

The Impact of Consultants on the Procurement of Public Construction Projects in Abuja, Nigeria

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Abstract: Consultants play a pivotal role in public construction procurement by providing technical, managerial and advisory services that shape project outcomes. Despite their importance, procurement inefficiencies persist in Nigeria, raising concerns about the effectiveness of consultancy services, particularly in Abuja where federal construction activities are concentrated. This study examines the extent to which consultants impact the procurement of public construction projects in Abuja, Nigeria. A mixed-methods research design adopting a convergent parallel approach was employed. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 391 public construction stakeholders, while qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted with 8 professionals. Descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests, including the Kruskal-Wallis test, were used to analyze quantitative data, complemented by thematic analysis of qualitative responses. The findings indicate that consultants exert the greatest influence during project implementation (Mean = 4.12), contract execution (Mean = 4.09) and stakeholder engagement (Mean = 4.04). Moderate influence was observed in risk management (Mean = 3.89), quality assurance (Mean = 3.87) and environmental and social impact assessment (Mean = 3.83), while minimal influence was recorded in early-stage procurement activities such as advertisement (Mean = 2.49), approval (Mean = 2.86) and contract award (Mean = 2.93). Hypothesis testing revealed no statistically significant variation in stakeholder perceptions of consultant impact across procurement stages ($H = 6.637$, $p = .156$), indicating broad consensus among stakeholder groups. Qualitative findings further demonstrate that consultants contribute substantially to cost control, time management, quality assurance and regulatory compliance, although their technical recommendations are sometimes constrained by administrative and political factors. The study concludes that consultants significantly influence public construction procurement outcomes in Abuja, particularly during implementation and contract administration phases. It recommends enhanced early-stage consultant involvement and the development of a standardized performance evaluation framework aligned with Nigeria's public procurement system to strengthen accountability, value for money and project delivery outcomes.

Keywords: Consultants, public procurement, construction projects, Abuja Nigeria, procurement performance

1. Introduction

Public construction procurement represents one of the most significant channels through which governments translate development policies into tangible socio-economic infrastructure. In Nigeria, public sector construction dominates capital expenditure and plays a vital role in the provision of roads, housing, public buildings and social amenities. Abuja, as the Federal Capital Territory, remains the epicenter of federally funded construction projects, hosting a large concentration of ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) responsible for infrastructure delivery.

Consultancy practice in construction involves the provision of specialized professional services by architects, engineers, quantity surveyors and project managers to support informed decision-making and ensure effective project execution (Ofori, 2022). Consultants are engaged across multiple stages of the procurement lifecycle, including feasibility analysis, cost estimation, procurement planning, tender evaluation, contract negotiation, supervision and compliance monitoring. These functions exert a direct influence on project cost, time, quality and regulatory compliance, particularly in public construction projects that operate under statutory procurement frameworks (Kangwa & Oladinrin, 2023).

Public construction procurement in Nigeria is governed by the Public Procurement Act (PPA) of 2007 and administered through the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP). The process comprises needs assessment, procurement planning, advertisement, tendering, bid evaluation, contract award and project administration (Windapo & Olukemi, 2017). Despite this structured framework, procurement outcomes in Nigeria remain largely unsatisfactory. Persistent challenges such as time overruns, cost escalation, contract variations, and rework and quality deficiencies continue to characterize public construction projects (Olusanya, 2018; Oyewobi et al., 2017).

Recent empirical evidence highlights the severity of these challenges in Abuja. The 2024 Federal Budget allocated approximately ₦4.99 trillion to capital projects, yet implementation performance remained poor (Punch, 2024). Ameh and Suleiman (2024) reported average cost overruns of 44.46% and mean completion rates of only 52.4% across selected public building projects in Abuja, with extreme cases recording cost overruns exceeding 216%. Similarly, Umar (2023) identified significant waste arising from poor supervision and ineffective materials management, while national assessments recorded over ₦99 billion worth of abandoned or unexecuted projects between 2023 and 2024 (ICIR, 2024; Intel point, 2025).

