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Assessment of Causative Factors of Infrastructural Project Abandonment in Developing Countries

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ABSTRACT

Infrastructural project abandonment remains a critical issue in developing countries, significantly affecting economic growth, infrastructure delivery, and public trust in governance systems. This study identifies and examines the key drivers causing the abandonment of infrastructural projects in Nigeria, Structured questionnaires were administered to construction professionals including architects, builders, civil, mechanical and electrical engineers, and quantity surveyors at the State Ministry of Works and Transport and the Federal Ministry of Works. Primary data were collected from the respondents, through a well-structured questionnaire from the study area, sample frame of seventy-three (73) professionals, thirty-nine (39) valid responses were retrieved representing a response rate of 53.3%. and found suitable for analysis. Data collected includes respondent profile. The respondents rated the significance of various causative factors of project abandonment. The data collected were analyzed using mean ranking analysis. Findings revealed that the most significant factors causing infrastructure project abandonment are poor project planning and management (mean = 4.66), inefficient project implementation or delays (4.38), and corruption or mismanagement of funds (4.35). The study concludes that abandonment of infrastructural projects is driven largely by inadequate risk management, poor quality control, corruption, inconsistent government policies, weak accountability, and lack of competent contractors resulting in cost overruns, delays, abandonment, and economic losses. Policy and practice for improving funding mechanisms, enhancing oversight with procurement processes, and promoting partnerships to ensure completion of infrastructure projects and safeguard economic benefits is recommended.

Keywords: Infrastructural Project, Economic Development, Construction Productivity, Nigeria, Risk Project Abandonment, Construction Industry.

Aims Research Journal Reference Format:
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1. INTRODUCTION

Infrastructural investments roads, bridges, water and sanitation systems, public buildings and power installations are vital drivers of economic development in developing countries. Successful infrastructure projects expand productive capacity, improve access to services, and create employment; conversely, the abandonment or long-term stalling of such projects wastes scarce public and private resources and undermines development objectives (Obakin et al., 2024). Over the past decade, many developing countries have recorded high incidences of partially completed or permanently abandoned public works, creating visible “skeletons” in urban and rural landscapes and producing negative economic, social and environmental spillovers (Jerisco, 2023).

Project abandonment is a multi-causal phenomenon. Empirical studies from Africa and other developing regions identified interacting abandonment drivers that include chronic under-financing and delayed disbursements, weak project planning and feasibility assessment, corruption and poor procurement practices, political interference and policy discontinuity, and technical or land-related constraints (Adagba et al., 2023). Many of abandonment drivers are institutional and systemic, abandonment is rarely caused by a single failure, rather, weak governance, inadequate risk management and financing shortfalls together create a cascade of problems that eventually halt implementation. Understanding these drivers in an integrated manner is essential for designing policy and managerial responses that prevent abandonment and protect the socio-economic returns of infrastructure investments.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Infrastructural project abandonment remains a critical issue in developing countries, significantly affecting economic growth, infrastructure delivery, and public trust in governance systems. Abandoned projects are those initiated but left incomplete or non-functional despite substantial investment (World Bank, 2022; Abdul-Rahman et al., 2013). These projects are prevalent across sectors such as transportation, housing, healthcare, and utilities. A number of studies have identified poor planning and inadequate feasibility studies as major causes of project abandonment. Weak project conceptualization often results in unrealistic cost estimates and scheduling inefficiencies, leading to eventual failure (Akinmoladun & Alabi, 2020; Damoah et al., 2015). In addition, financial constraints such as irregular funding, poor cash flow management, and budget misallocation significantly disrupt project continuity (Kelechi & Chinemerem, 2025; IIARD, 2025).

Governance-related challenges also play a significant role. Corruption, lack of transparency, and weak institutional frameworks contribute to inefficiencies in project delivery (Ofori & Ogunlana, 2021). Political instability and policy discontinuity especially in developing countries often result in the abandonment of projects initiated by previous administrations (Zuofa & Ochieng, 2014). Furthermore, weak procurement systems and poor contract administration practices have been linked to project failure (Damoah et al., 2015; Ofori & Ogunlana, 2021). Technical and managerial deficiencies further compound the issue. A lack of skilled professionals, poor supervision, and ineffective project management practices contribute to delays and eventual abandonment (Abdul-Rahman et al., 2013). In addition, inadequate stakeholder engagement often results in a mismatch between project objectives and community needs, thereby reducing project sustainability (Chinasa, 2025).

