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Examining the Effectiveness of Risk Management Processes in Project Performance Management: A Case Study of the Lusaka City Water Supply Improvement Project Phase One

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Abstract

Effective risk management is critical in large-scale infrastructure projects, where technical, financial, and operational uncertainties can significantly affect project outcomes. This study examined the effectiveness of risk management processes in enhancing project performance, using the Lusaka City Water Supply Improvement Project Phase One as a case study. The study focused on how risks are identified, assessed, and mitigated, and evaluates the impact of these processes on key performance indicators such as schedule adherence, budget control, and quality standards. The study shows that risk management in the Lusaka City Water Supply Improvement Project is mainly focused on technical and financial risks, identified largely through brainstorming (30%) and supported by structured tools such as the risk breakdown structure (42%), with risks reviewed monthly by 40% of respondents. Risk mitigation emphasizes reduction strategies (40%) and avoidance (30%), selected mainly through cost-benefit analysis (40%) and implemented by the project management team (40%) using budget allocations (40%). Project performance improvements are concentrated on schedule adherence and budget control (30% each), measured primarily through schedule and budget comparison (40%). Risk mitigation is identified as the most influential factor for project success (40%), and the chi square test confirms a significant association between risk management activities and performance measurement methods ($\chi^2 = 96.667$, df = 6, p = 0.003). Overall, the findings indicate that active risk mitigation supports measurable project efficiency, though its impact is constrained by limited team capacity and stakeholder involvement (30% each). A case study exploratory design was used with a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to Camfed staff, project partners, and community representatives. Primary data were analyzed using STATA software, with descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and means used to summarize findings. Chi-square tests were applied to assess associations between study variables. The study concluded that the Lusaka City Water Supply Improvement Project employed a structured, mainly qualitative approach to risk management, focusing on technical and financial risks identified through brainstorming, checklists, expert input, and historical data. Risk mitigation was largely handled internally, guided by cost-benefit analysis and risk severity, with active strategies such as reduction, avoidance, and contingency planning. Effective risk management improved schedule adherence, budget control, and quality, benefiting both the project team and stakeholders. However, constraints including limited team capacity, low stakeholder involvement, inadequate tools, and budget limitations reduced overall impact, highlighting the need for broader participation and resource allocation.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Risk Management Processes, Project Performance Management

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Risk management is a core component of project performance management. It involves the systematic identification, analysis, response, and monitoring of risks that may affect project objectives related to cost, time, quality, scope, and service delivery (Akinboboye, 2021). In infrastructure projects, risk management processes are used to reduce uncertainty, limit disruptions,

and support informed decision making throughout the project life cycle.

Globally, large water supply and sanitation projects face persistent risks arising from funding constraints, technical complexity, climate variability, institutional capacity gaps, and stakeholder coordination challenges (Alaerts). Over time, international project management standards and conventions have emphasized proactive risk planning as a requirement for achieving sustainable infrastructure outcomes. These developments reflect a shift from reactive problem solving toward preventive risk control as a foundation of performance management (Builti, 2023).

In developing countries, the effectiveness of risk management remains uneven. Rapid urbanization, aging infrastructure, limited financial resources, and governance constraints increase exposure to project risks. As a result, governments and development partners increasingly require formal risk management frameworks in publicly funded infrastructure projects (Jiang, 2024).

The Lusaka City Water Supply Improvement Project Phase One provides a relevant context for examining these issues. As a large scale urban water project, it involves multiple stakeholders, complex technical activities, and significant financial investment (Ncube, 2024). The way risks are identified, assessed, mitigated, and monitored throughout the project has direct implications for schedule adherence, cost control, quality outcomes, and overall project success. Understanding how risk management processes operate in practice within this project offers insight into the link between risk management and performance management in the local context (Lombanya, 2020).