Given these outcomes, attention has increasingly focused on the performance of consultants entrusted with safeguarding value for money, controlling costs and ensuring technical compliance. Decisions made by consultants during early design and procurement stages may influence up to 80% of total project costs (Windapo & Olukemi,

2017). However, consultant impact across procurement stages remains uneven, with evidence suggesting limited involvement in early-stage decision-making and excessive concentration on implementation and supervision.

This study therefore seeks to determine the extent to which consultants impact the procurement of public construction projects in Abuja, Nigeria. By examining consultant influence across the procurement lifecycle and integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of consultancy performance within Nigeria's public procurement environment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Consultants and Public Construction Procurement

Consultants occupy a central position within construction procurement systems, acting as professional intermediaries between clients, contractors and regulatory authorities. Their role extends beyond technical design to include advisory, managerial and governance functions (Ofori, 2022). In public procurement, consultants are expected to uphold transparency, accountability and compliance while ensuring that projects meet technical and functional requirements (Kangwa & Oladinrin, 2023).

Globally, studies have shown that effective consultancy services improve project predictability, reduce disputes and enhance value for money (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003; Lee et al., 2022). However, in developing economies, consultants often operate within constrained institutional environments characterized by bureaucratic inefficiencies, political interference and weak enforcement of standards (Ogunlana, 2020).

2.2 Procurement of Consultants and Value for Money

The procurement of consultancy services differs fundamentally from the procurement of goods or construction works. Consultancy outputs are knowledge-based, intangible and difficult to standardize, making quality-based selection critical (Daoud et al., 2018). Quality and Cost-Based Selection (QCBS), which prioritizes technical competence before fee negotiation, is widely recognized as best practice (World Bank, 2016).

In Nigeria, however, fee-based selection remains prevalent, often resulting in the engagement of underqualified consultants and compromised project outcomes (Festus, 2021; Obeoirien, 2019). Although the Public Procurement Act provides detailed procedures for consultant selection, including technical and financial evaluation, implementation remains inconsistent across MDAs (BPP, 2024).

2.3 Consultant Impact across Procurement Stages

Previous studies suggest that consultants exert varying levels of influence across procurement stages. While consultants play dominant roles in design development, supervision and contract administration, their involvement in needs assessment, procurement planning and contractor selection is often limited (Ogunlana, 2020;

Babatunde et al., 2022). This imbalance reduces opportunities for early risk identification and strategic decision-making.

Empirical studies in Nigeria and other developing countries highlight consultants' significant contributions to cost control, quality assurance and time management during project execution (Aduwo et al., 2021; Adel eke et al., 2024). However, political and administrative constraints frequently override technical recommendations, undermining consultant effectiveness (Olabode & Daniel, 2025).

2.4 Research Gap

Although numerous studies have examined consultant performance in construction, limited empirical research has systematically assessed the extent of consultant impact across the full public procurement lifecycle in Nigeria. Moreover, few studies integrate stakeholder-wide quantitative assessments with qualitative insights to capture contextual realities. This study addresses this gap by examining consultant influence across procurement stages within Abuja's public construction sector.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design using a convergent parallel approach. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently and integrated during interpretation to provide a holistic understanding of consultant impact. The philosophical foundation of the study was pragmatism, emphasising practical solutions to real-world procurement challenges.

3.2 Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The study population comprised stakeholders involved in public construction procurement in Abuja, including consultants, contractors, project managers, procurement officers and government officials. Due to the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame, snowball sampling was employed. A total of 391 valid questionnaire responses were obtained, exceeding the minimum sample size of 384 required for a 95% confidence level. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 8 experienced stakeholders.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

Quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising Likert-scale items measuring consultant impact across procurement stages. A pilot study involving 48 respondents confirmed instrument clarity and reliability. Qualitative data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide designed to elicit detailed insights into consultant roles and influence.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values ranging from 0.950 to 0.990, indicating excellent internal consistency. Validity was enhanced through triangulation, pilot testing and the use of established analytical techniques.

3.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were used to assess the extent of consultant impact. The Kruskal–Wallis test was employed to examine differences in perceptions across stakeholder groups. Qualitative data were analysed thematically and integrated with quantitative findings through triangulation.