The consequences of infrastructural project abandonment are extensive. Economically, abandoned projects lead to wastage of public funds and reduced return on investment (Lan, 2025; World Bank, 2022). Socially, they reduce access to essential services and contribute to unemployment and declining living standards. Environmentally, abandoned sites may result in land degradation and urban blight (Lan, 2025). In countries like Nigeria, the situation is worsened by weak regulatory enforcement and ineffective monitoring systems (IIARD, 2025; Akinmoladun & Alabi, 2020). To address this issue, scholars recommend improved feasibility studies, effective financial planning, and stronger institutional frameworks. Enhancing transparency in procurement processes and ensuring accountability in project execution are also essential (Ofori & Ogunlana, 2021). Additionally, stakeholder participation, policy continuity, and the adoption of sustainable procurement practices are critical in reducing infrastructural project abandonment in developing countries.

2.1 Factors Causing Infrastructural Project Abandonment

Infrastructure is a critical element for the growth and development of any country. However, in the study area, the abandonment of infrastructural projects has become a common occurrence, with most projects being left uncompleted, and others not even getting off the ground. Numerous factors have been identified by scholars as causing project abandonment. Ayodele and Alabi (2011) highlighted significant causes of project abandonment, including inadequate planning, finance, inflation, contractor bankruptcy, project scope variation, politics, client death, delayed payments, and incompetent project managers. Embarking on projects without needed analysis, lack of social analysis of a project, project imposition, improper financial analysis, underbidding of projects, and lack of technical analysis as major and contemporary causes of project abandonment. Other factors that could cause project abandonment include non-issuance of white paper on abandoned projects investigation panels" reports, granting of ex parte injunction to defaulting contractors, inefficient/ineffective legal system, inadequate/lack of budgetary allocation, project mismatch, high cost of financing capital projects, lack of true leaders, and lack of strategic plan to aid project planning. All these will eventually have effect on the construction activities leading to difference in the opinions of the construction professionals.

2.1.1 Financial constraints and funding instability

Lack of reliable funding either because budget allocations are insufficient, funds are released late, or projects are under-financed from the outset — is repeatedly cited as a primary cause of project stalling and abandonment in developing countries. Studies show that once disbursements are delayed or contingent payments fail, contractors' downscale activities or stop work, leading to cost escalation and suspension of construction (Jerisco, 2023). Shortfalls in public budgets, currency depreciation and rising material costs (inflation) further exacerbate budget gaps and make originally feasible projects unaffordable without re-scoping or re-tendering (Obakin et al., 2024).

2.1.2 Poor project planning, feasibility assessment and scope management

Inadequate front-end planning including weak feasibility studies, unrealistic cost and time estimates, and poor definition of project scope is a recurrent explanation for abandonment. Projects that begin without rigorous technical, environmental and social appraisal often encounter unforeseen site problems, inaccurate cost forecasts, or unrealistic schedules; when these problems emerge, funders or clients may suspend work rather than adjust budgets, triggering abandonment (Research on stalled projects, 2023). Several authors argue that stronger early-stage appraisal and stricter gate-keeping during project selection can prevent many later failures.

2.1.3 Governance failures, corruption and procurement weaknesses

A large body of literature links corruption and opaque procurement processes to the awarding of contracts to underqualified firms, inflated contract sums, and subsequent non-performance. Corrupt tendering and kickbacks can result in contractors lacking capacity to complete works, while weak oversight and accountability systems allow poor performance to continue until projects collapse (Adagba et al., 2023). Governance weaknesses including ineffective audit systems, low enforcement of contract terms, and politicized awarding of contracts are structural drivers that turn project risks into actual abandonment.

2.1.4 Political interference, policy discontinuity and administrative turnover

Political changes often re-prioritize public investments. Incoming administrations may halt or reallocate funds from projects initiated by predecessors, causing abandonment or long suspensions (Jerisco, 2023; Obakin et al., 2024). Studies report that when projects are used as campaign symbols rather than as part of a multi-cycle plan, continuity is fragile; political interference in execution, frequent changes in project leadership, and lack of bipartisan project protection also raise abandonment risk.

