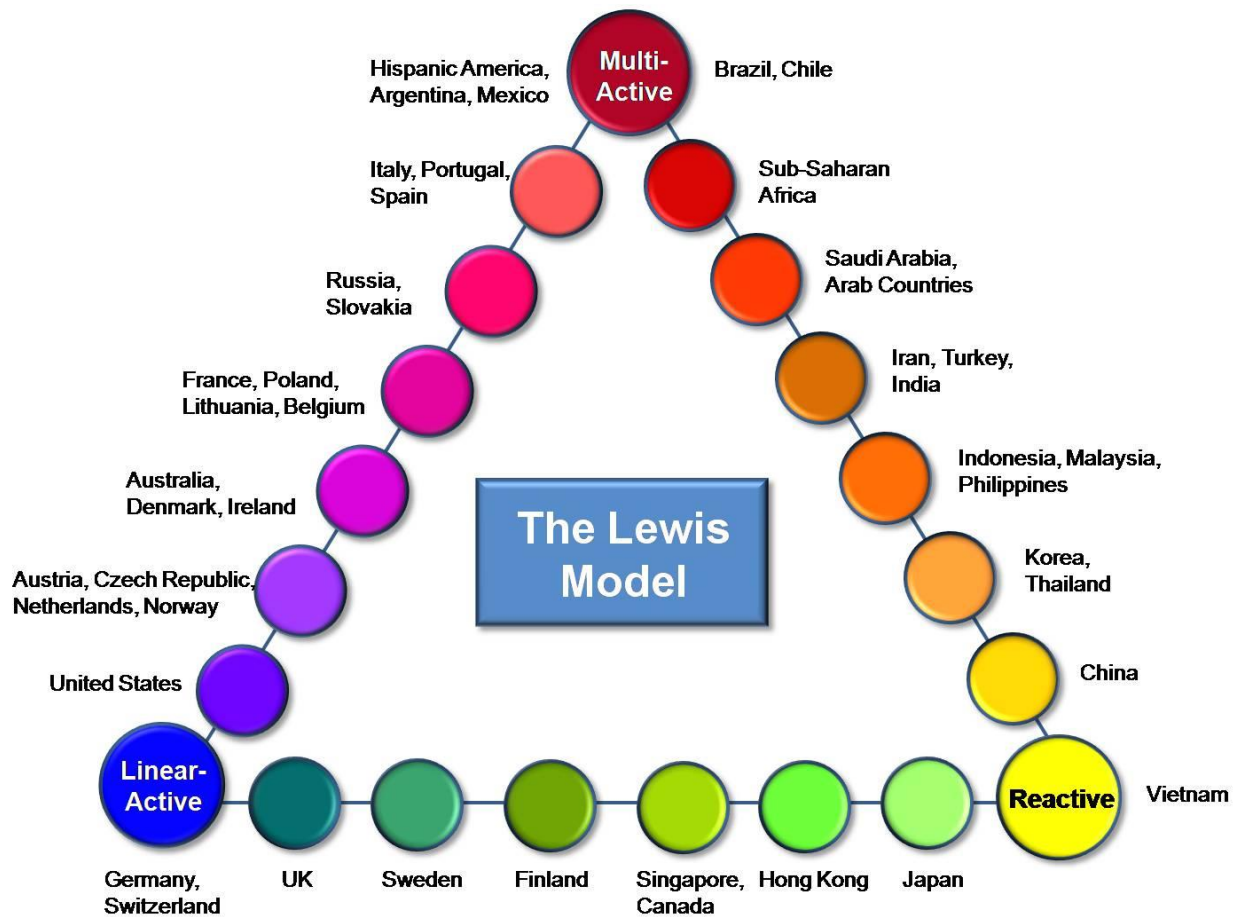


Figure 3: The Lewis Model (Gerlach, 2015)

Linear activists are detail-oriented, methodical planners who knock out tasks one at a time, ideally following a sequential plan. These individuals are rational and methodical in their actions. They operate precisely and efficiently because they complete each task individually and on time. They flourish in collaborative settings where everyone is laser-focused on the topic and values order and logic. Their focus on the job and disregard for interpersonal dynamics may irritate other personality types (Lewis, 2018).

Multi-activists value family, feelings, connections, and people in general and are known to be emotional, talkative, and impulsive. People with this trait need help with focusing and multitasking. These individuals have greater vitality and base their work priorities on their feelings and beliefs. They transition from one activity to another based on how engaging or essential it appears. They emphasize sustaining positive interpersonal relationships at work more than their linear-active counterparts. When they disagree, they dispute vehemently but quickly move on once a resolution has been reached (Lewis, 2018).

Reactives are attentive listeners who are reluctant to take the lead in a conversation or take any action before hearing the other person out and forming their viewpoint based on what they heard. Reactives are kind and compassionate relationship-oriented individuals who are less extroverted than multi-actives. Before responding, they pay close attention to what the other person is saying and give it careful thought. They have expansive minds and are more interested in governing concepts than fixed plans or vague objectives. They value peace and harmony and will attempt again if things are not proceeding smoothly. They will only abandon a plan or course of action once satisfied with it, despite not being combative (Lewis, 2018).

2.3. Stakeholder Theory and Stakeholder Engagement

2.3.1 Stakeholder Theory

Pereira et al. (2022), discussing the origin of stakeholders, state that since almost fifty years ago, academic examinations of enterprises have included stakeholder perspectives. Despite its pervasive use in informing public policy and corporate decisions, stakeholder engagement's broad applicability is subject to disagreements (Wang et al., 2022). According to Barney and Harrison (2020), stakeholder theory has already resolved its most pressing issues, is already being used to influence business decisions, and should continue to be utilized in this manner. Dmytriyev et al. (2021), contend that the stakeholder theory is not particularly useful because its central concerns still need to be resolved. Freeman's 1984 development of the stakeholder theory forms the basis of stakeholder management. According to this perspective, a company can only prosper

over the medium to long term if it establishes a balance between the expectations of its stakeholders, not just shareholders (Freeman et al., 2018). According to stakeholder theory, a business is only effective if it benefits the most significant number of individuals or groups with whom it interacts. When creating value for consumers, profits do not tell the whole story; money is not the only factor that matters.

In examining the definition of stakeholder, this research has adopted the definition by Derakhshan et al. (2019), which states that stakeholders are all representatives or groups that will be accountable for or impacted by the project's execution or operations. Stakeholders are also defined by Pedrini and Ferri (2019) as individuals who have or claim to have an interest or share in the project. According to Leipold and Petit-Boix (2018), there is widespread consensus about the types of entities that can be considered stakeholders: individuals, communities, institutions, groups, organizations, the public at large, and the natural world. When adequately engaged, stakeholders can have positive input towards the project's success other than the adverse when ignored.

Safapour et al. (2019), divided stakeholders into primary and secondary stakeholder categories to help simplify the concept of stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are the ones whose continued involvement is essential to the project's ability to continue as a going concern, while secondary are those who have some say over project affairs but are not directly involved in the project and are not crucial to its success (Safapour et al., 2019). Primary and secondary stakeholders have distinct roles regarding a company's commitment to environmentally responsible business practices (Charan and Murty, 2018). Understanding this distinction of stakeholders will aid the project manager in adequately allocating resources and managing and engaging with stakeholders. As interest in the notion of stakeholders has increased, so has the number of viewpoints on the topic (Friedman and Miles, 2002).



Figure 4: Project stakeholders (Brown, 2023)

Stakeholder theory proposes that, due to its multiple interconnected constituent groups, an organization can gain and maintain its constituents' support by addressing their concerns and striking an equitable balance (Clarkson, 1998; Freeman, 1984; Jones and Wicks). Profits and output are not the only factors that stakeholder theory motivates. Additionally, the practice has moral benefits; when employees are satisfied with their employment, it positively affects their mental health and workplace productivity (Järlström et al., 2018). In addition, the company's standing in the community will improve. When one company employs stakeholder theory, other companies are prompted to improve their performance, resulting in beneficial growth. Dmytriyev et al. (2021), highlight the stakeholder theory as a prevalent management strategy widely embraced in recent years to manage multinational stakeholders. Stakeholder theory has been applied to various disciplines of study, originating in strategic management, including construction project management in recent studies of the cultural diversity of stakeholders and their impacts (Möller and Halinen, 2017).

2.3.2 Stakeholder Engagement and Analysis

The concept of stakeholder engagement has been there since the 1990s. However, it acquired traction in stakeholder literature (Kujala et al., 2022). In a project, stakeholder engagement encompasses all communication phases with stakeholders (Heckert et al., 2020). A project manager may conduct a stakeholder analysis to determine who is engaged in the project, what they do, and how they can influence it. Project managers can evaluate stakeholders' expectations by soliciting feedback from those involved and documenting the resulting dispositions, preferences, and aversions (Dolla and Laishram, 2020). The project manager can then concentrate on mitigating the adverse effects of stakeholders or capitalizing on their positive assistance (Denney, 2020). Additionally, the project manager should assess what each stakeholder is anticipated to contribute to the project regarding work or approvals (Meredith and Zwikael, 2019).

Engagement of stakeholders is a crucial aspect of project management since a project can be viewed as a temporary coalition of stakeholders working together to accomplish a specific goal (Kusters et al., 2018). According to Aaltonen and Kujala (2010), stakeholder engagement is the most critical aspect of multinational projects. Many stakeholders with divergent interests are involved in these institutionally tricky and intricate projects. Engagement of project stakeholders comprises the identification of stakeholders, the study of their influences, and the determination of their expectations (Rajhans, 2018). Depending on their impact, project stakeholders might affect project outcomes. Thus, it is necessary to design acceptable techniques for working with stakeholders on multinational projects.

2.3.3 Stakeholder Identification and Analysis

i. Stakeholder identification

Identifying stakeholders determines which individuals or organizations should be deemed project stakeholders due to their potential to influence the project's outcome (Li et al., 2018b). An analysis of project stakeholders focuses on determining who will have a say in the project's outcome (Wojewnik-Filipkowska and Węgrzyn, 2019). Identifying the key

groups and subgroups of individuals with a vested interest in the project's outcome is the first step in engaging stakeholders (Edwards et al., 2021). The next step is stakeholder analysis, which investigates the concerns of various groups that stand to gain or lose because of your project. Stakeholder identification facilitates effective communication during regular project updates and meetings. According to Ryan et al. (2021), a crucial aspect of effectively managing the expectations of project stakeholders involves developing a comprehensive understanding of their identities and the functions they fulfil during the various phases of project development and execution.

Lock (2020) discusses the identification of project stakeholders, stating that it is a step-by-step analytical process that identifies project stakeholders who impact the project and analyses critical information like their interests, concerns, and involvement in the project. In order to focus attention on the relationships essential to the project's success, Ahmadi Eftekhari et al. (2022), state that the project manager supervises the process and devises methods for identifying project stakeholders. To ensure that critical stakeholders and their needs are noticed, project managers and management teams must adapt their methodologies to identify and analyse stakeholders to the cultural frameworks in which they operate. According to Ayala-Orozco et al. (2018), project managers and management teams should consider cultural differences and threats while formulating strategies for identifying and analysing stakeholders.

The overall demands of project stakeholders may be broken down into four groups: upwards, sideways, outwards, and downwards (Grøn et al., 2022).

- Upwards: Those in the "uppers" group are instrumental in the project's conception and financing, and they stand to profit from its ultimate success, for example, CEOs, significant investors, and sponsors (Grøn et al., 2022).
- Outwards: Traditional project stakeholders are included in the outwards category. Customers, users, regulators, and the general public have different requirements depending on how the project will impact them (Grøn et al., 2022).
- Sideways: Other project managers, department heads, and representatives from labour unions and trade groups are all examples of stakeholders in direct competition for the project's resources (Grøn et al., 2022).

- Downwards: Downstream participants are those who create the project's deliverables. Project team members, suppliers, and contractors are all people who want to be adequately treated, be paid on time, and have a better shot at getting the next contract after completing this one (Grøn et al., 2022).

The stakeholder identification process identifies persons who have a stake in the project's outcome, either favourably or adversely. Team members and other organization members who are conversant with the project's outputs and limitations, as well as the group's structure and politics, should collaborate on the list's creation (Waris et al., 2022). Stakeholders must achieve a consensus on multiple matters about the administration and execution of the project. The subsequent phase of stakeholder analysis entails documenting the project stakeholders' requirements and evaluating their significance levels. The data mentioned above has been published in the stakeholder registry after verification.

ii. Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder analysis determines the project's stakeholders, what they care about, how much influence the organization has over them, and how the organization affects them (Li et al., 2018a). Stakeholder analysis, as defined by Freeman (2020), is a method employed to identify and gain a comprehensive understanding of the most crucial stakeholders involved in a project. By devoting time to familiarizing oneself with the individuals associated with the project, one can develop strategies that ensure the satisfaction of all parties involved throughout the project's progression (Portny and Portny, 2022). Project managers use stakeholder analysis to determine who will be affected by the project and how they will feel about it (Eskerod and Larsen, 2018). Analysing the stakeholders involved in a project can facilitate the identification of individuals who should be apprised of its progress and extent, the specific information they should be provided with, and the frequency at which updates should be communicated to them. A stakeholder analysis aims to inform decision-makers of the parties who may influence whether or not their objectives are achieved (Sharpe et al., 2021). Through stakeholder analysis, it becomes possible to anticipate potential problems, effectively engage with influential stakeholders, and enhance the organization's offerings and communication channels.

iii. Stakeholder mapping

Stakeholder mapping entails the systematic identification and analysis of the interconnected relationships among various organizations and individuals who possess a vested interest in the ultimate result of a project or product (McHugh et al., 2018). A stakeholder map is a valuable tool for project managers to visually represent the intricate network of connections between different individuals and organizations involved in a project (Whicher et al., 2018). By utilizing stakeholder maps, project managers can enhance their ability to anticipate and address the needs and concerns of stakeholders in a more efficient manner. Some project stakeholders, for example, must be routinely updated on progress. There are two categories of stakeholder involvement per stakeholder map: stakeholder interest and stakeholder influence over the undertaking. These are divided into two categories, each represented by one of the table's four corners.

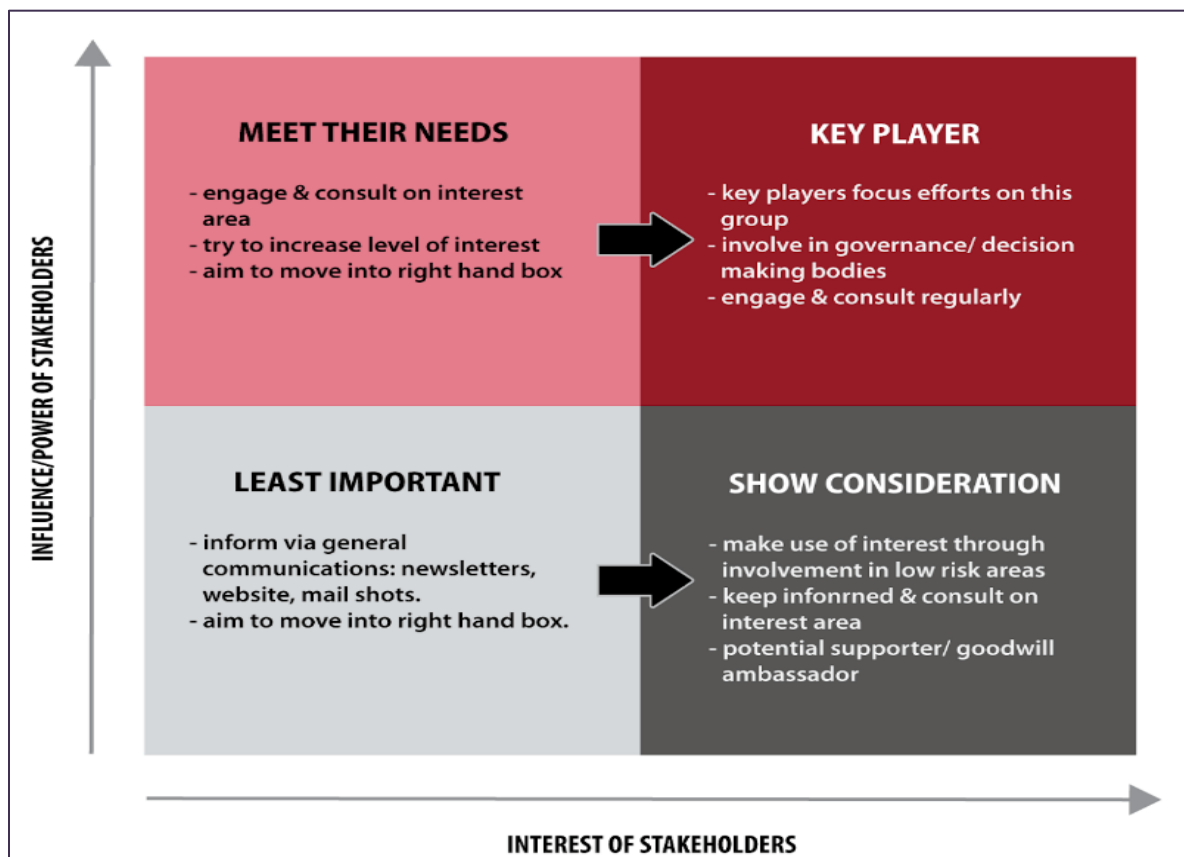


Figure 5: Stakeholder mapping (Wondershare, 2023)

A stakeholder map is an advantageous visual instrument that illustrates the interconnections among all key project participants. An efficacious stakeholder map will encompass comprehensive details about the extent of each participant's engagement, influence, and additional variables that will influence the project's triumph (Roxas et al., 2020).

iv. Stakeholder communication plan

A stakeholder communication plan refers to interactions among all parties engaged in a business or endeavour (Nguyen et al., 2018). Stakeholders include managers, team members, consumers, division chiefs, and high executives. According to Bahadorestani et al. (2020), a stakeholder communication plan focuses on the individuals affected by or have input into the project or decision. According to Di Maddaloni and Davis (2018), the above allows for better anticipating stakeholder requirements, allaying their concerns, and gaining support and cooperation. This section of stakeholder engagement comprises a detailed communication strategy providing opportunities for communication and participation; stakeholders can provide valuable insights as subject matter experts, address their concerns, and have a say in decision-making. Stakeholders and partners are more likely to collaborate on developing a project support system when they are well-informed and involved.

