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Interrogating Conflict Dynamics in the implementation of infrastructure projects in Arola, Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Infrastructure development is pivotal for socioeconomic advancement, yet project implementation frequently encounters conflicts that undermine effectiveness and sustainability. This study interrogates the conflict dynamics influencing infrastructure project implementation in Arola, Oyo State, Nigeria. Grounded in Realistic Conflict Theory, the research explores how power imbalances, and struggles exacerbate tensions within the community, affecting project outcomes and sustainability. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, data were collected through key informant interviews, in-depth interview, involving community leaders and community project management committees. Findings highlight that conflicts arising from leadership disputes, poor communication, misappropriation of funds, lack of transparency, and divergent interests between project committee and community authorities significantly delayed and derail infrastructure initiatives. The study underscores the necessity of integrating conflict-sensitive approaches in infrastructure development to ensure inclusive participation and equitable benefit-sharing. It recommends enhanced capacity-building for local institutions, and coordinated stakeholder engagement for project management committee, working with existing leadership structure towards mitigating conflicts and fostering sustainable project implementation. The study contributes to policy discourses on conflict dynamics and complexities in infrastructure projects within fragile local contexts.

Key words: Infrastructure Development, Conflict Dynamics, Project Implementation, Oyo State, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Infrastructure project plays a central role in national and local development efforts, especially in developing countries where access to basic services remains uneven. Roads, schools, water systems, healthcare facilities, and energy infrastructure are essential components that support economic productivity, promote social welfare, and enhance overall quality of life. In sub-Saharan Africa, infrastructure deficits remain a critical barrier to growth, contributing to limited market access, inadequate service delivery, and persistent inequalities (Adeniran, 2020; World Bank, 2022).

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Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, faces acute infrastructural challenges, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas where local development initiatives are often hindered by political and economic constraints. Oyo State, one of Nigeria's most historically significant states, has attempted to close development gaps through various community-based, government-driven projects and donor supported projects. However, implementation challenges remain pervasive, especially in communities such as Arola in Ido Local Government Area. Despite the existence of multiple development interventions, many projects remain incomplete, delayed, or poorly maintained due to social tensions and resource inadequacies.

Infrastructure projects in Arola have encountered persistent conflict that not only delayed implementation but also compromised long-term sustainability (Ladele,2025). Conflicts stem from unequal resource allocation, local authority contests, lack of transparency, and exclusionary decision-making. Although existing studies have examined conflict and development at national and regional levels, there is limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on community-level conflict dynamics within infrastructure projects in Oyo State. This study fills that gap by examining how conflict challenges interact to shape project outcomes in Arola. This study contributes to academic discourse on development, conflict management, and local governance. It also offers practical insights for local authorities, community leaders, NGOs, and policymakers involved in rural development initiatives. The study focuses on water infrastructure project through the World Bank assisted project between 2015 and 2018 in Arola community, Ido local government area, Oyo state, Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

In order to understand the meaning of some concepts used in this paper, it's important to clarify them. These include: Infrastructural development, water infrastructure, conflict dynamics, development project and implementation.

Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development encompasses the planning, construction, and maintenance of essential physical systems such as transportation networks, energy grids, water supply systems, and public facilities (UNDP, 2019). It is widely recognized as a key driver of both micro- and macro-economic transformation, enabling mobility, trade, and human development. The word "infrastructure" comes from an amalgamation of two Latin root words: infra, which means "below," and structura, which may refer to a "building" or "construction." Jochimsen (1966) provides the technical economic definition of infrastructure as "the sum of material, institutional and personal facilities and data which are available to economic agents and which contribute to realizing the equalization of the remuneration of comparable inputs in the case of a suitable allocation of resources, that is complete integration and maximum level of economic activities." Infrastructures is the "structural elements of the economy that provide basic services to industry and households" (Chan et al. 2009).

However, infrastructure development in developing states often unfolds within environments characterized by political fragility, institutional weakness, and socioeconomic inequality. According to Serven (1996), within the context of public policy, considers Infrastructural development as a core component and key

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determinant of economic and social progress, this study specifically looked at water infrastructural development so to further explain this concept.