2.1.5 Weak monitoring, supervision and contract management

Insufficient monitoring of contractor performance and lax enforcement of contractual obligations allow delays and quality problems to worsen. Without robust supervision, early signs of trouble (e.g., slow mobilization, quality lapses, non-availability of materials) are often missed or ignored, and corrective measures are not implemented timely, increasing the probability of suspension or termination (Adagba et al., 2023). Good contract management including performance bonds, timely inspections and escalation procedures — is therefore critical.

2.1.6 Technical, land-related and environmental constraints

Physical problems such as unforeseen geotechnical conditions, difficulty in land acquisition, unresolved compensation claims, or environmental constraints and litigation can stall implementation or make a project unviable. In many developing contexts, unclear land tenure and protracted compensation negotiations lead to stoppages that are costly to resolve; if costs escalate beyond available budgets, projects are abandoned (Obakin et al., 2024).

2.1.7 Community opposition and stakeholder disengagement

Projects that lack meaningful stakeholder engagement can provoke community resistance, legal challenges, or social conflicts that delay or stop construction. The literature highlights that poor communication with local communities, lack of benefit-sharing, or perceived negative impacts can transform a technical or managerial problem into a political one. Community opposition has been documented as an important proximate cause of abandonment in urban housing and public works projects (Obakin et al., 2024).

2.1.8 Macroeconomic shocks and external risks

Macro shocks sudden currency depreciation, commodity price shocks, or financial crises may trigger funding shortfalls (especially for projects with imported inputs or foreign financing), making ongoing projects unaffordable or unsustainable without restructuring. These external risks are typically beyond local control but should be managed through contingency planning and contract provisions.

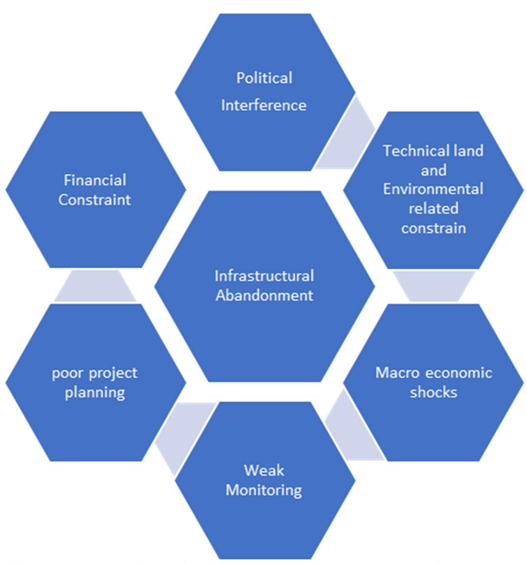

Figure 1: Infrastructural abandonment drivers

Recent empirical work emphasizes that abandonment usually follows a cascade: weak planning and poor procurement create latent vulnerabilities; funding delays and political interference expose these vulnerabilities; insufficient supervision permits problems to grow; and technical or community issues become final triggers (Adagba et al., 2023; Obakin et al., 2024). Thus, single-factor remedies are often insufficient integrated interventions across planning, financing, procurement and supervision are required.

3. METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research approach was adopted for this study focusing on gathering data from construction professionals within the Osun State Ministry of Works and Transport and the Federal Ministry of Works who are actively involved in procurement and administration of infrastructural projects. A sampling frame of 73 construction professionals from the State Ministry of Works and Transport was identified. Purposive sampling a non-probability technique was employed to select respondents considered most appropriate to fulfil the study objectives. A structured questionnaire with closed-ended items was administered which was developed based on review on existing literature ensuring the inclusion of relevant and appropriate items. Data were sourced from primary respondents at the Ministries of Works. Descriptive statistics were used to present and interpret the results. Tools included mean scores, standard deviations, percentages and relative importance indices (RII) where appropriate. Statistical analysis was executed using SPSS. The results were also subjected to T-test analysis.

The study distributed ninety (73) questionnaires to construction professionals within Osun State, out of which thirty-nine (39) were retrieved and found suitable for analysis, representing a response rate of 53.3%. Although the response rate may be considered moderate, it is regarded as adequate for construction management research where respondents are often difficult to access due to the demanding nature of professional practice. The retrieved responses were considered sufficient because the respondents possessed relevant professional experience and adequate knowledge relating to the subject matter of the study. Similar response rates have been adopted in previous construction-related studies and were found suitable for descriptive statistical analysis.