A stakeholder communication strategy can be created using a straightforward grid or spreadsheet that outlines stakeholders and their areas of interest and influence (Di Maddaloni and Davis, 2018). You may list significant project milestones and deliverables in the distinct sections and any monetary or emotional requirements. Effective stakeholder communication can increase the likelihood of a project's or initiative's success, improve stakeholder satisfaction, and facilitate a more open, two-way dialogue.

Benefits of stakeholder engagement strategy,

- By soliciting stakeholder input, organizations can enhance their decision-making in various contexts. When all relevant perspectives are considered, those who must implement the decisions are more likely to embrace them.
- When stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process, they gain insight into the rationale behind the decisions and are more likely to accept and embrace the outcomes.
- Business-to-constituent communication could be improved through stakeholder communication. When fully engaged, stakeholders are provided with regular updates and the opportunity to provide feedback.
- Participation of all concerned parties in the decision-making procedure could result in enhanced comprehension and support. When stakeholders believe their perspectives are valued and they have a voice in significant decisions, they are more likely to act in the organization's best interest.

Stakeholder engagement in multinational construction projects should be regarded like any other business initiative, requiring extensive planning, research, and execution, as well as evaluation and feedback. Engaging stakeholders in multinational construction projects necessitates an iterative strategy that permits careful planning, comprehensive reporting, and the incorporation of lessons learnt through assessment and monitoring.

2.4. Cultural Diversity and Impact

Engaging stakeholders poses significant challenges in the realm of multinational project leadership. Project managers encounter distinct challenges when collaborating with individuals from diverse geographical locations and cultural backgrounds (Oraee et al., 2019). The effective management of cultural differences poses significant challenges within the context of multinational project management (Lee, 2021). Boadu et al. (2020) state that within African nations, variations exist in business practices, decision-making processes, interpersonal communication strategies, and cultural impacts. In order to promote engagement and uphold a harmonious project environment, project managers must comprehensively understand these cultural disparities (Boadu et al., 2020). It is imperative to acquire knowledge about the cultural norms of stakeholders and

subsequently modify management styles following this understanding. In order to thrive in the contemporary interconnected and competitive multinational economy, organizations must prioritize the cultivation of stakeholder culture and foster a heightened awareness of diversity (Fry and Egel, 2021).

2.4.1 Impact on Communication

Communication and culture are separate but interrelated concepts (Ting-Toomey and Dorjee, 2018). Communication can be defined as fundamental human contact or exchanging ideas and emotions with another person. Communication becomes essential for learning, instructing, transmitting, representing, and preserving culture (Sueldo and Štreimikienė, 2019). Culture is the result of social communication, and communication practices play a significant role in culture's construction, formation, preservation, and transmission. Communication is crucial as a multinational construction project brings together a team of specialists (Fewings and Henjewe, 2019). For one to fulfil his responsibility, another must have begun or concluded his. This level of coordination necessitates effective communication, and if cultural differences hinder communication, then the performance of the project will also suffer.

According to Abugre (2018), their respective cultural contexts significantly influence how individuals interact with one another. Henderson et al. (2018), state that it is essential to remember that cultural differences may contribute to misunderstandings. Cultural norms and practices can profoundly influence workplace communication, according to Abugre and Debrah (2019). To minimize misunderstandings and maximize the effectiveness of your communications, it is helpful to be aware of the role culture may play. Timely change management is essential for local and multinational projects (Levitt, 2019). The above necessitates clear and concise communication to enable early identification of discrepancies and expeditious resolution of problems. Fantini (2018) agrees that prompt and punctual communication is essential.

According to Aramburuzabala et al. (2019), effective communication is crucial for cross-cultural project management as it enables stakeholder engagement in change management processes through cooperation and empowerment. In contrast, a lack of

communication protocols results in a project failure due to cultural diversity impact. According to Bjorvatn and Wald (2019), managers in a multinational environment of perpetual change may benefit from a culture that promotes open communication, adaptability, and expeditious decision-making. The requirements for rapid change management on multinational projects necessitate that they look beyond conventional communication tools (Ahmed, 2018).

Project managers must communicate effectively in today's multinational construction environment (Kerzner, 2018). Given the difficulties inherent in communication between cultural groups, cross-cultural management places the development of a premium effective communication plan as vital. The international context exacerbates the problems of misunderstanding and error. In addition to possessing the necessary functional and survival skills, it is recommended that cross-cultural managers also demonstrate adaptability and flexibility in their new environment (Charleston et al., 2018). Therefore, cross-cultural managers must understand cultural concepts, workplace diversity, and intercultural communication.

Kadefors et al. (2021) emphasize the significance of plain and concise communication within and between teams when managing multinational projects. Team members must also possess excellent communication skills to collaborate with stakeholders, such as the project's management sponsor and the client who provides financial support (Kerzner, 2018). According to Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018), it can be challenging to communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds because different cultures influence people in different ways. Wu et al. (2019), also agree that culture significantly influences how individuals perceive, comprehend, and make meaning of the world. The above implies that even if two individuals from distinct cultures speak the "same" language, they may have vastly different interpretations of the exact words. While translation facilitates communication between speakers of distinct languages, cultural differences can hinder this process through subtle confusion and miscommunication. Cerezo-Narváez et al. (2019), state that there are cultural differences in how individuals evaluate the effectiveness of various communication modalities.

2.4.2 impact on decision-making.

Philosophy, economics, psychology, and other management specialists have all studied decision-making, and it remains a popular topic in academic and business circles today (Clegg et al., 2021). Although there is no universally accepted definition of decision-making, it is commonly understood to be the mental act of selecting the best option from a set of alternatives (Virine and Trumper, 2019). Recent research on decision-making has been based on interdisciplinary models that seek to incorporate not only the decision-maker's psychological and behavioural characteristics but also the sociocultural context of the situation (König, 2020). When making judgments in such a context, comprehensive cultural awareness is advantageous to adjust your approach to the local culture. Since projects must be adapted to local norms, it is evident that local culture influences the decision-making and behaviour of organizations.

According to research by Cain et al. (2018), some cultures encourage individuals to make decisions based on their preferences and beliefs, while others encourage individuals to seek assistance before making a decision. People learn by participating in society, presenting and discussing the social values guiding their decisions and actions with others of their culture (Lindsey et al., 2018). When making decisions, culture is essential; to understand the perspective of others, one must be well-versed in cultural norms, values, and beliefs (Brett et al., 2020b). Culture influences and shapes how individuals interpret their surroundings and construct meaning from their experiences (Longman et al., 2018), and it significantly impacts how individuals interpret their experiences; different cultures may perceive the same information as a threat, an opportunity, or nothing at all (Li et al., 2018c).

According to (Henderson et al., 2018), culture is a factor that affects both individuals and enterprises in today's multinational economy; executives and supervisors have a great deal depending on their performance at work. Cultural diversity is only one of the numerous business factors that put employees under constant pressure to make judgments and impact their and their organization's performance. The impact of cultural diversity on leaders' decision-making and organizational performance is substantial (Meng and Berger, 2019). CEOs and other top-level administrators should emphasize cultural diversity's significance throughout their organizations. Executives in multinational

projects should listen to and incorporate the ideas of underrepresented cultural groups into business decisions (Gomez and Bernet, 2019). In the complex and diverse field of multinational construction projects, international decision-makers support and aid teams consisting of individuals from numerous countries, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic abilities to achieve goals and objectives (Nguyen et al., 2018).

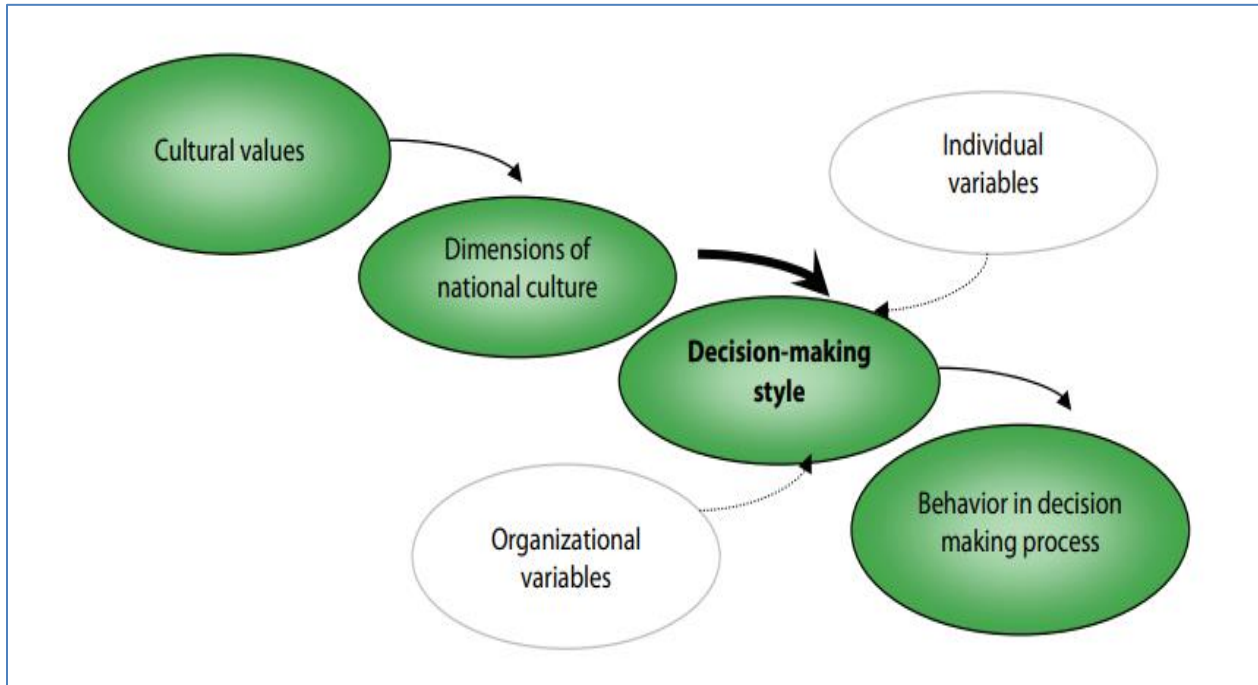


Figure 6: The national culture's influence on decision-making style (Podrug, 2011)

It is vital to understand the significant ways in which cultures all over the globe differ to understand the cultural disparities in decision-making styles (Cain et al., 2018). As portrayed in the figure 6 above, the national cultural values have a critical role in influencing the decision-making style and the behaviour in decision making process of individuals. Thus, the decision-making process may depend on cultural background and the choice of the right way.

Decision-making styles must be linked to the appropriate national culture, values, and norms, as emphasized by Groysberg et al. (2018). The above means that managers and others are subject to cultural effects at every stage of the decision-making process. Given the frequency with which current economic conditions force us to make difficult choices

with far-reaching implications, it stands to reason that such choices are, first and foremost, the product of the social and cultural values ingrained in each person. Thus, social and cultural values affect the decision-making process and the final outcome.

Müller et al. (2009), compared the German and Swedish decision-making processes. It was discovered that Swedish teams make decisions through group consensus. In contrast, the German squad relies on the advice of specialists. In addition, they discovered that examining decision-making in multinational teams is crucial for enhancing project outcomes. According to Hofstede (2011) international project administrators confront the unique challenge of navigating cultural differences among participating nations. Numerous other scholars, such as EstradaCruz et al. (2019), have examined the importance of researching national culture in decision-making.

The research of Luthans and Doh (2018) on the decision-making process revealed the importance of cultural factors at both the individual and social levels. According to Boland et al. (2019), culture is one of the most influential factors in business today, and it plays a significant role in determining whether or not ethical decisions are made. Koc (2020) compared the decision-making processes of communitarian and individualistic cultures. People raised in individualist societies were found to make snap decisions, whereas those raised in communitarian societies required more time to reach a group consensus. Sniashko (2019) investigated the influence of national culture on decision-making preferences and found that cultural values are an adaptable factor in decision-making. De Mooij (2019) observed that culture influences how individuals conduct and make decisions and noted that the nature of the decision is the most significant factor in determining how it is made.

2.4.3 impact on task performance

Cultural values positively impact an individual's performance if their cultural profile aligns with their job requirements; independent workers may be more effective than team members, while collectivists prefer group cohesion and supervision (Zheng et al., 2019). Autonomous individuals thrive in self-directed work teams, while authoritarian managers may produce poor outcomes (Meng and Berger, 2019). National cultural values indirectly

influence job performance through emotions, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours (Men and Yue, 2019). Cultural values directly impact workplace productivity by influencing internal states (emotions, attitudes, and perceptions) and external states (behaviour), all of which directly impact output (Chatzopoulou et al., 2022).

The cultural contexts of their employees may influence the perspectives and actions of managers; cultural theory provides cultural dimensions to facilitate this comprehension. National culture differences may influence how businesses are structured and managed, how leaders are perceived, and how human resources are handled. In order to fathom the significance of national cultures within an organization, it is essential to comprehend the fundamental concept of culture (Knein et al., 2020). A company's culture consists of its established codes of conduct and methods of operation, which new employees are expected to adopt without question. The most influential aspect of human resource management is national culture. According to Reiche et al. (2018), human resources management is the discipline most susceptible to cultural differences.

According to research conducted by Beugelsdijk and Welzel (2018), national culture significantly impacts the culture of its institutions. According to research by Adnan et al. (2018), national culture influences organizational culture, which in turn influences organizational behaviours. Jackson (2020) contends that what distinguishes one national culture from another is not merely the fact that its members speak a different language or practice different religions but that they perceive the world and each other in very different ways. The influence of a country's national culture, encompassing its values, beliefs, and practices, on employees of a foreign subsidiary within a multinational organization (Hampden-Turner et al. (2020). This influence is deemed to be more significant than the impact of the values and assumptions held by the parent company.

2.4.4 Impact conflict management

As acknowledged by Rahim (2023), the conflict lies in the minds of those in conflict and is only apparent when it becomes disharmony. Conflict is sometimes seen as an opposing force but may benefit an organization when handled well. It may help people better comprehend the motivations and ambitions of others and shed light on previously hidden stresses or discontents. Conflict and its resolution are cultural processes, as cultures are

like hidden rivers that flow through our lives and relationships, bringing us messages that mould our thoughts, beliefs, and values about ourselves and others (Durdyev and Hosseini, 2020). Cultures are influential, but their effects on conflict and attempts to overcome them are frequently unnoticed (Groysberg et al., 2018). This could imply that such factors can also be applicable in workplaces and can influence how stakeholders engage in multinational construction projects.

The inability to readily comprehend the nuances of one another's cultural heritage frequently results in communication misunderstandings. Thus, cultural differences between individuals in an organization or daily interactions can readily cause conflict. The above results from people's unwillingness to learn about and respect one another's cultures, a common source of cross-cultural conflict. Cultural differences in the workplace fuel conflict. Culture influences people's perspectives on conflict (Miković et al., 2020). The literature has demonstrated that culture played two significant roles in escalating hostilities. It has highlighted that the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the disputing parties aided in classifying them and how cultural contexts influence how individuals perceive and respond to intragroup conflicts. Culture clashes occur when individuals from various backgrounds fail to appreciate one another's distinctive traditions and conventions. Culture plays a role in conflicts when one's identity is at issue. Cultural variables influence how individuals respond to various stimuli and conduct themselves. Religion, communication, values, and gender are merely some cultural factors contributing to workplace issues.

Managing initiatives involving individuals from diverse cultural contexts has proven to be especially sensitive to organizational cultural differences (Ricucci, 2021). Effectively resolving this disagreement could benefit the productivity of all project teams involved in multinational construction projects. Mediators would do well to bear in mind the cultural underpinnings of disputes, as doing so would lend an additional edge and degree of sensitivity to the already challenging tasks of mediating and peacebuilding (O'Toole et al., 2019). Numerous studies examining the cultural aspects of conflict management need to provide a plausible explanation for the observed differences (Mardani and Christanti, 2020). Since most conflict models were developed in the United States, they may reflect a perspective on conflict that is unique to that nation (Rahim, 2023).