1.2 Statement of the problem

The Lusaka City Water Supply Improvement Project (LCWSIP) represents a critical intervention to alleviate Lusaka's chronic water shortages, yet persistent procurement risk management failures have undermined its implementation, resulting in project delays, cost overruns, and substandard contractor performance (Mulambia, 2020). These challenges are not isolated they reflect a broader pattern of inefficiency in Zambia's public infrastructure procurement, where weak risk assessment, poor contract supervision, and reactive decision-making frequently derail projects (Nyundu, 2024). Globally, a study by Alaert (2022) confirms that poor procurement risk management is a leading cause of infrastructure project failure, particularly in water and sanitation sectors where supply chain disruptions and contractual disputes are common. In sub-Saharan Africa, these risks are compounded by volatile material costs, weak regulatory enforcement, and capacity gaps in public institutions (Ncube, 2024). The LCWSIP case exemplifies these systemic issues, where delayed tendering, unplanned contract variations, and disputes with suppliers have eroded project efficiency. Without structured risk mitigation, such projects face escalating costs, missed deadlines, and compromised service delivery jeopardizing millions in public and donor funds. This study directly addresses this problem by: Analyzing LCWSIP's project risk management framework to identify gaps in risk identification, allocation, and mitigation. By bridging the gap between policy and practice, this research will provide actionable strategies to minimize procurement risks, safeguard public investments, and ensure timely water infrastructure delivery in Zambia and similar contexts.

1.3 General Objectives

To examine the effectiveness of Risk Management Processes in Project Performance management.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

1. To assess the risk identification methods used in the project performance of the Lusaka City Water Supply Improvement Project.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of risk mitigation strategies employed in managing project risks.
3. To identify the challenges affecting the implementation of project risk management processes.

1.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study explains the relationship between risk management processes and project performance management in the Lusaka City Water Supply Improvement Project Phase One. Risk management processes form the independent variable and include risk identification, risk analysis and assessment, risk response planning, and risk monitoring and control (George, 2020). These processes aim to reduce uncertainty and guide project actions during implementation. Project performance management is the dependent variable and is reflected through cost performance, time or schedule performance, quality performance, scope achievement, and service delivery outcomes. Effective risk management processes are expected to support better control of project resources, adherence to schedules, and achievement of quality and service objectives (Bhalti, 2023). The framework also recognizes the role of mediating factors such as decision making quality, resource allocation, communication, and coordination. These factors influence how risk information is interpreted and applied in managing the project.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Risk identification methods used in the project performance in water supply Improvement project

Risk identification forms the foundation of effective project performance management in water supply improvement projects. These projects involve complex systems that combine engineering works, financial planning, institutional coordination, and community interaction (Bhatti and Nazir, 2024; Bulti and Yutura, 2023). Because of this complexity, risks arise from multiple sources and often interact with each other. Technical risks may affect system functionality and reliability, financial risks may influence project affordability and continuity, institutional risks may slow decision making, environmental risks may disrupt construction or operation, and social risks may affect public acceptance and long-term use of the infrastructure (George, 2020; Giri, 2025). Early and systematic identification of these risks allows project teams to understand where failures may occur and how these failures could affect cost control, schedule adherence, quality of outputs, and service delivery outcomes (Akinboboye *et al*., 2021; Alaerts and Kaspersma, 2022). When risks are identified at an early stage, managers are better positioned to plan responses, allocate resources, and make informed decisions throughout the project life cycle (Bhatti and Nazir, 2024; Lombanya and Chileshe, 2020).

2.2 The effectiveness of risk mitigation strategies employed in managing project risks

Risk mitigation strategies play a key role in managing

project risks and supporting stable project performance, especially in large water supply improvement projects (Akinboboye *et al*., 2021; Bulti and Yutura, 2023). Once risks are identified and assessed, mitigation strategies aim to reduce the likelihood of risk occurrence, limit potential impacts, or both. The effectiveness of these strategies depends on how early they are applied, how well they are matched to the nature of the risks, and how consistently they are monitored during implementation (Bhatti and Nazir, 2024; Alaerts and Kaspersma, 2022). In water supply projects, effective risk mitigation contributes to better control of cost, time, quality, and service delivery outcomes (Mulamba, 2020).