3.1 Study Population

The area of this study is Osun State in South-West Nigeria. The population for the study consists of construction professionals in Osun State Ministry of Works and Transport and Federal Ministry of Works. These are the Architects, Builders, Quantity Surveyors and Engineers (Civil, Mechanical and Electrical). These are essential professionals that are mostly involved in the procurement and administration of infrastructural projects in Osun State, Nigeria. These exclude Estate Valuers, Land Surveyors and Planners whose service are limited during the execution.

Table 1: Construction Professional in the State Ministry of Works and Transport, Osogbo.

Section	Arch.	Builders	Civil Engr.	Elec. Engr.	Mech. Engr.	Q/S	Total
State Ministry of Works and Transport Public Building	8	8	16	11	8	22	73

Source: State Ministry of Works, Abere, Osogbo, Osun state.

As at the time of taking this data from State Ministry of works and transport Osogbo, having indicated in the table that there are six (6) professionals which are Architect (8), Builders (8), Civil Engineers (16), Electrical Engineers (11), Mechanical Engineers (8) and Quantity Surveyors (22)

thereby giving a total of 73. Table 1 shows that higher percentage of the respondents work with the state government, the data collected indicated that 83.10 percent (%) works at the Ministry of Works and Transports, Osun state secretariat, Abere, Osogbo, Osun State.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Respondents General Information

Table 2 shows that out of seventy-three 73 questionnaires directed to the construction professionals at the Osun State Ministry of Works and Transport, Osogbo, thirty-nine questionnaires were returned given a response rate of 53.42%.

Table 2: Respondent rate of questionnaires administered to the state Ministry of works, Osogbo office

State Ministry of works and transports	Total
Number distributed	73
Number properly filled and returned	39
Percentage	53.42%

The percentage of the returned questionnaires can be considered appropriate and adequate for analysis. Also, the highest respondent is Quantity Surveyor which is of 61.5 percent (%), followed by Civil Engineer 23. 1 percent (%), Builder and Architect are of same percentage which is 7.7 percent (%) Also, based on the analysis of the highest academic qualifications of the respondents, the highest percentage of the respondents are BSc. /BTech degree holders with 51.3 percent (%), 23.1 percent (%) of the respondents have MSc, 12.8 percent (%) have Higher National Diploma (HND), 7.7 percent are Doctorate Degree holders (PhD), while none of responded has National Diploma (ND) as Highest academic qualification. The information obtained support the fact that the respondents are well knowledgeable and are capable of providing intelligent and judgmental opinion which will assist in achieving the aim of this research.

The result of the professional achievement of the respondents shows that respondent with MNIQS has the highest percentage with 61.5 percent. The results of the respondents‟ years of work experience in construction shows that majorities of the respondents have experience of 16- 20 years with a percentage of 56.4 (%), followed by 11-15 years with a percentage of 28.2 (%), 6-10 years with 7.7 percent (%), above 21 years with 7.7 percent (%). Also, from the analysis, it shows that over 70 percent (%) of the respondents have over 16 years working experience; therefore, the respondents can be said to have adequate knowledge and experience to provide the right information that will help in achieving the aims of this research.

Table 3 Respondents' Profiles

Background	Parameter	Frequency	Percentage
Year of establishment of the firm	6-10 years	15	38.5
	16-20 years	10	25.6
	Above 20 years	14	35.9
	Total	**39**	**100.0**
Designation of the respondent	Quantity Surveyor	24	61.5
	Civil Engineer	9	23.1
	Architect	3	7.7
	Builder	3	7.7
	Total	**39**	**100.0**

Background	Parameter	Frequency	Percentage
Highest academic qualification of respondent	HND	5	12.8
	B.Sc/B.Tech	20	51.3
	M.Sc/M.Tech	9	23.1
	Ph.D	3	7.7
	PGD	2	5.1
	Total	**39**	**100.0**
Professional Achievement of the respondent	MNIQS	24	61.5
	Others	15	38.5
	Total	**39**	**100.0**
Years of Respondent Work experience on construction projects	6-10 years	3	7.7
	11-15 years	11	28.2
	16-20 years	22	56.4
	Above 21 years	3	7.7
	Total	**39**	**100.0**
How many Infrastructural projects have you been involved in the last 10 years?	6-10	3	7.7
	11-15	5	12.8
	16-20	20	51.3
	Above 21	11	28.2
	Total	**39**	**100.0**
How many were completed?	6 -10	9	23.1
	11-15	18	46.2
	16-20	5	12.8
	Above 21	7	17.9
	Total	**39**	**100.0**
How many were abandoned or initially	Less than 5	5	12.8
	6-10	25	64.1
	11-15	7	17.9
	16-20 years	2	5.1
	Total	**39**	**100.0**

Table 4: Identification of Factors causing Infrastructural Projects abandonment.