Water infrastructural development: The term water infrastructural development is described as a specialized and critical component of overall infrastructural development. It involves the planning, financing, construction, maintenance, and modernization of engineered and natural systems designed to manage water resources for human use, economic activity, and environmental protection. Water is essential for human daily activities, often viewed as a basic human right, leading to tariffs that are not cost-reflective, preventing utilities from recovering even their operational and maintenance (O&M) costs (World Bank, 2018). Despite the importance of water, it still faces various challenges. According to International water management institute (IWMI, 2023) which emphasized that the global investment shortfall for water infrastructure is approximated at $135 billion annually. According to Ketebu (2026) development agencies, particularly the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), should collaborate systematically with security institutions during project planning and implementation. The involvement of security agencies may reduce the fractions that exists especially in fragile context, but this should be properly managed in order not to great more tensions in project implementation, involving security institutions is also for the safety of outsides who may be service provides at the same time the ensuring local security that are members of the community is very important.

Conflict Dynamics

Conflict dynamics is a term used broadly in conflict studies, peace and conflict resolution, and sociology. It is often described as the process or mechanism by which a conflict evolves, rather than a single, static state. According to Kriesberg in analyzing conflict transformations and stages, his work inherently defines dynamics as the interactive, changing nature of conflict. Kriesberg (2007) defined conflict dynamics as the process of change in a conflict, particularly as it moves through stages of escalation, de-escalation, and transformation. It focuses on the interplay between the strategies, goals, and perceptions of the contending parties, and how these factors feedback into the conflict to sustain, intensify, or resolve it. Looking at the various key elements from a scholarly perspective of the conflict dynamics: Process, not State: Scholars like Kriesberg 2007), Zartman (2000), and Pruitt (2004) emphasize that dynamics are about the how a conflict unfolds over time, not just the what (the issue) or the who (the actors). Interactive/Systemic: The core of the definition lies in the feedback loops between the parties. One party's action (a threat, an attack, or a concession) influences the other party's perceptions, attitudes, and subsequent behaviour, leading to a continuous and often self-reinforcing cycle. Pruitt and Kim (2004) specifically detail this as a vicious cycle of escalation or cycle of de-escalation. In infrastructure development processes the conflict dynamics involves individual and groups their perception and attitude which involves how conflicts start, escalate, de-escalate, and transform over time, rather than just focusing on the single, static cause of the conflict. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for effective conflict resolution and management in project implementation. Some examples of conflict dynamics include interpersonal disagreements over resources, family disputes over inheritance, workplace conflicts due to unclear roles, and larger-

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scale intergroup conflicts arising from political or economic inequalities. These dynamics can escalate through factors like poor communication, escalating threats, and the "us versus them" mentality, or de-escalate through resolution strategies like collaborative problem-solving or involving local leadership. Conflict dynamics in this study refer to the evolving interactions, relationships, and tensions among stakeholders involved in infrastructure project implementation in Arola, including the causes, patterns of escalation, and mechanisms of resolution over time.

Development Project and Implementation

The notion of development project and implementation is fundamentally oriented towards improving the overall well-being of individuals, communities, or nations by tackling social, economic, and environmental dimensions (World Bank 2023b). These projects span sectors: healthcare, education, infrastructure, agriculture, and energy. A nuanced understanding of development is essential when examining these initiatives, as development is a subject that incites theoretical and political discourse, marked by its complexity and ambiguity. As articulated by Julius Nyerere, development is fundamentally for humanity, by humanity, and of humanity. In contemporary discourse, it has often interpreted as the operational focus of development organizations, particularly in poverty alleviation and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (Thomas, 2004). Therefore, development encompasses various domains: economic, social, psychological, and sustainable development. The World Bank (1994:37) defines development as the improvement of living standards over the long term. Thus, when development is conceptualized to improve living standards over an extended period, it entails a holistic and interconnected array of initiatives to advance economic, educational, healthcare, social, and environmental conditions. This perspective emphasizes the importance of the well-being and prosperity of both present and future generations, advocating for a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable future. In essence, development should be all-encompassing.