2.4.5 impact on adapting to a new environment.

Cultural adaptation is a term that defines how communities and individuals can adjust to changing conditions by subtly modifying their customary practices (Storti, 2022). According to Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018), throughout the adaptation process, psychological duress is unavoidable; however, this is not a disease but rather a driving force that compels outsiders to persevere through obstacles, learn and adapt to the new society, and ultimately experience personal growth. Individuals will develop psychological and sociocultural adaptation by learning to manage the effects of emotional, behavioural, and cognitive stress and then applying these gains to new social and cultural contexts. Bovis et al. (2018), also state that during cross-cultural adaptation, the pressure response and the development of social skills are extremely sensitive to various contextual circumstances.

Goyal et al. (2021), state that there is a belief that the period of culture shock poses a significant threat to a seamless transition to a new environment. According to Wood et al. (2019), barriers to communication, biases, social isolation, and cultural differences can all adversely affect a person's sense of self-worth and mental health, severely impeding the adaptation process. During a cross-cultural transition, negative emotions such as homesickness, prejudice, loss of self-esteem, anxiety, helplessness, depression, loneliness, stress, and lack of sleep can significantly impact an individual's mental health (Wang et al., 2018).

2.5. Gap in Literature

The reviewed literature has shown that there are few scholars who have researched on multinational construction in Africa. Furthermore, there also seems to be a gap in the South African context. There is a lack of research in the study of various African cultures in the context of project management. Many African nations consist of multiple tribes with distinct languages and traditions. Thus, this study attempted to cover the gap of literature in the context of South Africa. There is a gap in terms of engagement tools and techniques

used in multinational construction projects in the context of South Africa. The study collected data to cover this gap.

2.6. Summary

The management of stakeholders holds significant importance in multinational project management, as it has been observed that the primary reason for project failure often stems from the project manager and team's inability to effectively gather, assess, and address the interests and concerns of stakeholders involved in the project. However, managing stakeholders in cross-cultural projects poses significant challenges due to the need to consider and integrate the diverse values and perspectives of the stakeholders involved. Issues that arise in a particular multinational construction sector also frequently manifest in other industries. Upon initial examination, it is readily comprehensible how cultural disparities among multinational project teams and stakeholders could lead to the inadvertent neglect of significant stakeholders and requirements. Furthermore, frequent disagreements arise among individuals involved due to cultural disparities in cognitive processes, emotional responses, and behavioural patterns.

The final challenge entails determining the most efficient approach to managing multicultural project stakeholders' communication to mitigate potential issues and conflicts. With the world's growing interconnectedness, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds have an expanding array of opportunities for cross-cultural communication. An effective project manager demonstrates an understanding of the cultural backgrounds of the stakeholders involved in the project. To achieve success in the realm of multinational construction projects, it is imperative for individuals to demonstrate a willingness to embrace and accommodate cultural disparities. Participating in a multiethnic team presents advantages, including the potential for acquiring knowledge from and making valuable contributions to a diverse array of perspectives, worldviews, and experiences.

The literature review illuminates the most prominent cultural differences among significant stakeholders, including the project manager, the customer, and the project team. The

literature review aims to provide the necessary knowledge and understanding of the impact of cultural differences within the workplace.

CHAPTER 3 : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the research methods employed in the current study, encompassing the research design, sampling methodology, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations that were considered. According to Gupta and Gupta (2022), a research methodology is a carefully orchestrated sequence of deliberate actions to generate novel insights and propel the advancement of established domains of inquiry. The process entails the comparison of hypotheses or recommendations with objective reality to establish causal relationships. Research is a systematic approach employed to acquire and analyse information to gain a comprehensive understanding of pertinent or intriguing facts. Research can be conceptualized as the "craft of scientific inquiry," as it necessitates the application of innovative thinking and critical analysis. From a rational standpoint, science serves as the sole means to unravel the enigmatic aspects of the universe.

3.2. Research Methods

A research method is the process by which the researcher develops a problem-finding or problem-solving strategy to achieve a predetermined study conclusion (Kothari, 2004). The study methodology refers to the strategies the researcher intends to employ to corroborate the existence of a problem or barrier. According to Skovdal and Cornish (2015), there are two types of research methods: quantitative and qualitative, which are discussed below.

- Skovdal and Cornish (2015) assert that quantitative research primarily concerns examining the interplay between different factors. Within an evaluation framework, it is imperative to contemplate the degree to which observed outcomes can be attributed solely to a singular intervention. Surveys and questionnaires are frequently employed techniques for gathering quantitative data due to their capacity for statistical analysis and the potential for generalization to a larger

population. The emphasis on discrete, statistical associations inherent in quantitative research has the potential to obscure broader themes and interconnections. Quantitative data holds significance; however, solely focusing on numerical values may result in overlooking unforeseen revelations or the holistic perspective.

- L. Haven and Van Grootel (2019) describe qualitative research as a research methodology that employs inductive data analysis to gain insights into the meaning and experiences of participants regarding a specific topic or issue through identifying patterns or themes. According to the author's perspective, qualitative research is deemed to yield the most dependable outcomes due to its utilization of non-probability sampling methods and non-numerical data collection methods. Qualitative research offers several advantages, as it allows for the potential application of findings in various contexts and is conducive to implementing action research. Numerous research inquiries necessitate the transferability of the outcomes to real-world contexts, a particularly salient consideration in the case of empirical investigations.

Given the specific focus of the study on the viewpoints of project managers with expertise in multinational construction projects, it was deemed that qualitative analysis was the most suitable approach to be employed. The analysis of the study findings was conducted, and recommendations were made for the improvement of stakeholder involvement frameworks in international projects. During the conducted interviews, the participants exhibited a notable level of openness and honesty in expressing their personal experiences.

3.3. Research Design

Identifying potential solutions for the study topics necessitates meticulous planning and strategic design. Hence, the proposed plan must encompass a diverse array of methodologies and instruments suitable for effectively conducting the research. Furthermore, it is crucial to employ research methodologies and instruments that prioritize

the validity and dependability of the material and data. Conducting a comprehensive review and analysis of all the information and resources collected is imperative.

The term "research design" refers to the comprehensive strategy and analytical approach chosen to ensure a thorough examination of the research topic at all levels of the study. The process of gathering, analysing, and interpreting information and data relies on this fundamental basis. The study adopted the research onion below as the study framework.

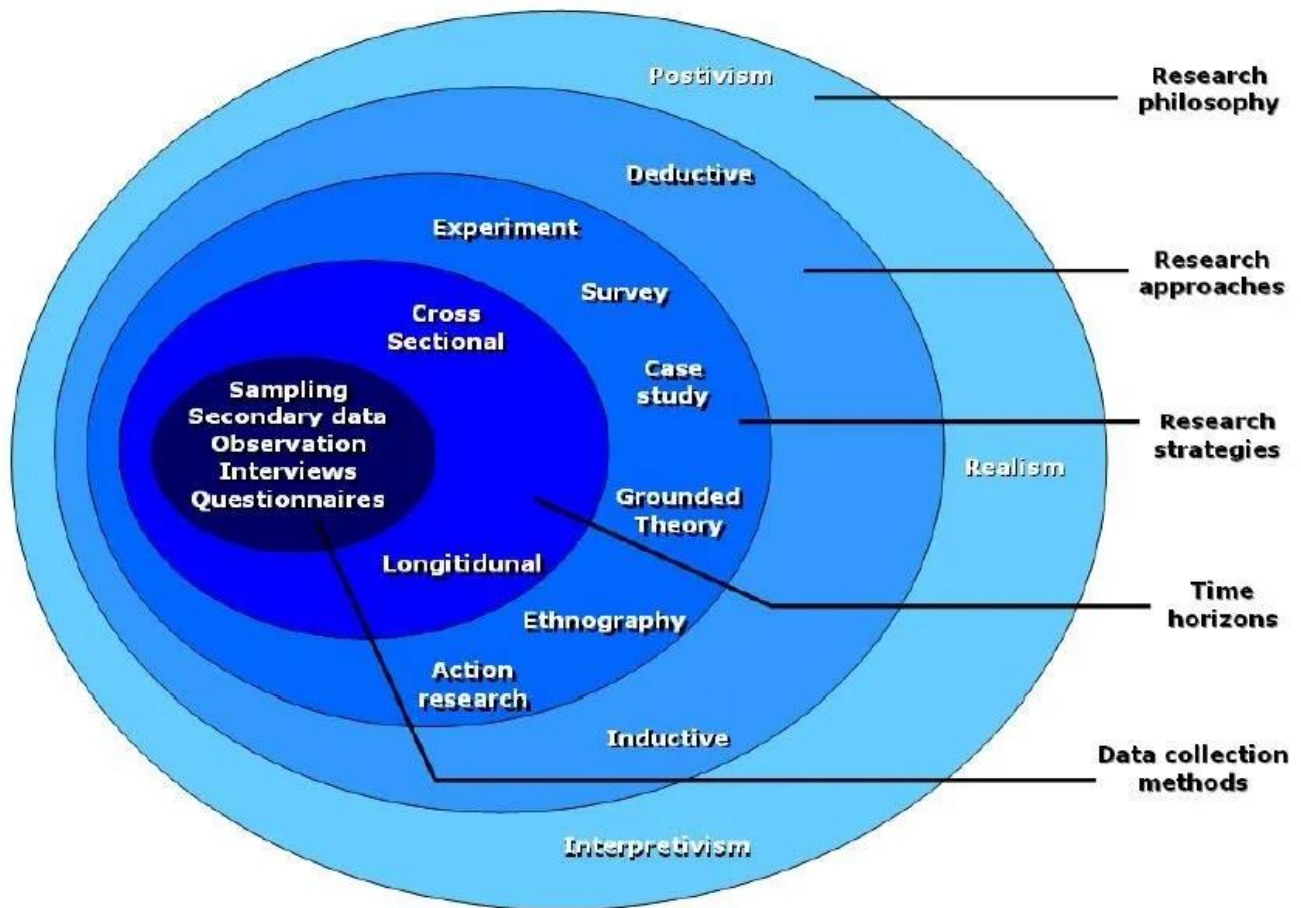


Figure 7: Research onion (Saunders et al., 2019)

The research onion was developed by Saunders et al. (2007), as a conceptual framework to illustrate the various stages involved in conducting a research study.

3.3.1 Research Philosophy

The term "research philosophy" is used to define a method of thinking regarding the acquisition of new information. This may sound abstract, but it conveys the essence of what researchers seek and a deeper understanding of a subject. Even if it is not as revolutionary as a new theory of human motivation, answering a specific problem in a specific organization still generates new knowledge (Saunders et al., 2007). Sanders continues by emphasizing that a valid research philosophy is the basis for the methodological decision, research plan, data collection method, and analytical methods.

- **Ontology** describes the philosophical foundation of an investigation into concepts and ideas with the goal of finding accurate explanations, such as those that relate to cause and effect. While many firmly grasp the concept of truth as an objective description of actual reality, some philosophers have argued that truth depends on the individual's perspective and historical moment.
- The focus of **epistemology** is understanding the theoretical foundations of the approaches adopted. For internal coherence in the study, the researcher's ontological perspective must connect with the epistemological approach, informing the technique and instruments (methods) used to conduct the research.
- According to positivism, all true information may be proven by rational means like scientific experimentation and careful observation (Saunders et al., 2019). Masaryk et al. (2021) cite Comte defining three major developments in human culture: the religious, the metaphysical, and the scientific or positive. In his view, modern civilization had entered the last phase, when a constructive philosophy of science was developing due to the rise of scientific rationality.
- **Interpretivism**, a school of thought in the social sciences, is the key to decoding the meaning of the facts that may be collected about an event and is an appreciation of the beliefs, motives, and reasoning of the persons involved in the circumstance. By "interpretivism," we mean theories and methods that place a

premium on the significance of individuals' actions in their communities and across cultural contexts (Pulla and Carter, 2018). With the view that people's understanding of reality is a social creation by human actors, this research paradigm excludes natural scientific procedures.

As the study aimed to create meanings and interpretations based on participants' experiences without making assumptions, the researcher utilized the Interpretivism philosophy.

3.3.2 Research Approach

The term "data analysis" refers to the practice of using statistical and/or logical methods to arrive at a better understanding of the information collected. Two methods exist for analysing qualitative data: inductive and deductive (Chambers, 2018).

- The deductive strategy in qualitative research is a method that starts at the top and works its way down to classify qualitative data. This method is employed by researchers in the creation of fixed-code structures (Chambers, 2018). Literature reviews, reports, and other comparable works might inspire these blueprints. For instance, researchers generate and define the codes based on the source during a literature review. The next step in the research process is to apply the coding system to the document's content.
- An inductive approach works its way up from the ground up (Chambers, 2018). Information is derived from data to make codes. In-person or verbal codes provided by participants are utilized to classify the information. These codes are developed and revised during the coding process.

Quantitative data can be analysed using the main methods namely inferential statistics, descriptive statistics, regression analysis and correlation analysis. According to Lohr (2021) inferential statistics refers to a data analysis method where conclusions from a study population are drawn based on sample data using techniques such as confidence intervals and hypothesis testing.

Descriptive statistics is a quantitative data analysis method which focuses on providing a comprehensive summary of the basic characteristics of data collected from respondents (Lakens, 2022). The use of central tendency is adopted to analyse the characteristics of the collected quantitative data. Thus, there is the use of mean, median and mode to determine the distribution of data points (Stratton, 2021). measures of variability may also be adopted. These include range, variance and standard deviation.

Regression analysis is used to analyse quantitative data by examining the relationship that exist between a dependent and independent variables. According to Rahman et al. (2022). regression analysis focuses on creating a mathematical model that seeks to predict the values or characteristics of a dependent variable based on an independent variable. To determine the value or characteristics of a dependent variable, there are several techniques that can be used which include linear regression, non-linear regression and multiple regression.

Correlation data analysis is used in quantitative studies to measure the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables under study (Lohr, 2021). Correlation coefficient used include Pearson's r , ranges from -1 (Perfect negative correlation) to 1 (perfect positive correction). This enables researcher to determine the extent of the relationship.

3.3.3 Research Strategy

Research strategy is the overarching strategy for accumulating, analysing, and reporting study results. It is a standard method for connecting theoretical questions with empirical research. Narrative research, case study research, grounded theory, phenomenology, and participatory action research are the five most popular qualitative designs (Creswell and Poth, 2016).

- Narrative research focuses on a specific topic. As opposed to the community, the researcher undertakes the role of storyteller. Narrative research is a qualitative inquiry methodology that uses a literary form to provide a comprehensive and intricate account of a particular subject or several significant subjects. Researchers frequently employ narrative writing to get deeper insights into a subject matter through the description of personal experiences and the subsequent analysis of

the relevance of these occurrences. The focal point of a narrative research design frequently revolves around an individual. In contrast to the community, the researcher is responsible for serving as an interpreter for the individual's experiences.

- A case study is an in-depth examination of a specific instance. It is a method for narrowing down many researchable topics to a manageable subset. It is an in-depth examination of a program, event, activity, process, or individual. Cases are typically bounded by time and activity constraints, prompting researchers to employ various methodologies to collect comprehensive data over a prolonged duration.
- Grounded theory is the collection and analysis of data based on real-world facts, which suggests that investigation and hypothesis development should follow data collection. The widely recognized method of grounded theory is employed in several research endeavours. Grounded theory research often combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies for data collection. The primary objective of engaging in data gathering, analysis, and comparison within the context of grounded theory is to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework. Despite its inherent versatility, grounded theory is a complex methodology. Hence, novice researchers need to acquire knowledge of the theoretical underpinnings and methodological approaches associated with grounded theory.
- Phenomenology is a qualitative study examining how various individuals' experiences intersect. The method's primary objective is to elucidate the nature of the contested occurrences. The objective of the qualitative research approach called phenomenology is to comprehend and articulate the fundamental nature of a phenomenon. This approach examines individuals' daily routines without imposing any predetermined assumptions on the inquiry. Phenomenological study aims to explore individuals' subjective interpretations of their own life experiences.
- Participatory action research (PAR) is a method for analysing and improving a group or community. In addition to informing the development of the new initiative,

it may also be used to guide the execution of an organizing effort, bolster a political position, or draw attention to a particular issue or concern. During ethnographic research, scientists observe and/or interact with test subjects in their natural habitats. A PAR study is dedicated to upholding democratic values of equality and justice by promoting active engagement and incorporating varied viewpoints. The primary aim of PAR initiatives is to facilitate constructive societal change via the active engagement and education of persons regarding their current circumstances.

The research focused on project managers' perspectives and experiences regarding the challenges of stakeholders' engagements in multinational construction projects. Given the objectives and concerns of the study, Case Study was the most suitable research strategy. The research identified the three most suitable multinational contractors (Raubex Construction, Ethos Construction and Ramdal Cape). The organizations selected had been involved in several multinational construction projects, providing a better study platform. The researcher developed an in-depth semi-structured interview guide encompassing all the relevant topics for the study.