Factors Causing Infrastructural Project Abandonment	Mean	S.D	Rank
Poor project planning and management	4.66	0.477	1st
Inefficient project implementation or project delays	4.38	0.59	2nd
Corruption or mismanagement of funds	4.35	0.58	3rd
Insufficient funding or budget constraints	4.23	1.20	4th
Government policies or regulations	4.17	0.75	5th
Inflation or cost escalation	4.15	0.74	6th
Inadequate project monitoring and evaluation	4.12	0.80	7th
Political instability or changes in government	4.05	0.45	8th
Inadequate maintenance and upkeep plans	3.94	0.94	9th
Economic downturn or financial crises	3.79	0.65	10th

Factors Causing Infrastructural Project Abandonment	Mean	S.D	Rank
Lack of stakeholder engagement and communication	3.66	0.57	11th
Technical challenges or feasibility problems	3.51	1.07	12th
Delays in obtaining necessary permits or approvals	3.48	0.94	13th
Inadequate risk assessment and contingency planning	3.43	0.71	14th
Environmental concerns or issues	3.35	1.40	15th
Social unrest or conflicts in the project area	3.30	1.05	16th
Land acquisition or property disputes	3.28	0.88	17th
Lack of skilled labour or expertise	3.25	1.46	18th
Unforeseen geological or geotechnical challenges	3.20	0.86	19th
Lack of community support or opposition	3.15	1.81	20th

The analysis of factors causing Infrastructural Projects abandonment as presented in Table 2 showed that Poor project planning and management with over all mean score of 4.67 ranking is the most significant factor causing infrastructural projects abandonment, this is hydra-headed factor that often characterize human activities especially where are no systems to check its prevalence. The results agreed with previous studies by Adeleke (2005), Makalah (2008), and Oyelola (2010) cited in Olalusi and Otunola (2012); Onyekwelu, et al. (2018); Okunola et al. (2019); Ayodele et al. (2011) that Poor project planning and management as a significant factor contributing to infrastructural project abandonment.

Furhermore, the result of Inefficient project implementation or project delays with overall mean score of 4.389, rank 2nd shows to be a very significant factor having close overall mean score with that of poor project planning and management. This agreed with Oladapo, et al. (2018) which opined that inadequate funding of infrastructural projects is also a significant factor in project abandonment. Other very significant factors are Corruption or mismanagement of funds overall mean score of 4.36 ranking 3rd and Insufficient funding or budget constraints with overall mean score of 4.23 ranking 4th, this agreed with Ibeto (2011) that insufficient funds in governance is a significant factor resulting to infrastructural projects abandonment. Alao and Jagboro (2017) and Ewa (2013) stated that Inadequacy in budgetary allocation result to cost overrun which is the most significant effect of infrastructural project abandonment.

Government policies or regulations overall mean score of 4.18 rank 5th, Inflation or cost escalation with overall mean score of 4.16 rank 6th and Inadequate project monitoring and evaluation with overall mean score of 4.13 ranked 7th are also significant factors but not as most significant as the aforementioned factors. Less significant factors were; Economic downturn or financial crises with overall mean score of 3.79 ranked 10th, Lack of stakeholder engagement and communication with overall mean score of 3. 67 ranked 11th, Technical challenges or feasibility problems with overall mean score of 3. 53 ranked 12 th, Delays in obtaining necessary permits or approvals with overall mean score of 3.49 ranked 13th, Inadequate risk assessment and contingency planning with overall mean score of 3.46 ranked 14th, Environmental concerns or issues with overall mean score of 3.42 ranked 15th, Social unrest or conflicts in the project area with overall mean score of 3. 30 ranked 16th, Land acquisition or property disputes with overall mean score of 3.28 ranked 17th, Lack of skilled labour or expertise with overall mean score of 3. 26 ranked 18th, Unforeseen geological or geotechnical challenges with overall mean score of 3.20 ranked 19th and Lack of community support or opposition with overall mean score of 3.16 ranked 20th.