One commonly applied mitigation strategy is risk avoidance, which focuses on changing project plans to eliminate certain risks altogether (George, 2020; Giri, 2025). Monitoring and review mechanisms enhance the effectiveness of all risk mitigation strategies. Regular risk reviews, updated risk registers, and performance reporting help project teams track changes in risk levels and adjust mitigation measures accordingly (Alazaiza *et al*., 2022; Radzi *et al*., 2024). Risk retention is used when risks are unavoidable or when mitigation costs exceed potential impacts (George, 2020; Mulamba, 2020). Risk transfer is another widely used mitigation strategy, particularly in construction contracts (Akinboboye *et al*., 2021).

2.3 Challenges affecting the implementation of project risk in water supply Improvement project

One of the most significant challenges affecting the implementation of project risk management in water supply improvement projects is the lack of adequate risk management knowledge and expertise among project teams (Akinboboye *et al*., 2021; Alaerts and Kaspersma, 2022).

Financial constraints and budget limitations constitute another major challenge affecting the implementation of project risk management (Abuye, 2023; Beker and Kansal, 2024). Water supply improvement projects are typically capital-intensive and require substantial investment for civil works, equipment procurement, treatment facilities, and distribution networks (Abdel Wahaab *et al*., 2021; Bolinches *et al*., 2022).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study adopted an exploratory case study, utilizing a mixed method approach.

3.2 Target population

The study population comprises all entities involved in LCWSIP procurement processes during 2018-2023 implementation phases.

3.3 Sample size

The sample size for this study consisted 50 participants.

3.4 Sampling

Convenience sampling approach was used to select the study sample.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

The study made use of a semi-structured questionnaire, which included both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Primary data was gathered through administration of questionnaires.

4. Result Presentation

4.1 Presentation of results on background characteristics of the respondents

The sample had an gender distribution of 85% male and 15% female respondents.

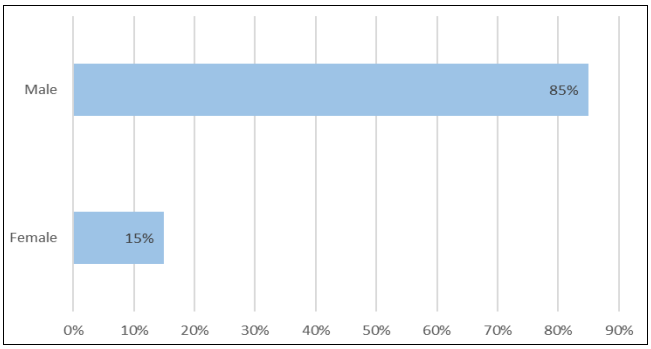

Fig 4.1.1: Participant's gender

The respondents were fairly well-educated, with the largest groups holding a bachelor's degree (60%), Masters' Degrees (15%), or Higher Education Diplomas/Certificates 20% and 5% had a PhD.

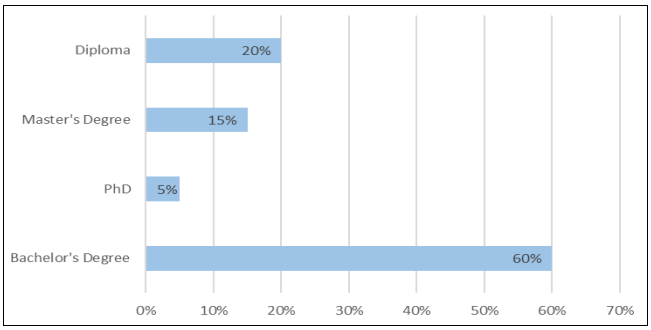

Fig 4.1.2: Education Background

4.2 Risk identification methods used in the project performance of the Lusaka City Water Supply Improvement Project

Brainstorming sessions were reported by 15 respondents (30%) as the primary method for identifying risks. Checklist analysis was cited by 12 respondents (24%), expert interviews by 10 respondents (20%), document reviews by 8 respondents (16%), and other methods by 5 respondents (10%).