3.3.4 Time Horizons

The time horizon refers to the projected timeframe, including the initiation and completion of the project. The research onion facilitates classifying studies into cross-sectional or longitudinal periods.

- The objective of a cross-sectional study is to provide a momentary depiction of an ongoing phenomenon, thereby necessitating data collection over a specified duration.
- Longitudinal research studies are characterized by their extended duration since they are done over a substantial period. This study aims to monitor and examine the temporal progression of a particular academic discipline.

A cross-sectional time horizon was adopted for this study due to time limits and the nature of the study.

3.4. Data Collection Method

3.4.1 Sampling

Sampling is a systematic approach employed to acquire a subset of data that accurately reflects the features of a larger population, enabling inferences to be made about the entire population. In the context of research, scholars often utilize diverse sampling methodologies to circumvent the need for an exhaustive examination of the entire population, thus facilitating the acquisition of valuable insights. With limited resources, the researcher must select a population subset to investigate. There are two main types of sampling methods: probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Rahman et al., 2022).

- According to Lohr (2021), probability sampling is the process by which units are selected randomly from the sampling frame for inclusion in the sample. Random sampling, systematic random sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling, multistage sampling, and multiphase sampling are all examples of probability sampling methods. The most elementary method for this research type is to select samples randomly.
- Non-probability sampling is the process of selecting samples based on non-random factors or the researcher's subjective evaluation. "Non-probability sampling" refers to a group of techniques used to pick samples from a larger population (Stratton, 2021).

Non-probability sampling was employed for this study, where the researcher selected the participants based on expert sampling because the study required participants to be knowledgeable, possess project management skills and have experience with multinational construction projects. Non-probability sampling is more convenient for the research and will ensure that the study objectives are all met. The assessment considers

the participant's background, educational qualifications, and professional experience, hence the suitability of non-probability sampling.

3.4.2 Sample Size

The number of units from which information was drawn is the sample size. During research or experiments, the number of subsamples or observations can be calculated using various metrics (Lakens, 2022). The case study was carried out on three construction firms with experience in multinational projects. The study participants consisted of project managers from these companies, who possessed considerable professional experience in the realm of multinational construction projects and had acquired international expertise. Consequently, the study did not express interest in employing a random sampling approach that might yield results with broader applicability. The chosen methodology for the investigation is purposive sampling. In this case, the objective is to choose a sample of individuals with the perfect characteristics necessary for effectively addressing the research inquiries.

According to Saunders et al. (2012, p. 283), *sample sizes for qualitative research are recommended to range from five to twenty-five individuals*. The point of theoretical saturation was achieved after completing a series of nine semi-structured interviews with project managers who possessed the necessary qualifications. The researcher successfully obtained consent from firms and their managerial employees by employing established protocols within their respective professional networks. The study's objectives were communicated to the participating organizations and personnel. The researcher also sent went to the company's most experienced and competent personnel to address inquiries. The phrase "snowball sampling" is used to characterize this selection method. Due to the geographical dispersion of the participants, electronic communication was employed to facilitate effective interaction. The ultimate pool of interviewees comprised eight project managers selected from the specific organizations under consideration.

3.4.3 Data Collection

Information is gathered and analysed in order to answer questions, establish hypotheses, conduct experiments, and assess outcomes through a process known as data collecting (Flick, 2018). The following tools are often used for qualitative research (Austin and Sutton, 2018).

- In-depth-Interviews allow the researcher to correlate the response, produce a synthesis of the ideas generated through the principle of triangulation. Interviews may be conducted face-to-face, over the phone, or via Skype, if necessary. Email or written correspondence might serve as an interview as well. In-depth interviews may be structured or unstructured. In a structured interview, the interviewer asks the same set of questions in the same general sequence each time. In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer is given a certain number of questions to ask but has the flexibility to add or remove questions as needed. In a structured interview, the interviewer asks the same set of questions in the same general sequence each time. The importance of this approach is that the researcher can ask different participants the same questions.
- Focus groups: Facilitated conversations with a small group of people with specialized expertise or an interest in a particular subject are known as focus group discussions (FGDs). The researcher may learn about the opinions and perspectives of a group by using them. Focus groups generally include 6-12 participants and consist of a sequence of questions meant to elicit in-depth replies. Focus groups are commonly used to get information from those who may feel uncomfortable or hesitant to speak up in larger groups. They can also be utilized to elicit the views of underrepresented groups such as women, children, and the handicapped.
- Observation: there are various ways to observe anything. While doing a structured or direct observation, using a checklist to document findings is standard practice. When trained observers document their findings, they are said to engage in "expert observation." It is feasible to observe in a participatory manner. Participants in a

program or initiative actively participate in its design, evaluation, and dissemination of results.

To collect accurate data from seasoned project managers, the researcher established several guidelines to control the pace and nature of the data collection process. Semi-structured interviews were adopted as the method of collecting data. The purpose of a semi-structured interview was to get responses that are relevant to the research question. Thus, semi-structured interviews, allowed the interviewer the liberty to ask additional questions to elicit more information or clarity of information already provided by the respondents. The researcher also chose semi-structured interviews to enable participants to be as flexible as possible in answering the questions. This resulted in the collection of detailed data from participants.

3.5. Data analysis method

The term "data analysis" refers to the practice of using statistical and/or logical methods to arrive at a better understanding of the information collected. Two methods exist for analysing qualitative data: the inductive and the deductive methods (Chambers, 2018). This study used a deductive method to analyse data from the interviews and the literature review. The research concluded by comparing the acquired data to the existing literature. The following are five methods for analysing qualitative data (Belotto, 2018):

- Perform content analysis. The categorization of data facilitates categorization, tabulation, and summary. The primary objective of content analysis is to discern and ascertain recurring themes, concepts, or terminologies present within qualitative data. Using content analysis enables researchers to assess and explore the occurrence, importance, and interrelationships of certain words, ideas, or concepts quantitatively and qualitatively. Researchers can analyse the textual content of a news piece to identify indications of bias or favouritism.
- Critical analysis of a narrative. Case studies and the participants' personal experiences are utilized to validate the veracity of the participant's accounts. It is

possible to view the process of updating secondary data as an update to primary data. Narrative analysis is a method researchers employ to acquire a deeper understanding of how study participants construct narratives and tales from their personal experiences.

- Discourse evaluation. This method examines the usage of words and sentences in ordinary life. Discourse analysis encompasses a range of qualitative methodologies that investigate the utilization of language within diverse social contexts. Researchers employ the approach to get a deeper understanding of the world view of respondents by examining the underlying connotations and implications of words and phrases in written text, audio recordings, and visual depictions. Discourse analysis refers to the systematic examination and interpretation of meaning derived from a compilation of writings, sometimes called a corpus. Data from a compilation of interviews or transcripts from a focus group might qualify for this purpose.
- Framework analysis, a more comprehensive approach, entails numerous stages, including familiarization, categorization, interpretation, and analysis of a given framework. The approach commonly employed by qualitative researchers to arrange and analyse material is referred to as framework analysis. The formulation of research questions and/or purposes serves as the foundation for developing an analytical framework. This framework has a predetermined set of subjects or categories. The framework provides a systematic approach to data analysis, enabling the identification of latent themes, correlations, and other valuable discoveries.
- Grounded theory, where each case is examined, and analogous cases are only considered if they strengthen the established theory. Grounded theory is predicated upon the notion that a researcher must formulate a hypothesis about a particular subject matter based on the information they gather. Alternatively, the researcher may construct a novel hypothesis firmly supported by empirical evidence through collecting and analysing qualitative data. Consequently, the

initial phase of grounded theory involves collecting data led by research questions, as opposed to data collection guided by hypotheses.

Framework analysis was used to code and compare information gathered from the literature with information gathered from participants using a case study approach. The study was conducted using a logical approach consistent with qualitative research methods. The framework analysis identifies, describes, and comprehends shared patterns and variations among various research occurrences. This adaptable and productive analytical technique has been utilized in many manners within a diverse array of actual research contexts and data types. This advanced methodology encompasses several stages, such as familiarizing oneself with the subject matter, establishing a theoretical framework, conducting coding procedures, creating visual representations, and analysing the outcomes.

3.6. Reliability and Validity

3.6.1 Reliability

The expression "reliability" refers to whether a researcher consistently obtain the same result. Research reliability is the degree to which a research strategy generates stable and consistent results over time. When an instrument measures something multiple times, the results should be consistent. The reliability categories are described below (Shao et al., 2019).

- Test-retest reliability: Gauging a test's reliability by taking tests as many times with roughly the same set of participants to calculate the variability of the results.
- The term "parallel forms reliability" describes a metric obtained by simultaneously applying different evaluation strategies to the same phenomena using the same sample population.

- Inter-rater reliability is a statistical measure of how well one set of results holds up compared to another set of results obtained by different raters employing the same technique.
- Internal consistency refers to the extent to which the items or components of a measurement instrument or test are measuring the same construct or concept. Reliability refers to the degree of consistency or dependability exhibited by a psychometric instrument, such as a questionnaire or exam, in its capacity to accurately evaluate a certain concept or characteristic. The purpose of this assessment is to determine the degree to which the items contained inside the instrument are effectively measuring the identical underlying idea or construct.

To enhance the credibility of the study's results, the researcher diligently checked that all established reliability criteria are satisfied.

3.6.2 Validity

Validity is described as a measure of how closely the data collected corresponds to the investigated phenomenon (FitzPatrick, 2019). It is the ability to measure what is intended to be assessed. FitzPatrick (2019) describes validity as follows.

- The degree to which an idea is "believable" is called its "face validity." Regarding non-specialists like test-takers and judges, "face validity" refers to how strongly a given instrument appears to be associated with a particular concept.
- The content validity of a measurement tool is determined by how closely its components reflect the content to which it will be applied.
- Concept Validity is achieved if a researcher has successfully translated or operationalized an idea. It is how accurately the results from the research participants reflect those of similar people not involved in the study.

The researcher also took the interview transcripts of the respondents back to the participants to ensure that they verify and confirm their responses and analysis for validity purposes. Thus, the research was conducted in a manner that incorporated the features mentioned above, with the researcher taking measures to resolve any validity-related issues.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

The study's findings will be more widely accepted if it is performed in a morally sound manner. Important ethical factors for qualitative research are listed below (Arifin, 2018).

- Human rights, such as the right to independent participation and the right to have a person's need for aid and protection satisfied, are frequently expressed in the notion of respect for persons. Participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, and all personal information was safeguarded.

- Informed consent: honouring participants' right to make decisions about their own lives necessitates providing them with accurate and complete information about the research project. A permission letter detailing the research ensured that participants were informed of the study's nature. In addition, individuals were informed that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that they may discontinue at any moment. Also, the researcher ensured that the organizations impacted by the study were contacted and that permission to conduct the research was sought.

3.8. Limitation of study

There was a challenge and limitation in the data collection process where the intended participants could not be reached physically for face-to-face interviews. Some participants indicated that they were busy and could not attend the interview sessions. To rectify this limitation, the researcher had to conduct some of the interview sessions online using video calls.

3.9. Summary

The chapter focused on laying out and explaining the methodology that was used in collecting data, sampling the population, analysing the collected data and the presentation methods that were adopted in the study. It was shown that interpretivism research philosophy guided the world view in every process. As such, a, case study research design and a non-probability purposive sampling method was adopted. The data analysis method that was used was framework analysis. The chapter also explained the ethical factors that were considered.

CHAPTER 4 : DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This section describes the findings of the research. The report comprehensively outlined the findings presented, thoroughly examining each topic. In this chapter, the author endeavoured to convey the findings cohesively and lucidly. The author discussed the findings in the three case studies before discussing the study's overall results. The participants possess a significant level of expertise in construction management and project management. To be eligible for this position, it was mandatory to possess a bachelor's degree in a construction-related field. Additionally, the participants needed to have obtained professional accreditation from the appropriate regulatory body.

4.2. Demographic Data

The researcher interviewed participants to elicit their perspectives on the impact of cultural diversity on stakeholder engagement in multinational construction projects. Demographic information, including educational background and work position, was gathered from each participant during the interviews. The participants consisted of 5 members whose qualification was a degree, 3 members had masters degrees and 1 member had a PHD. All participants in the study had a clear understanding of the need to be sensitive to cultural norms when engaging in multinational activities within the construction sector. The participants in the interview exhibited a greater degree of importance for some managerial practices, which are discussed below.

Table 4-1 : Qualifications of participants

Qualifications	Degree	Masters	PHD
Number of Participants	5	3	1

Table 4-2: Work positions of participants

Work Position	Team Leader	Project Manager
Number of Participants	4	5

Table 4-3: Professional body affiliation status

Affiliation with Professional Body	Yes	No
Number of Participants	9	0

4.3. Data Presentation

4.3.1 Case Study A: Raubex KZN

Raubex is a leading South African construction company with vast experience in local and multinational construction projects. Raubex is operating in Africa and Australia. The company is well suited for case study research for the chosen topic. According to their website: *“Raubex is one of South Africa’s leading infrastructure development and construction materials supply groups. Established in 1974, Raubex listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) in March 2007 and operates throughout Southern Africa and Western Australia. A level 1 Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) group, Raubex has over 7,000 employees and is focused on ensuring high levels of integrity, professionalism, and quality in all its work. Raubex aims to be the African leader in road and civil engineering contracting and the provision of construction materials and mining services while meeting all stakeholder expectations.”*

4.3. Objective 1. Cultural aspects of multinational projects and categorize the cultural diversity of stakeholders in multinational projects.

- Communication And Behaviour

Participants 1 and 2 highlighted the magnitude of the impact of stakeholder diversity by noting the impediments caused by the differences in cultural beliefs and practices. The perception, communication, and behaviour of project stakeholders in multinational initiatives are influenced by cultural norms, which in turn impact their degree of trust, engagement, and participation. Participant 1 stated that:

“Cultural norms influence how project stakeholders in international projects think, speak, and behave, which in turn influences how much they believe, participate, and provide feedback. Communication is the first hurdle in international construction projects.”

This affects the overall project progress and impacts on project planning and stakeholder engagement. According to Participant 2, misunderstandings may emerge because of cultural variations in communication styles and interpersonal interactions. For example, the act of establishing eye contact holds significant importance within some cultural contexts, whereas in other countries, it is seen as unfriendly.

- Decision-making

Participants 1 and 2 agreed that the decision-making in projects across cultural norms poses a significant challenge in the realm of global project management. Even among African nations that are geographically close to each other, there are notable variations in how construction operations are carried out, decision-making processes are undertaken, and interpersonal communication is practiced. Project managers must understand and adapt to cultural diversities to foster collaboration and maintain harmonious work environments. Participant 2 further stated that:

“Making decisions continues to be a challenge while leading various project teams. Sometimes, people are hesitant to act when they should and have the authority to. Most decisions in Southern African construction projects that ought to be made at a low level are instead reserved for larger gatherings.”

- Language barrier

One of the prevalent challenges that impact progress in multinational construction projects, according to participants 1 and 2, is the use of ethnic languages; this is the issue of efficiently interacting with colleagues who lack a shared language. Establishing a common linguistic framework is crucial in situations when team members do not possess a uniform language proficiency, according to Participant 1. Participants 1 and 2 regularly articulated concerns about the challenges associated with effective communication with their stakeholders, mostly stemming from a prevalent language barrier. Participant 2 stated that:

"Since there are more than 11 official languages in South Africa, linguistic barriers are a concern. Moving to a different province with the same team is really challenging. Some stakeholders believe that they must be addressed in their own tongue, even when English is widely used. Sometimes it is acceptable since other community members haven't attended school and English is mostly learnt in school."

- Conflict Management

Various cultural groups employ distinct methods to resolve conflicts and make significant decisions in multinational projects. According to Participant 1, cultural factors determine the length of time for which a decision should be considered, the necessary preparations to make, and the amount of effort to put forth. In contrast to communities characterized by introspection. Participant 2 highlighted that:

"African societies tend to have a tendency towards making rapid judgments, rather than extensively sharing all pertinent information prior to resolving conflicts."

Conflict resolution poses challenges in any group context, and the presence of a multicultural team introduces an additional level of complexity. Effectively managing and leading people from diverse cultural backgrounds is a significant challenge experienced in multinational construction projects.

- Task Performance

According to participants 1 and 2, a lack of education on diversity and cultural tendencies contributes to increased frustration and less tolerance among team members. Team tensions and disagreements arise due to a combination of factors, including a lack of understanding and awareness among team members and management regarding these issues and an unwillingness to accept differing viewpoints and perspectives. If the manager does not have the necessary skills to address these difficulties, team members will likely exhibit poor performance.

Participants 1 and 2 agreed that poor performance is directly linked to cultural diversity that is not adequately managed in multinational construction projects. It is further stated that the project manager must have cultural awareness and training workshops facilitated among stakeholders to bring them to an understanding of the subject.