Project planning and management, Inefficient project implementation or project, Corruption or mismanagement of funds, Insufficient funding or budget constraints, Government policies or regulations, Inflation or cost escalation, Inadequate project monitoring and evaluation and Political instability or changes in government, which were all considered to be more significant by overall analysis were also considered to be more significant by construction professionals in the both state ministry of works in Osun State, except that Inadequate maintenance and upkeep plans with mean score of 3.94 from the State ministry of works analysis. While other 7 factors were all considered less significant by the overall analysis.

The results were also subjected to T-test analysis, it was shown there is no statistically significant difference at 5% level, in the responses of the construction professionals at the State ministry of works and transports on 10 out of 20 of the factors causing infrastructural projects abandonment. These factors are: Poor project planning and management, Inefficient project implementation or project, Corruption or mismanagement of funds, Insufficient funding or budget constraints, Government policies or regulations, Inflation or cost escalation and Inadequate project monitoring and evaluation, Political instability or changes in government. This means that their opinions are the same on these variables. While, there is a statistically significant difference in the respondents" opinion on other variables, these variables are Inadequate maintenance and upkeep plans (p-value = .000), Economic downturn or financial crises (p-value = .002), Lack of stakeholder engagement and communication (p-value = .000), Technical challenges or feasibility problems (p-value = .000), environmental concerns or issues (p-value = .000), environmental concerns or issues (p-value = .024).

The descriptive analysis of respondents' profiles indicated that a large majority of the respondents had extensive professional experience (over 16 years for more than 70%), held BSc/BTech degrees or higher and were primarily quantity surveyors or civil engineers. This provides assurance of their expertise and judgmental capability for the subject matter. On the causative factors of infrastructural project abandonment, the findings corroborate existing literature: poor project planning and management registered the highest mean score (4.66), signaling its primacy as the root cause. Also ranking highly were inefficient project implementation/delays (4.38) and corruption or mismanagement of funds (4.35). Insufficient funding or budget constraints (4.23) and government policies/regulations (4.18) were also significant.

4.2 Summary of Findings

The study found that, Poor project planning and management with over all mean score of 4.75 ranking is the most significant factor causing infrastructural projects abandonment. Inefficient project implementation or project delays with overall mean score of 4.43, rank, Corruption or mismanagement of funds overall mean score of 4.35. Insufficient funding or budget constraints with overall mean score of 4.23, Government policies or regulations overall mean score of 4.17, Inflation or cost escalation with overall mean score of 4.15, Inadequate project monitoring and evaluation with overall mean score of 4.12. From the summary of findings, Poor project planning and management, Inefficient project implementation or project, Corruption or mismanagement of funds, Insufficient funding or budget constraints, Government policies or regulations, Inflation or cost escalation, Inadequate project monitoring and evaluation and Political instability or changes in government are the most significant factors Causing Infrastructural Projects Abandonment.

5.CONCLUSION

From the findings, it is evident that infrastructural project abandonment in Osun State is driven principally by poor project planning and management, inefficient project implementation or delays, corruption or mismanagement of funds, insufficient funding or budget constraints, and unfavorable

government policies/regulations. These causative factors translate into significant adverse economic effects — most notably infrastructure decay, job losses and decreased investor confidence — which undermine national and state economic growth prospects. The most effective mitigating strategies to reduce the incidence of abandonment are securing adequate funding allocation, conducting robust planning and feasibility studies, and ensuring effective project management and oversight.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study contributes to the body of knowledge by providing information on the prevailing factors influencing the delivery of infrastructural project abandonment. It provides updated empirical evidence on infrastructural project abandonment specifically in Osun State, Nigeria. It demonstrates that in the Nigerian context, foundational project governance (planning, funding and management) remains the dominant pathway to preventing abandonment. It highlights a gap in stakeholder engagement, maintenance planning and environmental sustainability as relatively under-prioritized in practitioners' perceptions. Identification of under-researched areas: The review flags the relative paucity of robust longitudinal studies tracing projects from appraisal through abandonment, and calls for more mixed-methods and time-series research that quantifies economic costs across sectors and examines legal/institutional remedies empirically.

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