4. Findings and Results

4.1 Extent of Consultant Influence across Procurement Stages

This section addresses consultants' influence across stages of public construction procurement in Abuja using a five-point Likert scale and descriptive statistics. As shown in Table 1, consultants exert the strongest influence during implementation-related stages, notably project implementation (Mean = 4.12), contract execution (Mean = 4.09) and stakeholder engagement (Mean = 4.04), reflecting their central supervisory and coordination roles. Moderate influence is evident in risk management, quality assurance, environmental and social assessments, budgeting and reporting (Means = 3.79–3.89). In contrast, consultants have limited influence in early procurement planning and administrative or regulatory activities, which largely remain government-controlled.

The results indicate that consultants exert the strongest influence during implementation-related stages, particularly project implementation, contract execution and stakeholder engagement. Conversely, their influence is weakest in early-stage and authority-driven procurement activities such as advertisement, approval and contract award.

Table 1: Extent to Which Consultants Influence Public Construction Procurement

Consultants Influence	Mean	Ranking	Std. Deviation
Project implementation	4.12	1	0.820
Contract execution	4.09	2	0.850
Stakeholder engagement	4.04	3	0.806
Risk management	3.89	4	0.689
Quality assurance	3.87	5	0.685
Environmental and social impact assessment	3.83	6	0.708
Post-project evaluation	3.80	7	0.738
Budget appropriation	3.80	8	0.851
Reporting and documentation	3.79	9	0.734
Bid evaluation	3.27	10	0.944
Procurement planning	3.23	11	0.902
Needs assessment	2.99	12	0.983
Bid submission and opening	2.97	13	0.901
Prequalification	2.94	14	0.912
Contract award	2.93	15	1.009
Approval	2.86	16	1.008
Advertisement	2.49	17	1.066

4.2 Hypothesis Testing

The Kruskal–Wallis test results presented in Table 2 indicate no statistically significant differences in stakeholders’ perceptions across procurement stages ($p = 0.156 > 0.05$), leading to the retention of the null hypothesis. This finding suggests a high level of consensus among project managers, procurement officers, consultants, contractors and government officials regarding the nature and extent of consultant influence. As reflected in the table, consultants’ roles in project implementation, contract execution and stakeholder coordination are consistently recognised across stakeholder groups, indicating shared experiences rather than role-specific interpretations.

Table 2: Kruskal–Wallis Test on the Extent of Consultant Impact across Stakeholder Roles

Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
Kruskal-Wallis H	6.637
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.156
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: Stakeholder roles in Procurement	

4.3 Qualitative Insights into Consultant Impact

As illustrated in Figure 1, the interview findings indicate that consultants play a pivotal role in cost control, quality assurance, risk management and stakeholder coordination. Participants reported that early risk identification by consultants resulted in savings exceeding ₦50 million and shortened project delivery by approximately two months. Consultants were further credited with ensuring compliance with procurement regulations, producing audit-ready documentation and mitigating disputes through effective communication. However, Figure 1 also reflects stakeholder concerns that consultants’ recommendations are occasionally overridden by political or administrative decisions, particularly at the contractor selection and approval stages, thereby limiting their influence in these areas.