- Adapting To Environment

Based on the participants' 1 and 2 experiences, individuals who are in the process of adapting to a different cultural environment frequently transform their emotional well-being, transitioning from a state of excitement and comfort to one characterized by sadness and despondency. This shift in emotional state can potentially hinder their capacity to communicate effectively. An individual from a different cultural background may encounter a diverse array of profound emotions.

This happens to project teams venturing to new territories where the project is located abroad. Leadership must be aware of the adaptation challenge, thereby assisting in speeding up the process of adapting to avoid project delays.

4.2.1.2 Objective 2 - Analysing the effective stakeholder engagement tools and techniques.

- Identifying relevant stakeholder

Participants 1 and 2 highlighted that a crucial aspect of every project entail including persons and organizations that possess a vested stake in its successful outcome.

Stakeholder management, which pertains to the engagement and communication with stakeholders to address their requirements and issues, significantly relies on the identification process. Participant 1 stated that:

"What I noticed is that when venturing to international space, you most likely are not aware of who the stakeholders or important stakeholders are. Therefore, it is advisable that project managers pay attention to stakeholder identification process using local resources."

- Determining Relevance, The Influence Of Each Stakeholder, And Analysis

Participants 1 and 2 highlighted utilizing stakeholder analysis, which is a highly effective mechanism for assuring the project's success. Examining various stakeholders involved in the project and their potential influence on the development processes proves valuable for acquiring knowledge in multinational construction projects. Participant 1 stated that.

"Stakeholder analysis facilitates the identification and mitigation of various obstacles that impede the assessment of project progress. The collection of data pertaining to the supporters, opponents, and other stakeholders of projects aids in mitigating obstacles to the effective implementation of multinational projects."

- Discover the needs and expectations of each stakeholder.

According to participants 1 and 2, every group possesses specific requirements that necessitate attention from the project. One stakeholder group, project owners, anticipates the project to generate profits. In contrast, another group of stakeholders expects the company to adhere to legal regulations and fulfil its obligations punctually. The extent to which the corporation among all stakeholders throughout the planning and implementation phases directly correlates with the stakeholder's level of importance to the project. Participant 2 stated that:

"The needs and expectations of stakeholders have a pervasive impact on projects in all contexts. In other terms, corporations are established and managed with the

objective of fulfilling the demands of its owners and investors through the stakeholder analysis.”

Given their potential to facilitate and impede project progress, the project manager must duly consider the desires and requirements of a diverse range of stakeholders. Participant 2 highlighted the priority of the project needs and stakeholders' needs to achieve this.

- Create a project plan for stakeholder engagement.

Participants 1 and 2 also indicated that project managers may enhance their project communication with stakeholders by adhering to a well-defined stakeholder engagement plan. Enhancing internal communication and fostering transparency in the company's operations may be achieved by effectively informing and involving project stakeholders. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the process involved in formulating an engagement plan will enable the project team to assess the possible influence of a stakeholder on the project.

4.2.1.3 Objective 3 - Assess stakeholder engagement methods, tools, and techniques impacting managing cultural diversity in multinational projects.

- Effective Communication Is the Best Tool.

Cultural norms can potentially influence stakeholders' levels of trust in the project and their inclination to engage and offer constructive feedback. Conducting research on the cultural characteristics and behaviours of stakeholders, including factors such as power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, and communication style, can aid in the prevention of cultural misunderstandings and disputes. Participant 1 stated that:

“In the context of increasingly extensive and multinational projects, it is preferable to avoid assuming exclusive responsibility as the primary point of contact for the numerous stakeholders involved. The objective should be to enable the inclusion

of other project team members in stakeholder communications, using their expertise in certain areas of the project.”

In this case, the project manager does not relinquish control over communications; instead, they retain supervision over the process while extending an invitation to other stakeholders to partake. This boosts stakeholder engagement and ensures the total circulation of information among all stakeholders.

- Creating Cordial Relationships

Interpersonal relationships have a high degree of efficacy, as highlighted by participants 1 and 2. The change process starts with the interpersonal interactions that individuals establish with one another. To foster diverse communities capable of achieving significant accomplishments, it is imperative to establish meaningful relationships with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Participant 1 stated that:

“When individuals from disparate cultural backgrounds come into contact, it is unavoidable that there will be discernible disparities in their respective cultures.”

Certain individuals may experience little difficulty in adapting to new conditions. Reconciling differing worldviews can provide a significant challenge for individuals.

- Challenging Stereotypes

While it is essential to leverage local expertise wherever feasible, fostering cooperation within teams to prevent personnel from other regions from operating in isolation is vital. Overcoming stereotype challenges can be arduous, mainly when individuals from diverse backgrounds exhibit less inclination to collaborate due to preconceived beliefs about one other's cultures. Participant 2 stated that:

“The impact of adverse cultural stereotypes on multinational construction projects morale and productivity can be significant. Workplace tensions may manifest when historical rivalries are introduced into the professional environment.”

Stereotypes are simplified generalizations that have the potential to impose limitations or create divisions within the professional environment. This assertion holds validity even when the stereotype in question may not be inherently negative. The presence of cultural biases, whether they are consciously or unconsciously held, may provide a greater difficulty in fostering workplace diversity compared to explicit prejudice or stereotyping.

- Cultural awareness and training

Cultural consciousness involves acquiring the ability to effectively adjust to the dynamic and evolving norms and ideals of diverse communities. Participants 1 and 2 agreed that the potential for positive outcomes is enhanced when individuals from diverse backgrounds collaborate and exhibit mutual respect. This speeds up engaging in collaboration with individuals from various cultural backgrounds. The absence of cultural awareness may potentially influence critical decision-making. Participant 1 stated:

“If a project manager lacks cultural sensitivity, he may encounter obstacles in the multinational construction project due to the prevailing attitudes and behaviours of different stakeholders. Individuals inside the project management team may have challenges in comprehending and adapting to the extensive array of cultural differences.”

In contrast, project managers with a heightened level of understanding and awareness are firmly grounded in their own cultural contexts. Individuals with these qualities exhibit a heightened sensitivity towards cultural variations, a willingness to engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds and a high degree of adaptability.

4.2.1.4 Objective 4 - Develop a best practice framework for optimum engagement of culturally diverse stakeholders in multinational projects.

To achieve sustained and effective stakeholder engagement, project executives must initially acknowledge and demonstrate appreciation for the diverse range of stakeholder groups, according to Participant 1. Subsequently, doing thorough investigations into local customs, cultures, traditions, values, diversity, and religious perspectives becomes

imperative. Companies can only formulate effective engagement plans if they have acquired a comprehensive understanding of the key aspects that hold significance for each stakeholder involved. Participant 2 stated that:

“The engagement process is influenced by several factors, including geography, internet accessibility, and the local operating environment, and the active involvement of stakeholders has the potential to foster the establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships, hence facilitating the acquisition of valuable information pertaining to effective business practices.”

A corporation's reputation and stakeholder connections are enhanced by a strong understanding of and regular engagement with its constituents. The successful achievement of this objective necessitates a substantial investment of time in the careful planning and strategic execution of the engagement process. This entails acquiring knowledge about the backgrounds and preferences of the relevant local stakeholders.

4.3.2 Case B: Rumdel (Pty) Ltd

Rumdel is a multinational construction company operating in the Southern Africa region. According to their website: "Rumdel (Pty) Ltd, hereinafter referred to as Rumdel, is a privately owned, multidisciplinary civil engineering construction company operating throughout Southern Africa. We have experience in delivering complex projects, including roads, dams, and incrementally launched bridges, and have the capability of executing a wide range of other civil engineering infrastructure projects. The company has a category 9 CE grading issued by the Construction Industry Development Board in South Africa and is therefore not limited in the size of civil engineering projects it may tender for in South Africa."

4.2.2.1 Objective 1 - Cultural aspects of multinational projects and categorize the cultural diversity of stakeholders in multinational projects.

- Communication and behaviour

When individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds engage in a multinational project, it becomes apparent that their values, beliefs, customs, and behaviours exhibit variations. The cultivation of cultural awareness can facilitate the overcoming of communication obstacles, stated participants 3 and 4. The concept of cultural respect and sensitivity refers to the ability to comprehend the similarities and distinctions present in many cultures without engaging in value judgments on their inherent merits or drawbacks. Participant 3 stated that:

“To enhance communication in a culturally diverse environment, it is important to recognize that the ideas, emotions, and behaviours of individuals are influenced by both their shared characteristics and their unique distinctions.”

This facilitates the process of assimilating into the cultural practices and values of a different society.

- Decision-making

Project stakeholders encounter challenges in a multicultural environment because of disparities in decision-making norms, stated participants 3 and 4. Certain cultural decision-making processes need much thinking and planning, while others tend to be more spontaneous in nature. Individuals hailing from cultures prioritizing expeditious decision-making may experience disappointment due to the perceived sluggishness in response time and the seemingly protracted contemplation process. By understanding this, project managers can apply best management practices to counter these effects.

- Language

There exists a concern among stakeholders over the potential exploitation of the language barrier as a justification for persisting in inefficient practices, with the evident difficulties associated with managing individuals with whom effective communication is hindered. Participant 4 states that:

“Stakeholders may employ a claimed breakdown in communication as a strategy to manipulate the team responsible for project management.”

Individuals often display confusion in response to receiving instructions to evade their responsibility to execute these orders, states Participant 3. They provide a semblance of agreement yet harbouring dissenting views. Certain stakeholders may attempt to leverage cultural differences to justify non-compliance with managerial directives or project policies.

- Conflict Management

Participants 3 and 4 agreed that there are two major challenges in managing multicultural stakeholders from varied backgrounds; these include acknowledging the cultural origins of a problem and implementing interventions to restore harmony, as well as empowering team members to address future concerns independently. Participant 4 stated that:

“Cultural disparities have the potential to exacerbate preexisting disputes within the project team, hence resulting in communication breakdowns and strained interpersonal dynamics.”

Culture is an ever-present force that exerts influence on perspectives, attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes inside organizations, mainly when disparities arise. Cultures widely shared throughout a population may convey a sense of being representative or characteristic. When individuals from other cultural backgrounds engage in behaviours that deviate from general norms, observers tend to acknowledge these actions with opposite attitudes.

- Task Performance

The level of openness towards a range of characteristics among individuals involved in a task, including stakeholders, work groups, and the broader cultural context, serves as a crucial measure for assessing the influence of diversity on task performance, Participant 3 states. The advancements in communication technology have not eradicated the

necessity for face-to-face human connection in the context of multinational construction projects. Participant 4 states that:

“For multinational construction projects to be successful, it is imperative to overcome language hurdles and preconceived conceptions since these factors directly impact the performance of the team.”

The degree of cultural diversity inside an organization directly influences its overall efficiency. One potential consequence of a culturally diverse workforce is the manifestation of poor performance and disarray inside the organization.

- Adapting To Environment

The absence of cultural adaptability might impede stakeholder engagement, leading to potential miscommunication or unintentional offence, given that diverse cultures sometimes necessitate distinct approaches to work. In the realm of multinational construction, the process of adapting to cultural disparities should not entail the prioritization of one group's values over another's. Participants 3 and 4 described the strategies for recognizing and valuing diversity, collaborating with individuals with differing perspectives, and eventually using these differences to enhance diverse stakeholder engagement.

4.2.2.2 Objective 2 - Analysing the effective stakeholder engagement tools and techniques.

- Identify relevant stakeholders.

Utilizing a stakeholder registry might prove to be an asset in enhancing the efficacy of project planning and management in multinational construction projects. Participant 3 states that:

“Conducting stakeholder analysis facilitates the acquisition of knowledge pertaining to those who own a significant stake in the project's result. This analysis

provides valuable insights into their respective identities, roles, expectations, level of influence, and overall attitude.”

By utilizing this dataset, one may focus on individuals who have significant importance in the successful execution of the project. Subsequently, a strategic approach can be devised to establish communication with these stakeholders while also monitoring any changes in their expectations and level of influence. This proactive approach allows for identifying and mitigating any conflicts or risks. Moreover, it facilitates the development of trust and cooperation from these key individuals throughout the project's duration, according to Participant 4.

- Determining relevance, the influence of each stakeholder, and analysis

Each stakeholder will interpret the project and its intended impact from their own perspective. Participant 4 states that:

“Conducting a stakeholder analysis enables one to get insights into the diverse expectations and requirements held by all relevant parties involved in the project. This approach allows for the identification of the primary advocates and possible critics of your project.”

The provided information may be utilized to customize one's approach and determine the most efficient communication channels to engage with the target audience based on their perception of the project's value. Advocates will persist in providing support, while efforts might be made to engage with opponents to persuade them to change their perspectives. Project managers might enhance their efficiency by directing their efforts towards areas that yield the greatest benefits, proactively mitigating potential issues. Conducting a stakeholder analysis offers several benefits, one of which is gaining insights into their respective perspectives, stated Participant 3.

- Discover the needs and expectations of each stakeholder.

According to participants 3 and 4, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the needs and desires of the stakeholders is considered a critical stage in multinational stakeholder engagement. It establishes the foundation for the subsequent phases of the construction engineering project. Utilizing this approach ensures a collective understanding among all stakeholders and facilitates the attainment of outcomes that surpass initial projections. The process of ascertaining the needs, desires, and expectations of stakeholders is crucial in developing and implementing solutions to fulfil their requirements.

- Create a project plan for stakeholder engagement.

Participants 3 and 4 highlighted that the efficacy of a project is contingent upon the effective management of its stakeholders. Frequently, the financial resources, human capital, physical assets, or informational resources that are crucial for the successful execution of a project are under the control of essential stakeholders. Participant 3 stated that:

“To proficiently oversee stakeholders, it is important to possess a meticulously formulated plan of action that guarantees the consideration of their interests and expectations.”

A plan enables the project team to effectively communicate with specific individuals who will be notified about certain information and the corresponding timelines for such communication.

4.2.3.3 Objective 3 - Assess stakeholder engagement methods, tools, and techniques with impact on managing cultural diversity in multinational projects.

- Effective communication is the best tool.

According to Participant 3, when engaging in communication with a diverse range of stakeholders, it is important to approach the interaction with attentiveness toward their individual needs and perspectives. It is essential to acknowledge and be aware of diversified preconceived beliefs and assumptions and ensure that they do not negatively

influence the interactions and discussions towards the project goals. Participant 4 states that

“It is advisable to refrain from engaging in any verbal or behavioural actions that may be susceptible to misinterpretation or potentially harmful to the individual involved.”

It is advisable to recognize the achievements and challenges the stakeholders encounter while also expressing appreciation for their support.

- Creating Cordial Relationships

In a multinational project environment, project teams venture to an unprecedented level of mobility as they traverse through oceans, crossing international boundaries and diverse cultural contexts. Participant 4 highlights that establishing connections with individuals with different characteristics and backgrounds can be a challenging yet rewarding endeavour. Sustaining a good relationship takes consistent and diligent effort. It is not an excessive claim to propose that communication plays a pivotal role in maintaining the cohesion of our interpersonal connections. The nature of the connection is influenced by spoken and non-verbal communication. The act of unintentionally misconstruing communication can result in a state of perplexity, irritation, and potentially even discord.

- Challenging stereotypes

Culturally connected prejudice can have detrimental effects on any project. According to Participant 3, classifying team members or stakeholders into inferior groupings consistently hinders project progress. Therefore, it is imperative to avoid them whenever possible. On the contrary, it is important to emphasize the distinctive capabilities possessed by everyone. The evaluation of performance by the authority should be limited to actual outcomes alone. It is imperative that the determination of an individual's heritage or culture should not be predicated on unfounded assumptions.

- Cultural awareness and training

The primary goal of cultural awareness and training should be to cultivate an understanding and appreciation for the disparities between project teams and stakeholders within multinational projects, particularly those with unique attributes and values that differ. Participant 4 states that:

“Gaining knowledge about different cultures within the project might enhance the project team's ability to successfully communicate and collaborate with vast stakeholders.”

Cultural awareness may be defined as the state of being cognizant and exhibiting sensitivity toward the impacts of diverse cultural backgrounds among stakeholders. Participant 3 stated that enhanced cultural knowledge contributes to improving individuals' responsibilities and obligations. It facilitates the avoidance of hasty evaluations regarding individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Establishing effective communication can be a preferable alternative to engaging in conflict.

4.2.2.4 Objective 4 - Develop a best practice framework for optimum engagement of culturally diverse stakeholders in multinational projects.

Understanding the objectives pursued by the project management team and external stakeholders in the domain of stakeholder engagement helps establish the foundation for productive collaboration and coordination. This may pertain to an individual's personal pursuit, a more extensive issue, or an opportunity for professional advancement, according to Participant 4. If a shared objective can be established, it can serve as a basis for effectively aligning and synchronizing collective tasks. Competing or conflicting interests are an additional potential cause of conflict that might be mitigated. Participant 3 stated that:

“The engagement process is influenced by several factors, including geography, internet accessibility, and the local operating environment, and the active involvement of stakeholders has the potential to foster the establishment of mutually beneficial partnerships, hence facilitating the acquisition of valuable information pertaining to effective business practices.”