Danjibo (2021) posits that true development involve nurturing a population that is well-nourished, healthy, extensively educated, culturally enriched, and disciplined to sustain development projects. He asserts that “only very healthy people can pursue development.” It takes healthy people to handle development therefore the overall welfare of individuals ensuring their efficiency, mental stability and accessibility is key. The fundamental aim of development projects is to serve the populace improve their quality of life and develop physical structures. Consequently, human development is as crucial as infrastructural development. Nonetheless, human and infrastructural developments are integral to a people-centered approach, wherein development is perceived as a long-term enhancement of living standards that transcends mere economic metrics. It encompasses a comprehensive advancement in various dimensions of individual and community well-being. This holistic view of development includes improvements in economic prosperity, access to education, healthcare, and essential services, alongside the promotion of social justice and environmental sustainability. Therefore, this study conceptualizes development projects and implementation as the enhancement and expansion of physical infrastructure, including roads, water supply, sanitation, and electricity, as well as the improvement of social infrastructure, community relationships, and overall cohesion for inclusive and participatory development. As

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development projects provides wellbeing, implementation is a critical phase in the project lifecycle where the planned activities, strategies, and designs are translated into concrete action and deliverables to achieve the project's stated objectives. It has various phase characterized by the execution, coordination, and control of all resources (human, material, financial, and technological) to produce the intended outcome or product.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted is qualitative research, it relies on primary and secondary source of data from documented reports, online publications and other relevant materials. Six Key Informant Interviews (KII) were conducted with Community Project Management Committee(CPMC) this were members elected by the community to oversee the smooth implementation of the project, three In-Depth Interview(IDI) with Community Development Association (CDA) leaders, they are existing leaders in the community, who ensure the development and well-being of the community. The participants were chosen because they were part of the implementation process of the development project in the community.

Arola is a community in Ido local government area, Ibadan, Oyo state, that benefitted from the World bank assisted water project, the project was established to ensure safe drinking water to the community.

Conflict and Development projects in Nigeria

According to Ghani and Iyer (2010) they contend that the definition of conflict varies significantly based on the contextual framework. They posited that conflict is categorized into two primary types: the first being conflict directed against the State. This category encompasses civil wars and acts of terrorism, representing extreme manifestations of conflict characterized by a notable degree of organization. Such actions are typically executed by non-state actors and are aimed at the State itself. While terrorism is seen as a key indicator of conflict, some scholars agree to this due to the repercussions on state stability and the implementation of developmental initiatives. Nigeria, as noted by Orhero (2020), has a notable history of intense violent conflicts within the African continent. These conflicts manifest in various forms, including land disputes, resource management issues, ethnic tensions, and liberation movements. It is imperative for the Nigerian government, especially the National Assembly, to formulate and enforce policies that tackle the underlying and immediate causes of conflicts and crises within the nation. Internal shortcomings in governance and development can act as catalysts for such conflicts.

Breaches of peace often arise from disputes concerning jurisdiction, differing religious beliefs, cultural variances, or the encroachment of one community's economic or social interests by another community, individual, or group. Throughout history, various approaches have been employed to address these conflicts. It is important to note that conflict is not intrinsically detrimental; rather, it functions as an essential mechanism for articulating the aspirations and objectives of both individuals and collectives. Such conflicts can foster the emergence of creative solutions to diverse challenges and play a significant role in the development of a collective identity among individuals (Albert, 2001).