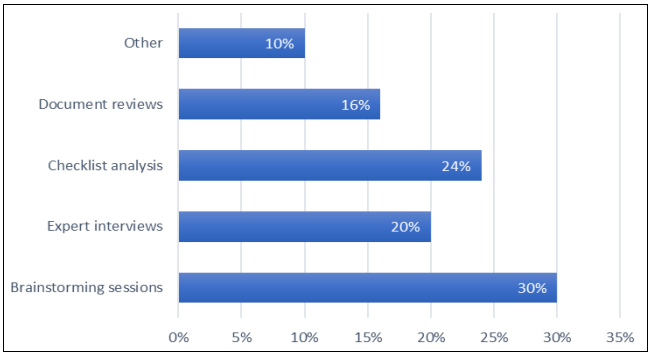

Fig 4.2.1: Methods used to identify risks

Monthly risk reviews were reported by 20 respondents (40%), quarterly reviews by 15 respondents (30%), reviews at each project milestone by 10 respondents (20%), and reviews only at project initiation by 5 respondents (10%).

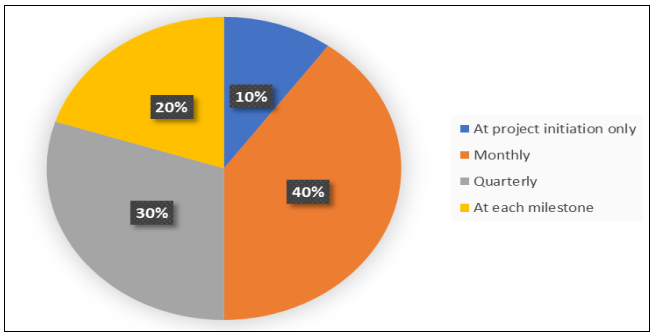

Fig 4.2.2: Frequency of risk reviews

Technical risks were reported by 20 respondents (40%), financial risks by 15 respondents (30%), operational risks by 8 respondents (16%), environmental risks by 5 respondents (10%), and social/community risks by 2 respondents (4%). This indicates a focus on risks that directly impact project execution, while environmental and social risks are less emphasized.

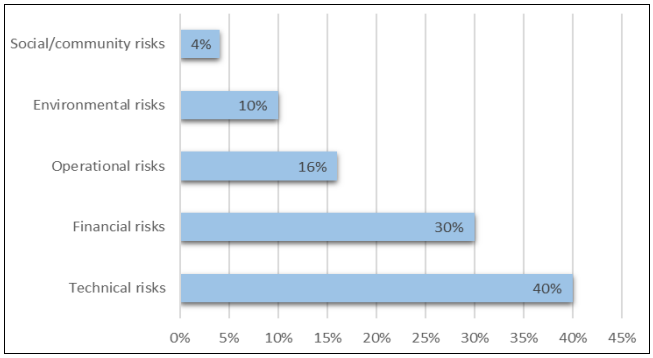

Fig 4.2.3: Types of risks identified

The risk breakdown structure (RBS) was used by 21 respondents (42%), SWOT analysis and FMEA by 12 respondents each (24%), Monte Carlo simulations by 5 respondents (10%). This indicates that structured qualitative and semi-quantitative methods are preferred over probabilistic tools.

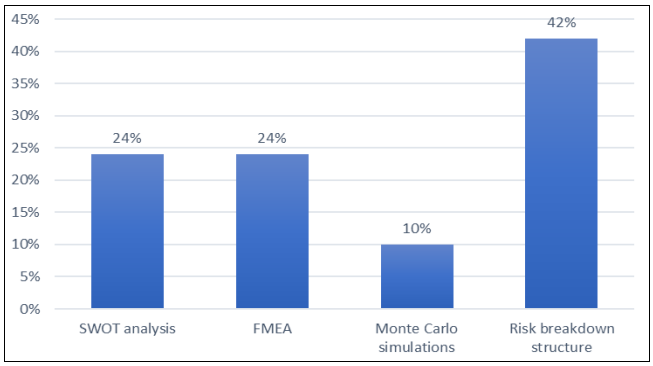

Fig 4.2.4: Tools used for risk identification

The project manager was reported as primarily responsible by 25 respondents (50%), the risk management team by 15 respondents (30%), all project staff by 5 respondents (10%), and external consultants by 5 respondents (10%). This suggests a predominantly top-down approach, with limited involvement of wider project personnel.