Active participation in effective communication entails the act of intently listening and providing constructive feedback while employing language that is both concise and polite, according to Participant 4. The utilization of contemporary modes of communication, such as email, phone, video conferencing, and other similar methods, is recommended in multinational projects. The implementation of regular meetings, check-ins, or updates may be necessary, contingent upon the nature and scope of the collaboration.

4.3.3 Case C: Ethos Transport and Plant Hire

Ethos Transport is a construction firm based in South Africa that operates throughout the country and in the bordering regions of Lesotho and Swaziland. The organization prides itself on employing construction managers with extensive expertise in multinational construction projects and high qualifications. The firm focuses explicitly on road construction projects and provides plant hire services nationwide. The organization will provide a comprehensive analysis of the influence of cultural diversity, as it has been exposed to many cultures inside and outside the country.

4.2.3.Objective 1 - Cultural aspects of multinational projects and categorize the cultural diversity of stakeholders in multinational projects.

- Communication And Behaviour

There is significant variation in communication techniques between external stakeholders involved and the project teams, between different cultures, according to participants 5 and 6. Language selection is an integral component of an individual's communication style. Certain words and phrases have varied implications contingent upon their cultural environment. Cultural disparities contribute to the diverse implications associated with specific phrases, even within English-speaking countries. Certain statements are perceived as indicative of vulnerability, while others are interpreted as expressions of disdain, according to Participant 5. Participant 6 stated that:

“Communication styles might vary from one culture to the next. This might have repercussions on how people express themselves verbally and nonverbally. Communication styles and approaches to dispute resolution can be influenced by cultural norms.”

The diverse cultural backgrounds of stakeholders can influence the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement. Miscommunications are more prone to arise when individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds collaborate. Facilitating successful interpersonal communication is contingent upon an individual's awareness and respect for cultural disparities. Interpersonal communication refers to sharing thoughts and information between two or more persons, often occurring in face-to-face interactions. This form of engagement may encompass both verbal and nonverbal cues.

- Decision-making

Participant 5 highlighted that the administration of projects across different cultures poses a significant challenge. Even among African nations that are geographically close to one another, there are notable variations in how construction operations are carried out, decision-making processes undertaken, and interpersonal communication is practiced, according to Participant 5. To foster collaboration and maintain harmonious stakeholder participation, project managers must possess an understanding of and adapt to cultural diversities. Participant 6 stated that:

"The factors of cultural identity, environment, and moral compass play significant roles in the process of decision-making. For example, in societies that prioritize tradition and family values, it might be prudent to seek guidance from seniors while making decisions about low-level tasks."

There exists a diversity among individuals about their moral values, ethical principles, and perspectives among stakeholders in multinational construction projects. Cultural variations can exert an impact on decision-making processes. Considering the many viewpoints and decision-making approaches within a collective context is crucial.

- Language

Participant 6 stated that the presence of a language barrier can impede good communication within a team, which can be perceived as a source of annoyance. Individuals may experience feelings of exclusion or alienation if they cannot grasp the subject matter. The lack of proficiency in communicating effectively in a second language can result in feelings of isolation and hinder individuals from engaging in social interactions and expressing their thoughts and ideas.

Participant 5 highlighted that multinational construction projects have unique challenges while engaging in cross-linguistic communication. Communication challenges and misinterpretations occur in projects due to people's limited proficiency in each other's native languages. It is possible to overcome language obstacles within the workplace and ensure effective and efficient communication among team members.

- Conflict Management

The influence of culture in conflict, according to both participants 5 and 6, is substantial, yet it should be noted that culture is not the fundamental cause. The core cause of conflict is not culture; instead, culture serves as the context in which conflict manifests itself. The influence of culture permeates conflicts, manifesting in various ways, either via direct confrontation or by subtle and inconspicuous means that may catch individuals off guard. This implies that culture and conflict in multicultural projects are inextricably linked at their most fundamental level, with conflict consistently shaping and influencing culture. Participant 6 states that:

“According to my experience, the occurrence of conflict is an expected outcome when individuals employ diverse approaches to their task, which is the case in most multinational construction projects.”

Addressing cultural differences in the construction sector is of utmost importance to proactively mitigate the potential adverse consequences that may arise from their persistence or dissemination. Cross-cultural teams sometimes have difficulties in domains such as communication, work ethic, and problem-solving because of the distinct

viewpoints contributed by team members' cultural backgrounds. As emotions escalate, these arguments have the potential to escalate into explicit violence.

- Task Performance

Cultural disparities within the multinational construction sector have the capacity to give rise to a diverse array of possible conflicts. Hence, organizations must devise a strategic approach to handle diversity to gain a competitive edge effectively, according to participants 5 and 6. Multinational construction projects are consistently confronted with the imperative to reassess their strategies and provide training to their employees to keep pace with the perpetually changing dynamics. The importance of valuing diversity among stakeholders has become increasingly significant due to the growing heterogeneous composition of contemporary workforces. Insufficient management of diversity increases the likelihood of failing to fully realize the advantages and operating at a suboptimal level, owing to the creation of internal misunderstandings.

- Adapting To Environment

Cultural adaptation refers to the capacity to acquire and assimilate the customs and principles of a different culture. The act of acknowledging the truth that individuals from diverse origins adhere to distinct sets of norms does not need agreement or personal preference. They possess distinct characteristics that do not inherently align with either positive or negative evaluations. Participant 5 states that:

“In multinational construction projects, each member of the team possesses a distinct cultural heritage, resulting in a range of proficiency levels in communication and behaviour. It is imperative that all members of the team possess the capacity to adjust and adapt.”

4.2.3.2 Objective 2 - Analysing the effective stakeholder engagement tools and techniques.

- Identifying relevant stakeholder

Identifying stakeholders is a pivotal component in facilitating effective and efficient communication among stakeholders. The stakeholder identification process holds significance not only in ascertaining the many stakeholders associated with a project but also in establishing the most effective approaches to managing their expectations. Participants 5 and 6 agree that each stakeholder possesses desires or anticipations regarding the project. To adequately meet the needs and address the concerns of project stakeholders, it is imperative to possess a thorough comprehension of their identities and the distinct responsibilities they undertake during the phases of project development and execution.

- Determining relevance, the influence of each stakeholder, and analysis

Participants 5 and 6 highlighted that, to enhance one's ability to engage with individuals and assist them in resolving their issues, it is imperative to possess a comprehensive understanding of their goals, incentives, concerns, and preferences. The mitigation of conflicts or misconceptions that have the potential to undermine the quality of the project can thus be achieved. Through the implementation of a stakeholder analysis, it becomes possible to ascertain the individuals or groups that need to be consistently informed on the progress of a project, as well as determine the appropriate frequency at which such updates should be provided. Thoroughly evaluating the concerns and preferences of all pertinent stakeholders might facilitate acquiring information about necessary support or mitigate anticipated opposition.

- Discover the needs and expectations of each stakeholder.

The management of stakeholder expectations is of utmost importance as it cultivates trust, promotes collaboration, and mitigates disputes, according to participants 5 and 6. Through proactive engagement with stakeholders, companies may effectively match their activities with the expectations of individuals or groups with a substantial vested interest in the project. Inadequate management of stakeholder expectations can result in discontent, opposition, or perhaps the collapse of a project.

- Create a project plan for stakeholder engagement.

Participants 5 and 6 agreed that developing a strategic plan necessitates a comprehensive examination and understanding of all possible influencers. This approach can assist in meeting the expectations of individuals and addressing their concerns proactively. In implementing a stakeholder engagement plan, a project manager may effectively facilitate the dissemination of relevant information on stakeholder expectations, preferences, risks, and project progress to the relevant individuals promptly.

4.2.3.3 Objective 3 - Assess stakeholder engagement methods, tools, and techniques with impact on managing cultural diversity in multinational projects.

- Effective communication is the best tool.

In the contemporary context of the multinational construction landscape, it is imperative to possess the skill of successful cross-cultural communication. Enhanced communication may be achieved by maintaining a courteous approach, employing a deliberate and articulate speaking style, and engaging in active listening with one another, according to stakeholders 5 and 6.

Communication and interaction are regarded as courteous and considerate stakeholder engagement tools. Maintaining open and welcoming body language while refraining from using slang and jokes is advisable. To mitigate the occurrence of misunderstandings, it is imperative to adopt a formal mode of communication, abstain from posing inquiries with negative connotations, and actively pursue input from others. Ensure a smooth transition by providing a concise overview of your discourse.

- Creating Cordial Relationships

While it is indeed accurate that the process of establishing and sustaining friendships across different cultural backgrounds might present difficulties, it should not be inferred that varied societies are incapable of sharing common notions regarding the essence of

friendship, according to Participant 6. The virtues of honesty and integrity are universally recognized throughout cultures but with variations in their relative importance.

- Challenging Stereotypes

Participant 5 stated that it is essential to acknowledge that there are also advantages associated with acquiring knowledge about many cultures, broadening one's perspective, and avoiding perpetuating stereotypes. Efficiently using cultural disparities to generate innovative solutions is a significant challenge for project managers overseeing outsourcing endeavours.

- Cultural Awareness and Training

Participant 6, citing his experience, stated that acquiring knowledge of cultural diversity has become a crucial competency for project managers in a multicultural environment. The participant further stated that it is imperative for a project manager to possess an understanding of different cultures and the ability to accommodate culturally diverse project stakeholders to accomplish the project goals in multicultural settings effectively.

4.2.3.4 Objective 4 - Develop a best practice framework for optimum engagement of culturally diverse stakeholders in multinational projects.

Participants 5 and 6 stated that it is imperative for experts and practitioners engaged in stakeholder engagement to share and acquire best practices through mutual collaboration actively. The engagement of stakeholders is a dynamic domain that needs constant adaptation, hence requiring the continual development of novel methodologies. One can benefit from acquiring information and developing understanding through engaging in the reciprocal exchange of personal experiences, insights, and challenges with other peers, according to Participant 6. One may acquire knowledge on novel tactics, approaches, or resources that can enhance the involvement of stakeholders and facilitate the attainment of project objectives.

Participant 5 highlighted that effectively coordinating and collaborating with other professionals involves demonstrating a genuine appreciation for diversity and embracing

other perspectives. Engaging with stakeholders from many origins and cultures encompasses a multidisciplinary and cross-cultural vocation, requiring collaboration with various individuals and societies. One may contribute to establishing an inclusive community that values and acknowledges the many attributes of its members by demonstrating decency and respect towards others in a multinational project environment. Enhancing one's comprehension of stakeholder participation may be achieved by using colleagues' diverse experiences and perspectives within the professional community.

Participant 6 also highlighted that establishing mutual trust and respect is an essential component when collaborating with fellow professionals in the field of stakeholder engagement in a multinational construction environment. In addition to expressing appreciation, recognition, and encouragement towards stakeholders, it is equally crucial to exhibit transparency and candour regarding one's personal experiences, accomplishments, and aspirations.

4.3 Discussion of research findings

During the coding process, the data was subdivided into three themes that provided valuable information on project management in a multicultural environment. The main themes revolved around three objectives: Theme 1: The challenges of managing multicultural projects; Theme 2: Analysing the performance of conventional stakeholder engagement tools in multinational projects; and Theme 3: How to enhance stakeholder engagement tools to be compatible with multinational projects.

4.3.1. Theme 1: Cultural Aspects of Multinational Projects That Impact Stakeholder Engagement in Multinational Projects.

The first study objective was to examine the impact of culture on stakeholder engagement within multinational construction projects. The findings derived from the empirical investigation indicate that culture influences the many facets of stakeholder engagement. According to existing literature and empirical research, the domains that experience the

most significant influence include communication, conflict management, decision-making, and adaptation to novel situations.

According to literature and empirical findings, stakeholder engagement's first and most culturally critical impact is communication, manifested through language barriers, communication styles, and behaviour. According to (Dai and Chen, 2022), the geographical and cultural divide is a significant obstacle to the advancement and efficiency of international construction endeavours. Ineffective communication, stemming from misunderstandings, contradictions, and linguistic disparities, exemplifies the challenges encountered in this context. The presence of obstacles in intercultural communication and the unfamiliarity with cultural norms can significantly influence the outcomes of multinational construction endeavours. Project managers must understand the potential issues that may occur due to varying cultural viewpoints and diverse means of communication. Language and cultural differences may pose challenges to the development of multiethnic companies, according to (Brett et al., 2020a). Successful enterprises acknowledge the imperative of adapting to their various stakeholder cohorts' cultural and communication inclinations.

According to the literature, project managers must understand the potential obstacles of intercultural communication, cultural barriers in multinational projects, and stakeholder involvement (Almashhadani and Almashhadani, 2023). To achieve a mutually beneficial agreement, stakeholders and project goals must be aligned. Misunderstanding and misinterpretation within the project team and among stakeholders lead to detrimental effects on relationships. Communication necessitates language, which can be expressed via many means, such as spoken, nonverbal, or sign language. Language barriers arise when individuals encounter difficulties in effectively communicating with each other, according to (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020).

Empirical study also found that linguistic barriers are primarily attributed to the inability of individuals who speak different languages to communicate effectively. A linguistic and interpersonal disconnection exists. Nevertheless, the scope of the challenges arising from linguistic restrictions in communication extends beyond that. Subtle variances arise because of the unique characteristics inherent to each organization. In a professional

setting, such as the workplace, individuals new to the environment may need help effectively utilizing specialized terminology. Using inappropriate vocabulary can adversely impact the stakeholder's emotional state, decreasing morale and overall project satisfaction.

The second cultural impact on stakeholder engagement is in conflict management; empirical research and literature highlight conflict management as most impacted by cultural diversity in multinational projects. The role of culture in shaping behavioural variety is undoubtedly significant. Stakeholders involved in multinational projects frequently originate from several continents or nations, introducing many cultural perspectives and viewpoints toward the tasks and methodologies employed in project execution. Multinational construction projects possess a greater propensity for task conflict than culturally homogeneous projects (Lin et al. (2022)). Nevertheless, empirical research found that individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds may have difficulties effectively communicating with one another. Individuals within a group may see the actions of their peers as intentionally malevolent or lacking in respect. They may interpret disagreements on the nature of a work as a personal affront. Consequently, this can give rise to heightened interpersonal conflicts within groups due to cultural disparities.

According to the literature, failing to recognize the universality of the cultural characteristics among all nationalities employed among project stakeholders might cause deleterious conflict (Maemura et al., 2018). Misunderstandings and potential acts of violence can arise when individuals fail to acknowledge and value the fact that individuals from other cultures employ distinct communication tactics. When the project structure does not accommodate other cultures, stakeholders are more inclined to develop negative perceptions of these cultures due to top management's lack of positive role modelling. Due to its consequential nature, certain stakeholders may develop a hostile or contemptuous attitude towards their peers operating within the same environment. Disagreements frequently arise in international construction projects. Organizations engaged in construction projects experience significant setbacks when they fail to manage conflicts in multinational projects effectively. The existing body of literature provides compelling evidence that the organizational culture inside construction projects significantly impacts the overall effectiveness of projects. Recognizing conflict resolution

as a feasible method is crucial for addressing the issues faced by construction management and facilitating the organization's progress, according to a study by Nicholas and Steyn (2020).

Thirdly, culture impacts decision-making processes; according to empirical research and literature, individuals have considerable variability regarding their views, morals, and viewpoints. The decision-making processes of individuals could be impacted by their cultural origins. Considering the many viewpoints and decision-making approaches within a collective context is essential. Certain cultures have a propensity for meticulous contemplation and deliberation prior to acting, whereas others do not demonstrate such tendencies. Individuals from cultures prioritizing speedy decision-making may find the slower response time and more extensive cognitive processes frustrating. Empirical research found that the decision-making method is mainly aligned with the relevant national culture, values, and norms, focusing on the role of national culture. This implies that individuals in managerial positions, as well as other relevant stakeholders, are susceptible to the influence of cultural factors across all phases of the decision-making process.

The literature review highlighted that engaging in group decision-making and problem-solving processes that incorporate diverse viewpoints and experiences can provide highly beneficial outcomes. The understanding of the problem and the effectiveness of the solution can be enhanced by considering several diverse perspectives, according to Davidaviciene and Al Majzoub (2022). Nevertheless, diverse backgrounds, outlooks, and perspectives within multicultural teams might provide distinct obstacles. Cultural orientation significantly impacts an individual's beliefs and values, making them more inclined to accept practices that align with their worldview. As a result, individuals prioritizing independence above all else may face challenges in environments that require ongoing collaboration to achieve consensus.

The fourth significant finding is that stakeholder engagement in multinational projects is predominantly influenced by environmental adaptation, which is identified as the most significant component. Empirical research indicates that the likelihood of project success is significantly enhanced when the project management team proactively addresses the

multicultural aspects of the project from its inception. Based on the research findings, a cultural adaptation deficiency can impede or lead to termination of a project.