The core elements of conflicts can be summarised into three primary components:

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"actors," "context," and "issues." The issues serve to define the identities of the parties involved in the conflict, characterized by their distinct positions, interests, and fundamental needs. In contrast, the context refers to the circumstances that give rise to and perpetuate these issues, influencing the conflict engagement strategies employed by the actors involved (Faleti, 2013). Conflicts can present themselves in both constructive and destructive forms. Constructive conflict is marked by its ability to foster new ideas, resolve existing problems, create opportunities for personal and team development, and stimulate creativity. This type of conflict arises when differing perspectives are explored, often leading to significant advancements in thought. Conversely, destructive conflict impedes progress, resulting in harm and obstruction rather than resolution. The repercussions of conflict can be immediate and severe, including loss of life and injuries to both civilians and combatants. Additionally, it frequently leads to mass population displacement, extensive damage to physical infrastructure, and significant disruptions to social and economic systems (Wilmot and Hocker, 1998).

A comprehensive understanding of development requires recognition of its dual capacity to both create conflict and promote peace (World Bank Group, 2020). Decision-making frameworks that overlook prevailing social and economic disparities or that fail to confront persistent developmental challenges linked to incomplete decolonization, may intensify tensions and increase the likelihood of conflict (World Bank Group, 2020). Furthermore, development initiatives are not exempt from the potential to incite conflict, whether it is violent or non-violent in nature (World Bank Group, 2020).

Addressing conflicts that arise during the development process presents a significant challenge characterized by its complexity. Best (2009) posits that certain conflicts, especially those concerning resource allocation, can be mitigated by fulfilling fundamental needs and alleviating associated fears. Conversely, conflicts stemming from divergent values may not be resolvable and require effective management strategies instead, while lack of attention to social disparities during the initial planning phases of development initiatives can precipitate conflicts rooted in discrimination, exclusion, favoritism, and entrenched social divisions tied to identity, thereby increasing the likelihood of conflict emergence. Furthermore, failing to engage local stakeholders in the design and planning phases, coupled with delayed communication following decision-making, can adversely affect the development process (Bhatt, 2020).

In resolving conflicts that arise in development implementation, Wilmot and Hocker (1998) recommend approaches for conflict resolution, including enhancing communication clarity and verifying perceptions. It is essential for all parties to articulate their views candidly, listen attentively, express emotions constructively, and pose questions while remaining rational. Additional strategies encompass promoting a culture of compromise, refraining from harmful remarks, directly confronting issues, sharing personal viewpoints, pursuing adaptable solutions, fostering collaboration, recognizing patterns of conflict, engaging in genuine negotiations, and achieving consensus. Conflict is an inherent and unavoidable aspect of society, emerging from disagreements and the pursuit of varying interests, objectives, values, and aspirations within a defined geographical context (Odobo, 2017).

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However, project consultants often neglect the presence of conflicts within development initiatives. According to Jokubauskaite and Turner (2022), those conducting consultations tend to exaggerate the positive outcomes of development projects while failing to adequately address the negative consequences. This imbalance can lead to unrealistic expectations, subsequent disappointment, and a loss of trust as the project unfolds. For instance, specialists who assess the environmental impacts may lack the authority to evaluate the social ramifications of the project. A lack of thorough conflict understanding and analysis before project initiation can foster a detrimental environment for implementation. The engagement of conflict analysis experts in a systematic study of conflict profiles, causes, actors, and dynamics can de-escalate the negative impacts (Saferworld, 2004). Therefore, the primary aim of conflict analysis is to aid development practitioners in comprehending the operational context, the interplay between their interventions and the surrounding environment, and ultimately to mitigate adverse effects while enhancing beneficial outcomes. Although the interplay between development and conflict is significant, it can be managed effectively, underscoring the importance of conflict management in addressing issues before, during, and after they arise.

Otite and Albert (2001) argue that conflict resolution and transformation are complex and multifaceted when necessary, incorporating a broader spectrum of concepts and applications. Nonetheless, there is no universal approach to conflict resolution; each situation must be assessed on its own merits to avoid unintended negative repercussions that could exacerbate the conflict.