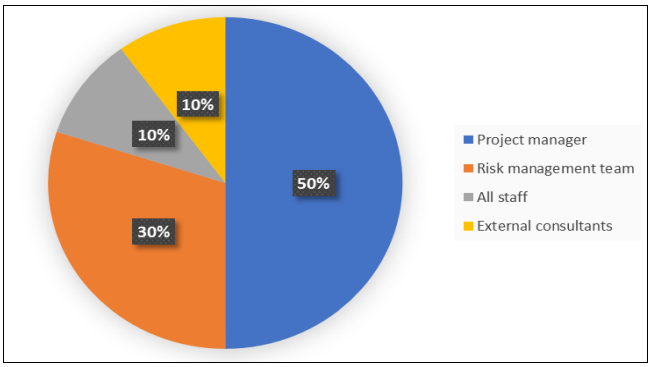

Fig 4.2.5: Responsibility for risk identification

Historical project data was used by 20 respondents (40%), stakeholder input by 15 respondents (30%), industry standards by 10 respondents (20%), regulatory reports by 3 respondents (6%), and other sources by 2 respondents (4%). This indicates reliance on internal knowledge and experience rather than external regulatory or industry benchmarks.

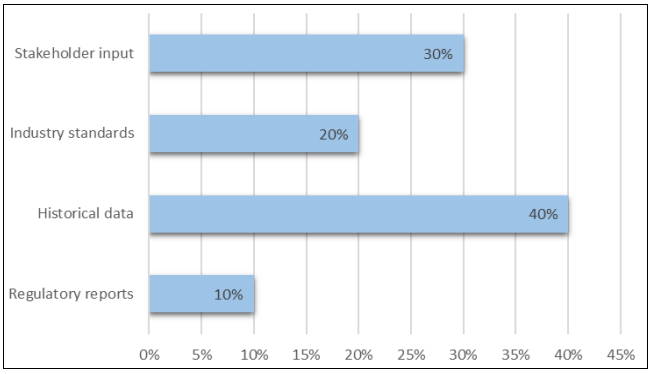

Fig 4.2.6: Sources of risk information

Technical complexity and budget constraints were each cited by 15 respondents (30%), schedule pressures by 10 respondents (20%), regulatory compliance by 5 respondents (10%), and stakeholder expectations by 5 respondents (10%). These statistics highlight a focus on operational and financial challenges as primary drivers for risk identification.

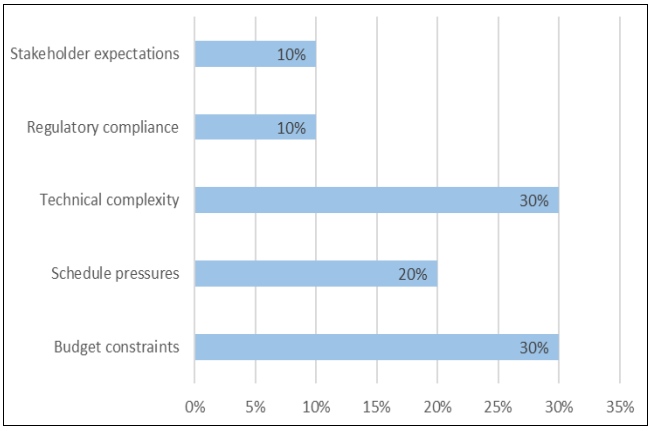

Fig 4.2.7: Factors driving risk identification

Probability × impact matrices were used by 20 respondents (40%), high/medium/low classifications by 18 respondents (36%), urgency/frequency by 5 respondents (10%), and departmental allocation by 5 respondents (14%). This suggests that prioritization is based mainly on severity and likelihood.

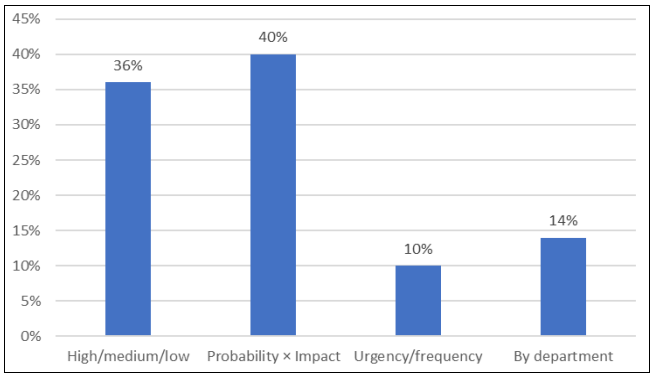

Fig 4.2.8: Risk categorization

The risk register was used by 30 respondents (60%), the risk management plan by 10 respondents (20%), project charter by 5 respondents (14%), and meeting minutes by 3 respondents (6%). This shows that formal documentation through the risk register is standard practice.