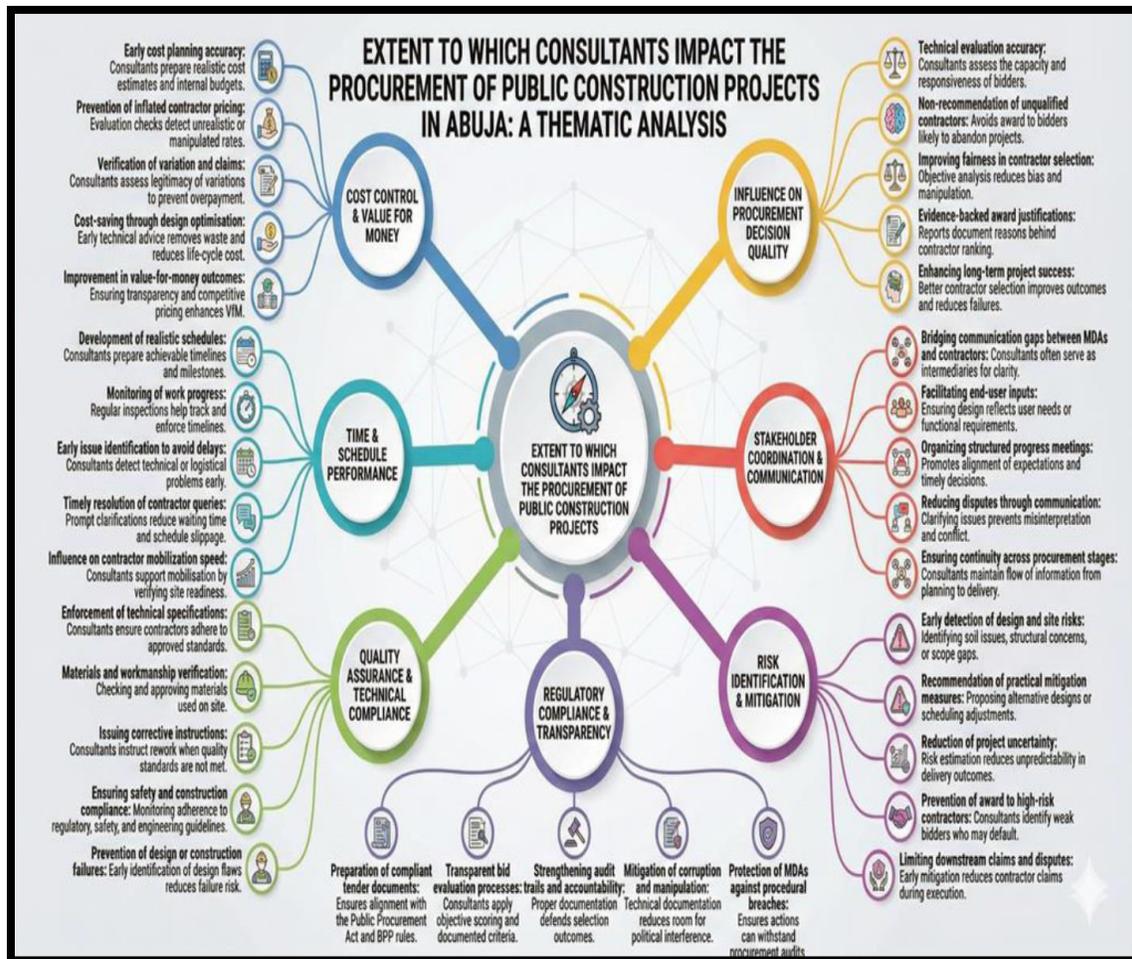


Figure 1: Impact of Consultants on Various Stages of the Procurement Process

5. Discussion

The findings demonstrate that consultants exert substantial influence during the implementation and oversight phases of public construction procurement in Abuja. High mean scores for project implementation, contract execution and stakeholder engagement reflect consultants' central role in supervising works, enforcing contractual obligations and coordinating stakeholders.

The limited influence observed in early-stage procurement activities aligns with previous studies indicating that strategic procurement decisions remain largely under government control (Dagohoy et al., 2023; Ogunlana, 2020). The absence of significant variation in stakeholder perceptions suggests a shared understanding of consultant roles shaped by systemic procurement structures rather than professional differences.

The qualitative evidence reinforces the quantitative findings, highlighting consultants' contributions to cost efficiency, time management and quality assurance. These results are consistent with Adel eke et al. (2024) and Okeke and Emoh (2024), who emphasized the importance of early consultant engagement and structured risk management.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the extent to which consultants impact the procurement of public construction projects in Abuja, Nigeria. The findings reveal that consultants significantly influence procurement outcomes, particularly during implementation, contract execution and stakeholder coordination. Their influence is more limited in early-stage and authority-driven procurement activities.

The study concludes that while consultants play a critical operational role, their restricted involvement in early procurement stages constrains their potential contribution to strategic decision-making and value optimisation. It recommends enhanced early-stage consultant engagement and the development of a standardised, context-sensitive performance evaluation framework aligned with Nigeria's public procurement system.

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