Anderson (1999) posits that development projects, instigate change, which subsequently catalyzes social and political restructuring. Bush (1998) contend that while development-related conflict is often perceived as wholly detrimental, it can also possess constructive elements. The management of such conflict is crucial in determining its impact, whether it yields positive or negative outcomes. It is frequently suggested that conflict can be harnessed productively to investigate diverse problem-solving strategies and stimulate creativity by recognizing and thoughtfully addressing conflicts, thereby illuminating emotional and irrational arguments and alleviating entrenched tensions (International Alert, 1996, as cited in Faleti, 2006).

Conflict generally arises when stakeholders perceive incompatibilities in goals, resources, or power distribution. In development projects, conflict may emerge due to: exclusion from decision-making, competing political interests, traditional leadership disputes and perceptions of injustice (Fisher, 2018). Project-related conflict can delay implementation, increase costs, and reduce project legitimacy. Scholars note that infrastructure projects in Nigeria frequently suffer from delays and abandonment due to corruption, elite capture, and local power struggles (Adeoti, 2019; Olukotun, 2021). In many communities, traditional rulers, political actors, and self-help associations compete for visibility and control over development resources. However, few studies explore how these dynamics unfold in localized settings like Arola, thereby establishing a gap this research addresses.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT) the theory is relevant to the

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study because it explains the conflict dynamics in relation to the study according to Sherif, 1966, which posits that intergroup conflict arises from competition over scarce resources. Applying RCT to infrastructure development suggests that: communities and stakeholders compete for limited development funds, traditional leaders and political actors struggle for control over project decisions, while exclusion of certain groups generates tension and antagonism, RCT helps explain why unequal benefit-sharing fuels resistance, delays, and project failure. The relevance of RCT to the study is appropriate because, Arola community faced challenges that affects them as a people.

RESULTS OF FINDINGS

The major root causes of the conflict were leadership disputes and power struggles, misappropriation of funds and poor communication

Leadership Disputes and Power Struggles

The primary driver of conflict is the ambiguity of authority. The involvement of stakeholders is often insufficient in Nigerian infrastructure projects, leading to resistance from local communities and delays in project implementation Falaye (2024). When the direct beneficiaries of the project show little concern about the development of their area, it affects implementation and usage of such projects. In the study area Leadership disputes which aroused when the CDA viewed the CPMC as temporary persons for the project execution, which they feel as a threat to their traditional influence.

There were conflicts which revolved around disagreements and power struggles led to leadership disputes, lives of some committee members were also threatened. Studies in community development have examined the role played by the leaders towards successful implementation and completion of projects. According to Udensi et al. (2012), Community leaders were significant factors in the Boki, Rivers state development project.

Conflict dynamics in project implementation takes various dimensions before, during and after, the response from key informant interview indicated that community members and leaders sometimes threatened members of the Community Project Management Committee (CPMC) with charm. Expectedly, members of CPMC would then see the need to avoid participating in the project implementation in the future: According to a female member of the CPMC, she stated that:

We the CPMC faced a lot of abuse to the extent that some community members were using charm; we were seeing it like this. I will even say that next time they bring this project I will never participate because I had enemies within our neighbourhood even up till now **(KII/ CPMC/2023).**

The Arola project showed that intragroup conflict caused a level of physical fracas in the form of fighting among the leadership of the community and the CPMC. The submission below provides direct attestation to the nature of intragroup conflict in Arola community

Among the project members, the work didn't go well. The community was complaining bitterly, there were serious battles among the existing leaders in the community even those who elected us to be part of the committee had a different motive, thinking they would manipulate things and have access to funds, during the CDA meeting at times, we fight ourselves openly **(KII/ CPMC/ 2023).**

Community Development Association and Community project committee members had

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disagreement at various levels of project implementation that resulting to a long dispute among the groups, from the findings, this highlighted the importance of resolving issues at an early stage of implementation, this will go a long way to build trust and confidence for a team work and better outcome. Issues arising from development-related conflict have not only affected the projects but also human relationships. Iheriohanma et al. (2014) narrate that leadership in community development needs to be development-oriented, shun all forms of corruption, and be transparent and accountable to achieve their set goals. This shows how of intragroup conflict in the community project implementation process revealed the complex nature of the conflicts, encompassing physical and spiritual dimensions. It was found that intragroup conflict affected adversely the willingness of some project committee members to participate in future projects even though a few others still showed remarkable resilience and remained committed to project implementation regardless of the personal attacks and other challenges they faced.