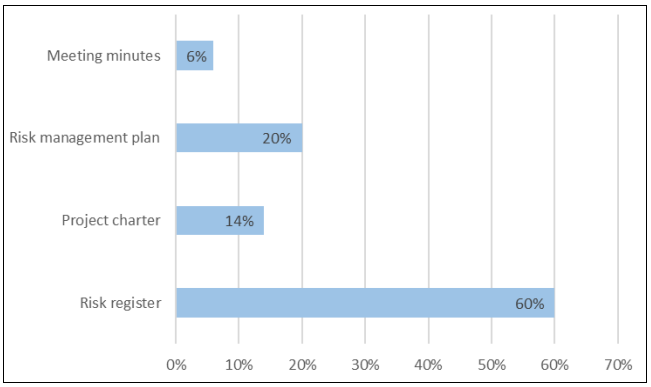

Fig 4.2.9: Document used to record risks

Peer review was reported by 20 respondents (40%), historical comparison by 15 respondents (30%), external consultants by 10 respondents (20%), and stakeholder confirmation by 5 respondents (10%). This indicates that validation relies mainly on internal review and past project experience.

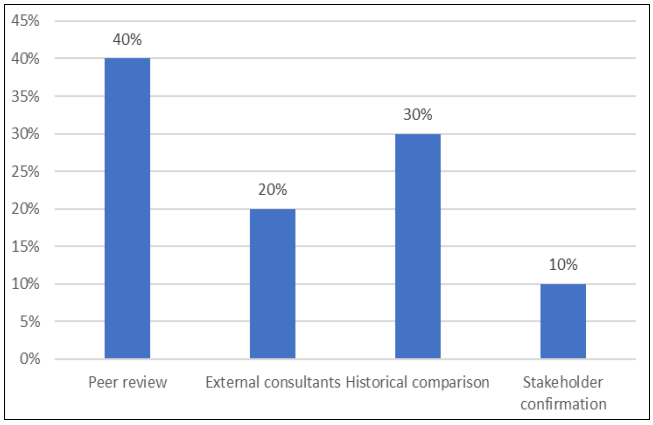

Fig 4.2.10: Risk validation methods

4.3 Risk Mitigation Strategies

Mitigation/reduction strategies were applied by 20 respondents (40%), avoidance by 15 respondents (30%), transfer by 10 respondents (20%), and acceptance by 5 respondents (10%). This shows that the project actively addresses risks rather than accepting or outsourcing them.

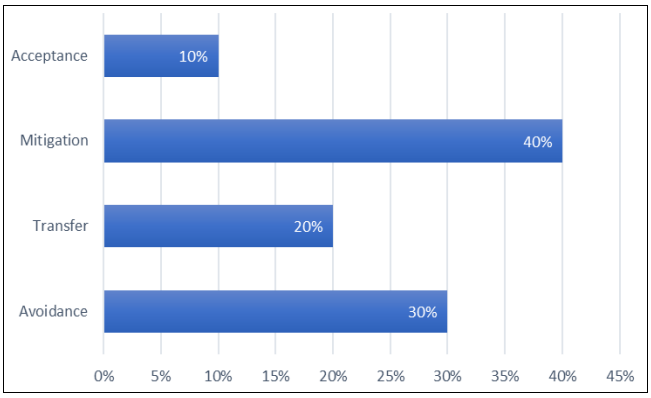

Fig 4.3.1: Types of mitigation strategies used

Cost-benefit analysis guided strategy selection for 20 respondents (40%), risk severity ranking for 15 respondents (30%), stakeholder consultation for 10 respondents (20%), and regulatory requirements for 5 respondents (10%). This demonstrates that economic feasibility and risk magnitude are key considerations.