The literature highlights the need for efficient communication in cross-cultural management and is amplified by the inherent difficulties of translating across different cultural groups (Shamne et al., 2019). The presence of multinational construction entities amplifies the challenges associated with miscommunication and errors. Cross-cultural project managers should possess the requisite functional and adaptation skills and exhibit adaptability and flexibility within the new environment. Further, cross-cultural project managers must comprehensively understand culture, workplace diversity, and intercultural communication. The notion that a project's team's capacity to adapt to a novel cultural environment substantially influences its effectiveness in multinational construction projects is widely acknowledged. The adaptability of project teams contributes to their improved comfort and productivity in a multicultural environment and the quality of their relationships with local stakeholders.

4.3.1.1 Challenges to Multinational Stakeholder Engagement

- Communication impact

All participants unanimously concurred that the success of multinational construction projects hinges on effectively managing stakeholders' expectations and interests. To establish a suitable environment and guarantee achievement, it is crucial to promptly identify stakeholders in the initiatives and effectively acknowledge and handle their needs and anticipations. A practical approach to achieving this objective is ensuring stakeholders are promptly contacted through appropriate communication.

The study discovered that improving communication strategies and project engagement tools for international construction projects is crucial to efficient communication management. Several communication strategies inform stakeholders about significant developments and information. Stakeholder interests, accessibility, and needs determine the selection of the channel. Choosing the appropriate communication channel combinations is essential to ensure the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in the project.

Language constraints also give rise to various issues in multinational project management. Due to these hurdles, team members from varied cultural backgrounds need help communicating and collaborating effectively. The project may have delays, errors, and conflicts due to its incapacity to foster effective collaboration and decision-making. Language constraints can impede cross-national projects, documentation, and communication for multinational organizations.

- Impact on decision-making.

A comprehensive understanding of the country's culture is crucial while undertaking multinational initiatives. The empirical study has demonstrated that national culture substantially influences management practices, particularly decision-making. The research suggests that comprehending decision-making processes and their influences necessitates recognizing and valuing cultural variety. The empirical investigation's outcomes validate that individuals from various national cultures exhibit distinct behaviors and have different values. Project managers from various nations employ distinct methodologies while tackling identical jobs, and this fact is well acknowledged. This includes utilizing diverse communication means and assigning varying importance to different success criteria. Given the vast array of leadership styles observed across different countries, it can be deduced that variations in decision-making exist.

Cultural awareness enhances decision-making by encompassing an individual's knowledge of their own cultural and professional background, as well as their own beliefs and ideals. Research indicates this is crucial for mitigating preconceived views, biases, and assumptions. Project managers with cultural sensitivity are more adept at effectively communicating with stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds; this ensures no bias or lack of clarity in the decision-making procedures. A study indicates that multinational project stakeholders or project managers who need more cultural awareness may encounter difficulties due to the conventions and expectations associated with their teams' different cultural origins. They could encounter difficulties comprehending and adapting to novel social norms and customs. The study determined that cultural connections are highly significant for project leaders with knowledge and understanding. Furthermore, the participants agreed that project managers should possess heightened

adaptability, versatility, and efficacy while demonstrating increased sensitivity and the ability to make sound decisions in multinational projects effectively.

- Adaptation

To ensure the success of the project management strategy in multicultural environment and situations, it is essential to evaluate the available techniques, select those that align with your projects, effectively implement them, comprehend their advantages and disadvantages, and make the required adaptations. Project managers may establish effective communication channels and avoid misunderstandings by adapting their communication approaches to accommodate diverse cultural preferences. Openly expressing the need for varied communication styles helps decrease the team's sensitivity and enhance their awareness.

- Stereotypes and bias

According to the participants, overcoming preconceived notions while interacting with people from diverse cultural backgrounds to effectively adapt to a multicultural environment is the key to success for project managers. When we set aside our preconceived views and try to comprehend diverse cultures, we frequently discover that they possess several admirable attributes that may positively impact the project. Understanding the favorable characteristics of many cultures enhances the project's performance. Adhering rigidly to stereotypes hinders comprehending and establishing meaningful connections with others from diverse origins and cultures and hampers project success prospects. Additionally, this prevents exploring and appreciating any given culture's favourable and affectionate aspects. To effectively adjust and flourish in a multicultural setting, it is imperative to relinquish all biases and preconceived notions, particularly those related to race and ethnicity.

It is crucial to actively challenge and eradicate cultural prejudices to promote tolerance, understanding, and acceptance. Stereotypical ideas about a group sometimes overlook the diversity and uniqueness of individuals within that group, leading to generalizations and oversimplifications of their characteristics, behaviours, or attributes. When

stereotypes are perpetuated, it can lead to the growth of misunderstandings and discrimination as preconceived notions and prejudices are reinforced.

4.3.2. Theme 2: Analysing the practical stakeholder engagement tools and enhancing them to be compatible with culturally diverse stakeholders.

The second objective examines the effectiveness of conventional stakeholder engagement tools for managing multicultural stakeholders in a multinational project environment. According to empirical findings, though effective in multinational projects, more than conventional stakeholder management processes are required in culturally diverse environments. The conventional stakeholder identification, analysis, and planning processes must be enhanced to manage culturally diverse stakeholders in multinational construction projects.

The first stakeholder engagement step, which is stakeholder identification, is a methodical approach that entails vigilantly assessing the stakeholder impact in terms of power, influence, legitimacy of claims regarding the multinational project, and the urgency of their interactions with one another to facilitate the seamless and effective accomplishment of the project. The success of a multinational project necessitates establishing coordination among several stakeholders across diverse time zones, regions, and cultural backgrounds. Stakeholder analysis tools may be utilized throughout a project to effectively monitor stakeholders and their respective expectations, needs, and interests.

Inclusion of the diverse stakeholders in multinational projects can enhance the design process and the likelihood of successful project implementation, which is achieved by acquiring valuable insights and perspectives on the problem. The stakeholder registry lists individuals or groups with a vested interest in the project (Lock, 2020). The above will enable the project team to assess the positive and negative impacts they could exert on the project. Identifying stakeholders can be accomplished by using simple techniques such as brainstorming, reviewing historical records of project team members, or examining organizational charts and directories.

The second tool used is stakeholder mapping, which assists in identifying project stakeholders and their possible impact on the project. The tool considers the amount of influence each stakeholder possesses and their level of interest in the project. Utilizing a stakeholder map can provide a more accurate assessment of the relative impact that various stakeholders may have on multinational projects. With this method, it is possible to effectively communicate with all project stakeholders, tailoring the approach to accommodate their requirements. Stakeholder mapping is a visual strategy that utilizes a matrix or grid to plot stakeholders along two axes, namely high or low power and high or low interest in the project (Mabelo, 2020). This approach aids in the categorization of stakeholders based on their respective power and interest levels in the project. This approach makes it feasible to ascertain the most influential and significant stakeholders, who warrant the highest degree of consideration, alongside the less engaged but still pertinent stakeholders, who should be kept apprised. By employing a stakeholder map, the allocation of resources and communication may be distributed to align with each stakeholder's relative levels of influence and interest.

The third tool is the stakeholder engagement plan, which formally documents project stakeholders' involvement and influence. Additionally, the document delineates the stakeholder communication strategy, encompassing the timing of engagement with each stakeholder, the chosen communication platform, and the extent of information dissemination (Watson et al., 2018). A stakeholder engagement plan systematically analyzes how an organization will engage with stakeholders with a significant stake in achieving the multinational project's objectives. As an official document, the stakeholder engagement plan delineates the individuals with whom communication will occur and the methods through which contact will be established; in the multinational project, this will outline the communication language and style and enable the project manager to effectively strategize communication methods to ensure all team members are well-informed and aligned throughout the multinational project stages. The study of stakeholders and the subsequent development of a plan to engage them are closely interconnected. Both services are designed to aid individuals in selecting the most efficient methods of communication. This approach can mitigate adverse reactions, enhance positive outcomes, and avert the escalation of conflicts.

Conventional stakeholder engagement methods are applicable in multinational projects; however, these need to be enhanced to be compatible with culturally diverse multinational environments.

4.3.3 Theme 3: How to Enhance Stakeholder Engagement Tools to Be Compatible With Culturally Diverse Stakeholders.

The study found that conventional stakeholder engagement processes must be enhanced to be fully applicable in multicultural environments. Multicultural project teams and stakeholders may encounter communication issues. Cultural norms have a significant impact on the development of intercultural competence. Nevertheless, as previously said, the achievement of success ultimately hinges upon the collective efforts of team members, namely their aptitude for effective communication and their inclination to actively listen and express their thoughts inside the team and throughout the global endeavour. Effective communication is crucial for a multicultural project team to ensure mutual understanding. Establishing trust within a group necessitates engaging in open and transparent communication and fostering a collective commitment to building trust. Members of a group should exert effort to reduce the level of unpredictability in their attempts. Research has demonstrated that training is a highly successful strategy for reducing friction and conflict within multiethnic teams and organizations.

The enhancement of cultural literacy and awareness among the members of a global project team will significantly contribute to improving communication, productivity, and teamwork. A project team with cultural competence exhibits enhanced capabilities for effectively communicating and collaborating with various stakeholders from varied backgrounds. Enhancing a team's ability to navigate cultural differences within a project context may be achieved by offering educational experiences that cultivate cultural literacy and awareness. Examples of activities in this category include language lessons and workshops on intercultural dialogue. The primary objective of cultural awareness is to ensure that a project's varied cultural perspectives and contributions are effectively utilized for beneficial outcomes. Project managers who possess cultural awareness

acknowledge the inherent potential for strength within the distinct viewpoints of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

The study found that prejudice can be observed when an individual has a negative sentiment towards another person solely based on affiliation with a specific social group. Individuals with diverse cultural origins may encounter instances of bias. Cultural stereotypes encompass broad generalizations of a particular culture or collective of individuals derived from a limited set of distinguishing qualities. Stereotypes encompass broad generalizations formed by an entire collective of individuals, primarily relying on a limited understanding of the cultural aspects associated with that group. The impact of racial or ethnic discrimination within the project setting can have severe consequences for those who are subjected to such prejudice, and its prevalence can be observed throughout several aspects of the project. Stereotyping can lead to several adverse consequences, including but not limited to diminished job satisfaction, decreased morale, reduced productivity, compromised trust, and higher employee turnover rates. Hence, challenging stereotypes should be part of stakeholder management processes.

Building cordial and respectful relationships is one of the findings of enhancing stakeholder engagement tools. Utilizing identical methodologies to cultivate robust and effective professional alliances, regardless of whether one is immersed in an international, multicultural organizational setting, is recommended. The norms about managing multinational construction projects exhibit a diverse range, comparable to the diversity observed in cultural and societal standards. The most effective methodology for acquiring comprehensive knowledge about the intricacies of communities or cultures is to develop cordial relationships with individuals with substantial cultural experience or establish a professional relationship with the leaders in those communities.

- Stakeholder Identification Enhancing

Project management must adapt its structures and processes to accommodate cultural differences when interacting with stakeholders with dissimilar cultural backgrounds in multinational projects. It is advantageous when stakeholders are identified and engaged early in the project planning process; there is a significant potential to influence options

and implement changes to suit requests and their demands. Furthermore, this process must continue throughout the project, allowing opportunities to optimize advantages and offer input for future advancements. An extensively defined method of stakeholder identification is necessary for collecting feedback, presenting it to project teams for evaluation, analysing proposed improvements, and communicating the outcomes back to project owners.

Lack of sufficient stakeholder identification in a multinational infrastructure project gives rise to social hazards, leading to delays and budget overruns and reducing the likelihood of obtaining societal approval for the project. Stakeholders can be regarded at several levels, from providing information to granting them authority. There needs to be more identification of stakeholders to avoid loss of interest, whereas suitable stakeholder identification seeks to empower marginalized groups. Each project will have distinct stakeholders and obstacles. Historically marginalized populations include those from low-income origins, women, children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, minority groups, and anyone without legitimate property ownership.

- Stakeholder engagement process enhancement

Project managers and owners may achieve the credibility and success of multinational projects by inclusively engaging stakeholders. More significant support for a project may be garnered by considering the needs of individuals. Another advantage is establishing a shared objective that can be effectively implemented and upheld. Allowing everyone to observe the potential benefits of a development cultivates a sense of community, pride, and accountability, all of which contribute to the project's long-term sustainability. In addition to outcomes, stakeholders may consider the project's impact on the economy and society. The project's responsiveness to the requirements of vulnerable stakeholders can be enhanced by incorporating their input into the final design or by ensuring the representation of vulnerable groups. The likelihood of obtaining support and buy-in for a project increases when the developer actively endeavours to fulfil specified requirements, especially those of the community.

- Build trust and cordial relationships.

Trust is essential when working on multicultural projects for a team to accomplish its objectives. Multinational organizations can only achieve their maximum potential if their workers have mutual trust. Building trust requires patience and determination, but the rewards are precious. Trust may naturally grow within teams that engage in frequent collaboration. Establishing trust may be particularly difficult when engaging with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds and cultures. Project managers at global firms that operate remotely and rely on virtual communication technologies for team meetings typically have daily interactions with their workers. Therefore, the establishment of trust can be a time-consuming endeavour. Trust may be established gradually through genuine and supportive language and actions. Once created, project managers must prioritize cultivating and expanding trust among their team members.

Establishing confidence is essential for multinational projects. The impact of cultural and geographical boundaries becomes severe when tasks are passed between individuals in various locations and time zones without the advantage of direct interpersonal communication. Establishing confidence and building relationships in multicultural projects necessitates the fundamental abilities of emotional and cultural intelligence, which ensure the project's success.

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4.4. Summary

This chapter provides a comprehensive presentation of the findings derived from literature research and in-depth interviews. As stated in Chapter 3, the data was evaluated using framework analysis correlating the existing literature with the results of the data from empirical study. The study's findings indicate that cultural differences provide a significant barrier to multinational projects. Additionally, the study proposes measures to improve stakeholder participation to overcome these challenges. The consensus among participants was that cultural diversity can generally influence project stakeholder engagement, albeit to differing extents. The findings derived from the empirical investigation indicate that culture influences the many facets of stakeholder engagement. The presence of obstacles in intercultural communication and the unfamiliarity with cultural norms can significantly influence the outcomes of multinational construction

endeavours. Inclusion of the diverse stakeholders in multinational projects can enhance the design process and the likelihood of successful project implementation, which is achieved by acquiring valuable insights and perspectives on the problem. The findings indicate that communication, cultural awareness, challenging stereotypes, and building cordial relationships are among the top improvements in managing multicultural projects.

CHAPTER 5 : CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This research has focused on exploring the influence of cultural diversity on stakeholder engagement in multinational construction projects. The study aims to create a hybrid stakeholder engagement framework for domestic and international projects, evaluate the effectiveness of engagement tools, and investigate the influence of cultural diversity. The objectives of the research were to:

- Analyse the cultural diversity of individuals involved in multinational projects and their impact,
- Analyse practical tools and techniques for engaging these stakeholders,
- Identify the methods, tools, and techniques that had the most impact on managing cultural diversity in multinational projects, and
- Ultimately develop a framework of optimal practices for engaging stakeholders from diverse cultural backgrounds in multinational construction projects.

The study contributed to the existing knowledge base through the following findings:

- Use of enhanced stakeholder engagement tools: Using advanced communication and stakeholder planning methods can enhance the efficacy of the stakeholder engagement process. The research revealed that effective communication necessitates professionalism, precision, and adherence to appropriate linguistic conventions. A courteous and caring approach characterizes effective communication. Developing a stakeholder engagement strategy should also consider cultural diversity to address the needs and preferences of various cultural groups effectively.
- Understanding the dimensions of cultures: acknowledging the cultural influences that contribute to the cognitive processes, behaviours, and modes of communication shown by individuals and collectives. This encompasses qualities such as power distance, individualism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and a focus on the long term, which are discussed in the literature. By acquiring a more profound understanding of these areas, project managers may enhance their

comprehension of their stakeholders' standards, principles, and viewpoints. Consequently, they can adapt their approaches to communication and engagement more suitably. The level of formality and hierarchy in communication may differ across stakeholders due to their cultural backgrounds.

- Ability to adapt to different cultures: Cultural flexibility entails adapting communication and leadership strategies according to the specific contextual circumstances in which one operates. Recognizing the influence of one's cultural perspective on individual perceptions, it becomes evident that divergent interpretations may arise when comparing viewpoints across cultures.
- Challenging stereotypes and building relationships: The stereotypes can be quickly challenged by volunteering to build relationships with other cultures. Cordial relationships with stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds present an enriching experience that offers numerous potential benefits for the project. Despite the inherent danger of misinterpretation and misunderstanding, engaging in interpersonal relationships is worthwhile due to the potential for acquiring new knowledge and enhancing one's interpersonal aptitude. The project team should be trained and willing to peruse relationships across cultures to understand different cultures better.
- The early involvement of all pertinent stakeholders in the process facilitates the establishment of dependable communication channels and enables project teams to set realistic objectives. The alignment between multinational construction projects and corporate objectives may be enhanced by the active involvement of stakeholders throughout the planning and scoping phases. Effective communication ensures that misunderstandings are minimized, the project's scope is effectively managed, and a sense of accountability is fostered among all stakeholders. A significant portion of a project manager's duties include engaging with the project's internal and external stakeholders. When individuals from diverse cultural and organizational backgrounds with a range of skills, perspectives, and interests who exert influence or impact on the implementation or outcome of a project can engage in successful communication, significant achievements can be realized.