Power struggles among community causing conflict with the participation of the committees and community development associations who are the stakeholders in the implementation process of the projects. One of the participants pointed out that:

After the water project the committee said they must handle the income, while the community development association members said the CPMC had completed the project, the income from the borehole should be handled and managed by us (CDA) Also the collection of community dues to repair the transformer was a struggle for the CDA and CPMC, who should handle it, these struggles have lingered and affected the smooth running of the projects **(IDI/ CDA/ 2023).**

Regarding resource management, especially for income-generating projects and internal conflict, the distribution of benefits is very challenging. Odobo (2017) sheds light on how oil-related conflicts bring about grievances, which is often a result of greed and who manages what it can be argued that the assumption of the community taking ownership after the completion of the project is automatic, and this differs in context. This study implies that conflicts resulting from power struggles are inherent in community participation and ownership.

Misappropriation of Funds

Conflicts are frequently triggered by allegations or actual instances of funds being diverted. When financial reports are not shared transparently, suspicion grows that committee members are "enriching themselves" at the community's expense. During the project implementation, misappropriation of funds emerged as a serious conflict issue; community members had varying expectations about the economic benefits of the project, which created many arguments. Hence, economic conflicts manifest as disagreements over job opportunities, fund misappropriation, income distribution, or compensation for land use or location for a project. Best (2009) argued that some conflicts, especially those over resources, can be resolved once the needs of the parties involved are met. Unfortunately, disputes over values may not be resolvable but managed. The study found prolonged tension in the case of project implementation in the Arola community, Ido Local Government, the task of who should handle the procurement of the materials for the community project implementation. The conflict ensued between the project community members and some community

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members who directly indicated interest in procuring materials for the project. The interview carried out elicited the response from the informant an executive member of the project committee:

> The issues were too many, during the project there were conflicts, some members wanted to handle the money and be the ones to purchase materials, and the Community Development Association executives had misunderstandings with the project committee. They wanted the committee to take instruction from them also money was misappropriated and they took executives to the Public Complaint Commission (PCC) at the Oyo State Secretariat because of misappropriation and embezzlement of funds **(/KII/CPMC/ 2023).**

Misappropriation of funds meant for projects, either public or community funds have its effects on the development and sustainability of those projects. Supporting this view, Abraham (2020) points out that misappropriation of funds poses a serious development problem while proper management of finances meant for public development will enhance development.

Poor Communication

Poor communication serves as both a cause and a symptom of conflict. Often when there is no regular stewardship reports or open town hall meetings, groups begin to operate in silos, feeding a cycle of rumors and distrust. The impact of communication on community development cannot be overemphasized. According to Adedokun et al. (2010), communication means not just passing information to people but helping them their change attitudes and behaviour to the issues that affect them. It goes beyond mere interaction in meetings but ensures attitudes that focus on solving their problem through effective communication. One may ask can poor communication lead to conflict? Conflict is not a static phenomenon, it is expressive and dialectical. Conflict is part and parcel of social life (Odobo, 2017). Communication in conflict suggests conflict that arises due to issues related to communication or miscommunication between people or groups. It usually occurs when there are differences, misunderstandings, or disputes regarding how information is exchanged, interpreted, or conveyed. Good communication helps to build a mutual team (Salvation, 2019) Communicating the rules and regulations meant to guide project implementation in a manner that is not effective or misleading can breed serious communication conflict.

For example, it was found that most people failed to realise that there was a laid-down plan and procedure for disbursement of project funds. When the rules and regulations are followed strictly without prior communication with the members of the community, conflict becomes inevitable. Trust is made easy when there is a free flow of communication. Besides the gap in information sharing between the committee, existing community leaders and the entire community Ovwasa and Onimisi (2021) identified that having access to information increases trust and friendship between the community leaders or representatives of various partners and stakeholders.