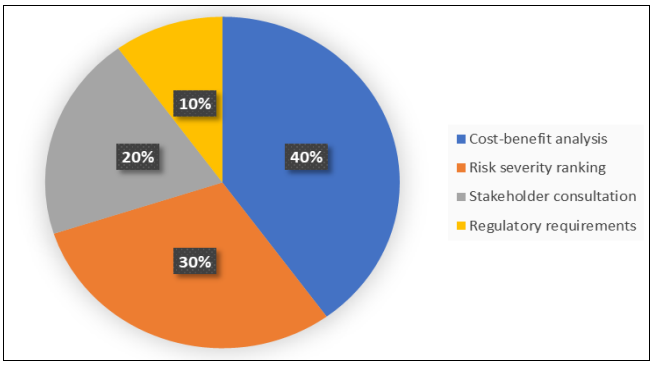

Fig 4.3.2: Basis for selecting strategies

The project management team implemented mitigation for 20 respondents (40%), the risk management unit for 15 respondents (30%), department heads for 10 respondents (20%), and external consultants for 5 respondents (10%). This shows that mitigation is largely handled internally.

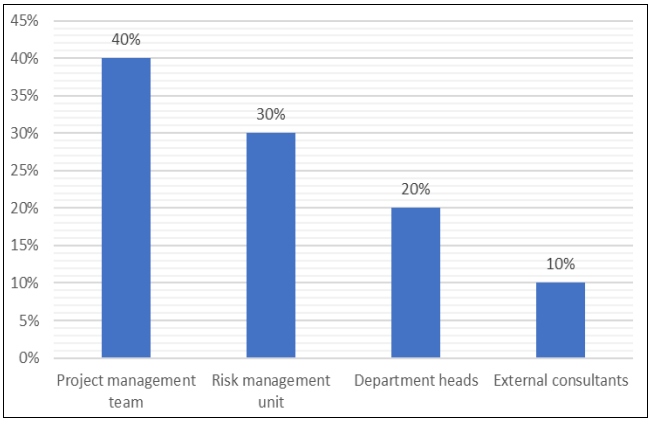

Fig 4.3.3: Teams implementing mitigation

Updates after major project changes were reported by 20 respondents (40%), quarterly by 15 respondents (30%), as needed by 10 respondents (20%), and only at project initiation by 5 respondents (10%). This indicates that mitigation updates are reactive to project developments.

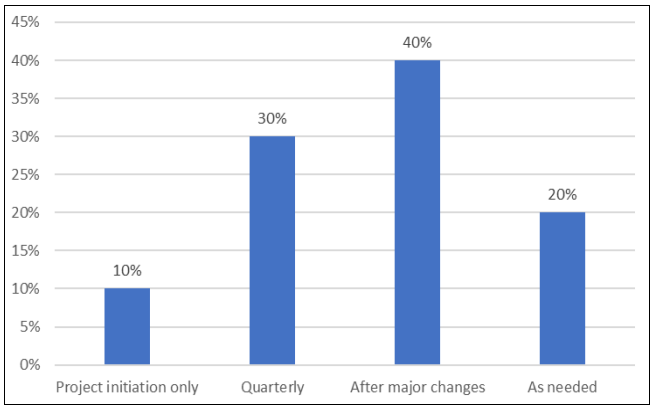

Fig 4.3.4: Frequency of updating mitigation strategies

Budget allocations were reported by 20 respondents (40%), human resources by 15 respondents (30%), technical tools by 10 respondents (20%), and external services by 5 respondents (10%). This emphasizes the importance of financial and personnel resources for effective mitigation.

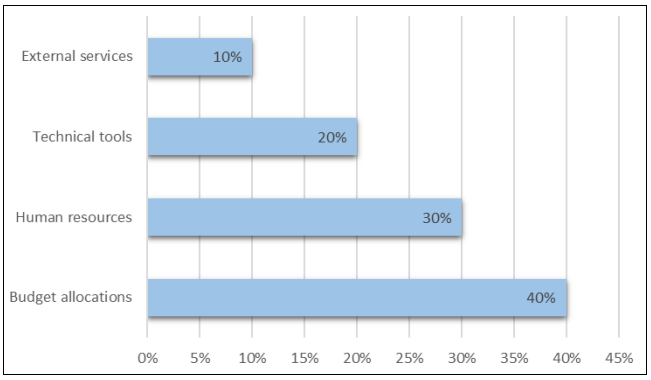

Fig 4.3.5: Resources for mitigation

Financial and technical risks were mitigated by 15 respondents each (30%), operational risks by 10 respondents (20%), environmental risks by 5 respondents (10%), and social/community risks by 5 respondents (10%). This indicates prioritization of risks that affect core project outcomes.