5.2. Contribution to the body of knowledge

The study not only contributes to existing knowledge but also offers novel perspectives. To get more universally applicable findings, this study employed qualitative research methodologies. Furthermore, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by explicitly establishing the correlation between cultural diversity and stakeholder engagement in multinational project settings. Multinational project stakeholders exhibit distinct behaviours in contrast to domestic project stakeholders. As such, this study contributed to the body of knowledge by enlightening these distinct behaviours. The research further indicates how culture of stakeholders directly impacts the engagement of project stakeholders in multinational projects.

5.3. Implications of the research

The study revealed that the cultural diversity significantly influences stakeholder engagement in multinational projects. The findings indicate that conventional methods of engaging stakeholders must be improved for multinational projects. More techniques for stakeholder interaction need to be developed to address this limitation.

Firstly, multinational projects are impacted by communication challenges. Effective communication is crucial for both the success of a project and the effective engagement of stakeholders. Based on the findings, there are several ways in which communication might pose challenges for multinational projects. Even in countries where the primary language is English, a language barrier exists that, if left unresolved, can result in misunderstandings, hindering the project's progress. Because language carries implicit assumptions and a sense of certainty, mere translation cannot quickly overcome linguistic barriers. To overcome language hurdles, project managers must possess cultural sensitivity, strive to build trust, and foster cordial connections.

Furthermore, identifying stakeholders is a crucial component of the stakeholder engagement process. Project managers should assess the project's effect on the nation or community to identify the most vital stakeholders. When engaging with culturally diverse stakeholders, it is crucial to consider that different countries possess unique

values and interests. To effectively identify stakeholders, it is crucial to involve local people from the beginning of the project who can assist in stakeholder identification.

To mitigate the impact of cultural differences, it is recommended to evaluate stakeholder engagement methods in multinational projects, as shown by the study findings.

5.4. Study Limitation

Regarding limitations, the researcher acknowledges that a restricted range of cultural conditions were considered throughout this investigation. The study focused on three major construction companies in South Africa. The outcomes of this research would have exhibited variation if a diverse range of individuals, including various origins and races, had been included in the research. The companies involved all provided South African perspectives on cultural diversity. Hence, the researcher has limited the scope to a particular set of countries to acquire an adequate understanding of the chosen subject of investigation.

Given that this study encompasses just a subset of the population from selected organizations, the researcher admits the need for a cautious interpretation of the findings. The study only reviewed the project manager's view of the subject; however, the study's population included internal and external stakeholders.

5.5. Recommendations

The influence of culture may significantly affect construction projects within multinational environment. The recommendations below for project managers when tackling multinational projects.

- It is recommended that the organizations consider the cultural factors inherent in their day-to-day operations to navigate the multinational construction landscape effectively.
- The analysis of the interviews indicates that cultural disparities exert varying degrees of influence on managerial practices within the construction industry,

thereby necessitating the alteration of stakeholder engagement tools in dealing with multicultural stakeholders.

- In a multinational construction project, all stakeholders must comprehensively understand cultural disparities to mitigate the probability of discord.
- Organizations must consider the significance of cultural diversity and the principles of cross-cultural management when undertaking a project.

5.6. Recommendations for future research

Based on the study's limits and findings, the researcher recommends that future studies explore the topic as outlined below.

- In order to conduct a comprehensive empirical inquiry and gather diverse data, future research on the subject should incorporate the participation of both internal and external stakeholders.
- As more multinational projects emerge, researchers will have ample data to delve further into the subject and substantiate previous qualitative studies with quantitative research.

5.7. Conclusion

The study aims to investigate the challenges faced by project managers working for multinational construction companies. An empirical investigation consisted of interviews with project managers from leading construction companies in South Africa. A thorough literature review and prior research on the topic preceded this study. The data collection involved conducting in-depth interviews to gather qualitative information. The analysis of the acquired data yielded valuable discoveries using framework analysis. The last significant section analyzes the correlation between the findings and the studies referenced in the literature review, proposes recommendations for future research directions, and identifies potential topics for additional investigation. There were six volunteers, each of whom worked for one of three different companies. All the individuals involved in the study are in the KwaZulu Natal region.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Objective 1- To Analyse The Cultural Aspects Of Multinational Projects And Categorize Cultural Diversity Of Stakeholders In Multinational Projects.

- 1) Does the effectiveness of stakeholder participation in international construction projects depend much on cultural differences?
- 2) What do you consider to be the biggest cultural obstacles to securing the support of important stakeholders while working on a multinational construction project?
- 3) What part does culture play in the negotiations between multinational stakeholders?
- 4) How does language affect the involvement of stakeholders in multinational projects?

Objective 2 - To Analyse The Effective Stakeholder Engagement Tools And Techniques.

- 5) When engaging in a multinational project, it is important to consider the influence of diverse cultural norms on stakeholder participation and communication.
- 6) Were there a significant number of cultural disparities experienced while engaging in international projects? Which tools were utilized?
- 7) Have you ever experienced the perception that culture has exerted a detrimental influence on projects conducted within a multinational context? Which tools demonstrated effectiveness?
- 8) What is the degree of influence of culture on stakeholder participation in project meetings?

Objective 3 - Assess Stakeholder Engagement Methods, Tools And Techniques With Largest Impact On Managing Cultural Diversity In Multinational Projects.

9) Which stakeholder engagement tools demonstrate efficacy in the context of stakeholder engagement within multinational projects?

10) To what extent do cultural differences influence the prioritization of stakeholders in multinational projects? To what extent does cultural bias impact the prioritization of stakeholders?

11) Is it deemed imperative to administer cultural training to project managers prior to embarking on multinational projects? This inquiry pertains to the identification and examination of the obstacles encountered, as well as the identification and evaluation of the efficacious instruments and approaches employed.

Objective 4 - Develop Best Practice Framework For Optimum Engagement Of Culturally Diverse Stakeholders In Multinational Projects.

12) In the context of engaging stakeholders with diverse cultural backgrounds, what strategies can be recommended for effective engagement?

13) What recommendations can be provided for stakeholder engagement within a multicultural environment?

Appendix B: Participation Letter

Dear Participant

My name is Spha Ndlovu student No. NDLSIP060. I am enrolled in the Master of Science in Project Management program at The University of Cape Town (UCT), where I am pursuing a master's degree. The study is titled: "*Analysing the Impact of Cultural Diversity on Stakeholder Engagement in Multinational Construction Projects*". The goal is to increase the understanding of the impact of cultural diversity on multinational construction project stakeholder engagement. The case study will be conducted where research interview questions will be prepared for all participants.

The study will be conducted with your consent, and you will be given the opportunity to withdraw at any time. You have the option to reject participation in the research completely. There are no known dangers associated with involvement that are different from those faced in normal life. The information you provide will be kept secure and anonymous. The results of this study will be kept strictly confidential and will only be published as a summary of all the data collected.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign and return the letter and indicate a time that is convenient for you to be interviewed. Transcripts will be made available upon request.

If you have any questions regarding this endeavour, please contact Mr. S Ndlovu at 078 827 5331. If you have any concerns about the veracity of this message, please contact UCT via the website's provided email address or phone number. If you wish to participate in the study, please sign below and return the letter.

Yours Sincerely,

S.B. Ndlovu

Approved by Participant

Print your name and title here

Signature

Date

Appendix C : Organization Consent Letter

To: Manager

RE: Permission to Conduct Case Study Research Study about Multinational stakeholder engagement in multinational projects

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to request a permission to conduct case study research on the recent multinational construction projects you have undertaken. I am currently enrolled at The University of Cape Town (UCT) undertaking the master's in project management, I am in the process of writing my dissertation. The study I am conducting is entitled: "*Analysing the impact of cultural diversity on stakeholder engagement in multinational construction projects.*"

Project Managers who will participate in these initiatives will be interviewed in person, or telephonically or questions emailed, which ever will be convenient; a letter requesting their assent has also been prepared. The investigation will be conducted ethically. The results of this study will be kept strictly confidential, and the identities of the participants will be concealed. The research will incur no expenses for both your organization and the participants.

Your approval will go a long way in assisting me with my studies. If you approve, kindly sign below and keep the signed copy. You can contact me on 0788275331 and my institution (UCT) at the numbers provided on the website, my student number is NDLSIP060.

Yours Sincerely,

S.B. Ndlovu

Approval by the Manager

Approved by:

Print your name and title here

Signature

Date

Appendix D: Table 2a Interview responses [A horizontal analysis of the suitable themes]

Objective	Related questions	Responses			Synthesis of ideas	Suitable theme(s)
		A	B	C		
1.Cultural aspects of multinational projects and categorize the cultural diversity of stakeholders in multinational projects	Communication And Behaviour	<p>“Cultural norms influence how project stakeholders in international projects think, speak, and behave, which in turn influences how much they believe, participate, and provide feedback.</p> <p>Communication is the first hurdle in international construction projects.”</p>	<p>“To enhance communication in a culturally diverse environment, it is important to recognize that the ideas, emotions, and behaviours of individuals are influenced by both their shared characteristics and their unique distinctions.”</p>	<p>“Communication styles might vary from one culture to the next. This might have repercussions on how people express themselves verbally and nonverbally. Communication styles and approaches to dispute resolution can be influenced by cultural norms.</p>	<p>Ai, Bii, Ci Aii, Biii, Civ Aiii, Bi, Cii Biv, Ciii</p>	<p>Theme 1 Theme 2 Theme 3</p>

	Decision-making	<p>"Making decisions continues to be a challenge while leading various project teams. Sometimes, people are hesitant to act when they should and have the authority to. Most decisions in Southern African construction projects that ought to be made at a low level are instead reserved for larger gatherings."</p>		<p>"The factors of cultural identity, environment, and moral compass play significant roles in the process of decision-making. For example, in societies that prioritize tradition and family values, it might be prudent to seek guidance from seniors while making decisions about low-level tasks."</p>	<p>Ai, Biii Aii, Bii Aiii, Biii</p>	<p>Theme 4 Theme 5 Theme 6</p>
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	Language barrier	"Since there are more than 11 official languages in South Africa, linguistic barriers are a concern. Moving to a different province with the same team is really challenging. Some stakeholders believe that they must be addressed in their own tongue, even when English is widely used. Sometimes it is acceptable since other community members haven't attended school and English is mostly learnt in school."	"Stakeholders may employ a claimed breakdown in communication as a strategy to manipulate the team responsible for project management."		Ai, Aii, Bi Aiii, Bii	Theme 7 Theme 8 Theme 9
	Conflict Management	"African societies tend to have a tendency towards making rapid judgments,	"Cultural disparities have the potential to exacerbate pre-	"According to my experience, the occurrence of	Bi, Cii, Ai Aii, Bii	Theme 10 Theme 11

		rather than extensively sharing all pertinent information prior to resolving conflicts.”	existing disputes within the project team, hence resulting in communication breakdowns and strained interpersonal dynamics.”	conflict is an expected outcome when individuals employ diverse approaches to their task, which is the case in most multinational construction projects.”		
	Task performance		“For multinational construction projects to be successful, it is imperative to overcome language hurdles and preconceived conceptions since these factors directly impact the		Bi, Bii	Theme 12

			performance of the team.”			
	Adapting to environment	“In multinational construction projects, each member of the team possesses a distinct cultural heritage, resulting in a range of proficiency levels in communication and behaviour. It is imperative that all members of the team possess the capacity to adjust and adapt.”			Aii, Aii, Aiii	Theme 13
2 Analysing the effective stakeholder engagement tools and techniques.	Identifying relevant stakeholder	"What I noticed is that when venturing to international space, you most likely are not aware of who the stakeholders or important stakeholders are. Therefore, it is advisable that project	“Conducting stakeholder analysis facilitates the acquisition of knowledge pertaining to those who own a significant stake in		Aii, Bi Ai, Bii	Theme 14 Theme 15

		managers pay attention to stakeholder identification process using local resources."	the project's result. This analysis provides valuable insights into their respective identities, roles, expectations, level of influence, and overall attitude."			
Determining Relevance, The Influence Of Each Stakeholder, And Analysis		<i>"Stakeholder analysis facilitates the identification and mitigation of various obstacles that impede the assessment of project progress. The collection of data pertaining to the supporters, opponents, and other stakeholders of projects aids in mitigating obstacles to the effective implementation of multinational projects."</i>	<i>"Conducting a stakeholder analysis enables one to get insights into the diverse expectations and requirements held by all relevant parties involved in the project. This approach allows for the identification of the primary advocates and</i>		Ai, Bi, Bii	Theme 16
					Ai, Biii	Theme 17
					Aii, Bii	Theme 18

			<i>possible critics of your project.”</i>			
	Discover the needs and expectations of each stakeholder.	<i>“The needs and expectations of stakeholders have a pervasive impact on projects in all contexts. In other terms, corporations are established and managed with the objective of fulfilling the demands of its owners and investors through the stakeholder analysis.”</i>			Ai, Aii Ai, Bi Bii	Theme 19 Theme 20 Theme 21
	Creating cordial relationships	<i>“When individuals from disparate cultural backgrounds come into contact, it is unavoidable</i>			Al, Aii	Theme 22

		<i>that there will be discernible disparities in their respective cultures.”</i>				
3. Assess stakeholder engagement methods, tools and techniques impacting managing cultural diversity in multinational projects.	Effective Communication Is the Best Tool	<i>“In the context of increasingly extensive and multinational projects, it is preferable to avoid assuming exclusive responsibility as the primary point of contact for the numerous stakeholders involved. The objective should be to enable the inclusion of other project team members in stakeholder communications, using their expertise in certain areas of the project.”</i>	<i>“It is advisable to refrain from engaging in any verbal or behavioural actions that may be susceptible to misinterpretation or potentially harmful to the individual involved.”</i>		Ai, Bi Aii Bii	Theme 23 Theme 24 Theme 25

	Cultural awareness and training	<p><i>“If a project manager lacks cultural sensitivity, he may encounter obstacles in the multinational construction project due to the prevailing attitudes and behaviours of different stakeholders. Individuals inside the project management team may have challenges in comprehending and adapting to the extensive array of cultural differences.”</i></p>	<p><i>Gaining knowledge about different cultures within the project might enhance the project team's ability to successfully communicate and collaborate with vast stakeholders.”</i></p>		Ai, Aiii	Theme 26
					Aiv, Aii, Bi	Theme 27

	Challenging Stereotypes	<i>“The impact of adverse cultural stereotypes on multinational construction projects morale and productivity can be significant. Workplace tensions may manifest when historical rivalries are introduced into the professional environment.”</i>			Ai, Aii	Theme 28
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Appendix E: Table 2b. Developed themes [A vertical analysis of the suitable themes],

Objectives	Questions	Suitable themes	Synthesis of suitable themes 1	Synthesis of suitable themes 2	Summary of developed themes	Wording of the themes
1. Cultural aspects of multinational projects and categorise the cultural diversity of stakeholders in multinational projects.	Communication And Behaviour	Theme 1	Theme 1 & 8	Theme 1.1	Theme 1 =1.1; 1.2 & 3.1	Cultural Aspects of Multinational Projects That Impact Stakeholder Engagement in Multinational Projects.
		Theme 2	Theme 2,9,7,11, 12 & 13	Theme 1.2	Theme 2 = 1.3 & 3.3	Analyzing the practical stakeholder engagement tools and enhancing them to be compatible with culturally diverse stakeholders.
		Theme 3	Theme 3, 4, 5, 6 & 10	Theme 1.3	Theme 3 = 2.1; 2.2; & 3.2	How to Enhance Stakeholder Engagement Tools to Be Compatible With Culturally Diverse Stakeholders.
	Decision-making	Theme 4				
		Theme 5				

		Theme 6				
	Language barrier	Theme 7				
		Theme 8				
		Theme 9				
	Conflict management	Theme 10				
		Theme 11				
	Task performance	Theme 12				
	Adapting to environment	Theme 13				
2. Analysing the effective stakeholder engagement tools and techniques	Identifying relevant stakeholder	Theme 14	Theme 14, 15, 16, 17 & 18	Theme 2.1		
		Theme 15	Theme 22	Theme 2.2		
	Determining Relevance, The Influence Of Each Stakeholder, And Analysis	Theme 16	Theme 19, 20 & 21	Theme 2.3		
		Theme 17				
		Theme 18				
	Theme 19					

	Discover the needs and expectations of each stakeholder	Theme 20				
		Theme 21				
	Creating cordial relationships	Theme 22				
3. Assess stakeholder engagement methods, tools and techniques impacting managing cultural diversity in multinational projects.	Effective communication is the best tool	Theme 23	Theme 24 & 25	Theme 3.1		
		Theme 24	Theme 27 & 28	Theme 3.2		
		Theme 25	Theme 23 & 26	Theme 3.3		
	Cultural awareness and training	Theme 26				
		Theme 27				
	Challenging Stereotypes	Theme 28				