Consistent with Ovwasa and Onimisi (2021) when there is trust between community members and governmental agencies or institutions, communication channels open up more freely, and people are more willing to share their needs, concerns, and ideas, which provide valuable information for developing and implementing community development plans. Poor communication and the inability to effectively share the

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progress of work with other stakeholders involved in projects negatively affect the process of community development (Wawira and Susan, 2019).

To avoid or limit the adverse effect of communication conflicts on project implementation, the study found the desire for efficient leadership, teamwork, responsibility, and effective communication to ensure the smooth accomplishment of projects.

Communication and interaction at every stage of implementation create room for transparency; the findings were consistent with the claims by Okolie and Edo (2023) that poor communication results in a negative impact on project failure in Nigeria. This is most common when various groups handle such assignments but when there is open communication they understand each other very well. From the findings above, it can be pointed out that when information is not properly communicated to parties in any group or involved in an assignment conflicts seems to be inevitable.

Conflict dynamics in infrastructure project implementation is a complex phenomenon within fragile local contexts, it has received significant attention in peace and conflict studies and academic literature. Falaye (2024) is of the opinion that improving stakeholder engagement is crucial for minimizing conflicts and resistance among members of project implementation at all levels. Conflict that ensues before, during and after project implementation process often distort the expected outcome. This discussion synthesizes findings on the conflict dynamics between Community Project Management Committees (CPMCs) and Community Development Associations (CDAs) leaders within the context of infrastructure projects.

In many developing regions, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas, infrastructure delivery relies on two primary local bodies, the Community Development Association (CDA), which serves as the overarching traditional or civic administrative authority, and the Community Project Management Committee (CPMC) as a specialized, temporary body formed and selected individuals from the community to oversee the implementation of the water project in Arola Community. It is expected that the groups should ideally work in tandem, the findings showed that the intersection of their roles was a battleground for power, resources, and relevance

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The consequences of conflict dynamics in infrastructure development remain complex and devastating for local development, often resulting in project delays and total abandonment. As seen in the case of Arola, when groups such as the Community Project Management Committee (CPMC) and the Community Development Association (CDA) bicker over who should purchase project materials or authorize payments, projects stall. In this instance, the project was ultimately abandoned and left unused because the broader community backed out early, refusing to contribute their labor and levies. To them, their contributions were seen as "feeding the dispute" rather than building the project.

Infrastructure development is central to social and economic transformation in Nigeria, yet community-level implementation is fraught with conflict dynamics that frustrate these outcomes. This study demonstrates that power imbalances and internal disputes directly cause significant delays, by applying Realistic Conflict Theory, we can see how these

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tensions arise and persist over perceived or actual competition for scarce resources. This research paper underscores the essence of understanding conflict dynamics in the project implementation in communities, the conflict between CPMCs and CDAs is rarely about the infrastructure itself; it is a struggle over governance and the spoils of development, for sustainable infrastructure development, donors and policy actors must move beyond technical construction and focus on the sociopolitical landscape of the host community. The following measures are recommended to minimize conflict and achieve long-lasting outcomes post project implementation.

1. Role Balancing and Financial Clarity: Stakeholders and implementing donors should establish clear roles at the project's inception, strictly defining the financial boundaries for the CPMC and the oversight role of the CDA, balancing the authority of existing community structures with the specialized responsibilities of project committees is essential for successful completion and utilization.

2. Strengthen grievance-redress mechanisms where formal community-level mediation channels should be created to resolve disputes quickly before they escalate into project-halting bickering.

3. Ensure mid-term capacity building for accountability, develop mid-term training for local project committees, focusing specifically on project management, financial accountability, and transparent procurement processes not only at the inception but mid project implementation.

Ultimately, the struggle between CPMCs and CDAs proves that development projects or infrastructural success in Nigeria depends less on technical engineering and more on transparent governance and the equitable management of project resources and mediating the local power dynamics that determine whether a project serves the people or falls to ruin.

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