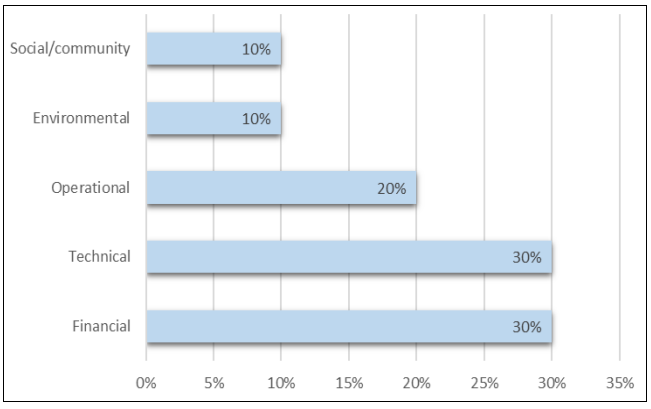

Fig 4.3.6: Types of risks mitigated

Project meetings were used by 20 respondents (40%), risk plan documents by 15 respondents (30%), emails/memos by 10 respondents (20%), and dashboards by 5 respondents (10%). Face-to-face communication appears preferred.

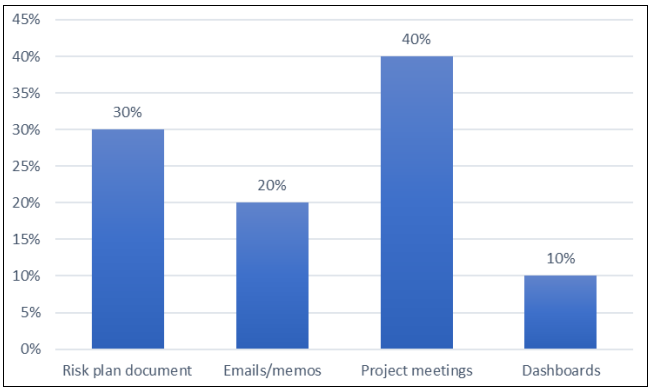

Fig 4.3.7: Communication of mitigation plans

Reduced cost overruns were reported by 20 respondents (40%), reduced delays by 15 respondents (30%), fewer complaints by 10 respondents (20%), and risk tracking by 5 respondents (10%). This shows that mitigation effectiveness is evaluated based on measurable project outcomes.

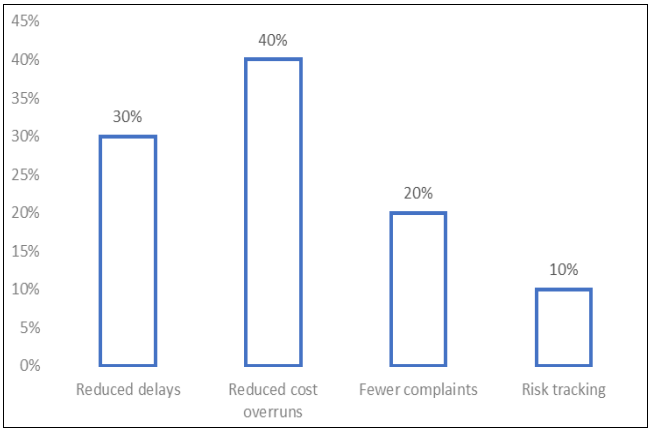

Fig 4.3.8: Evaluation of mitigation effectiveness

Cost was the main factor for 20 respondents (40%), potential project impact for 15 respondents (30%), likelihood of occurrence for 10 respondents (20%), and time required for implementation for 5 respondents (10%). Economic feasibility and risk severity dominate decision-making.

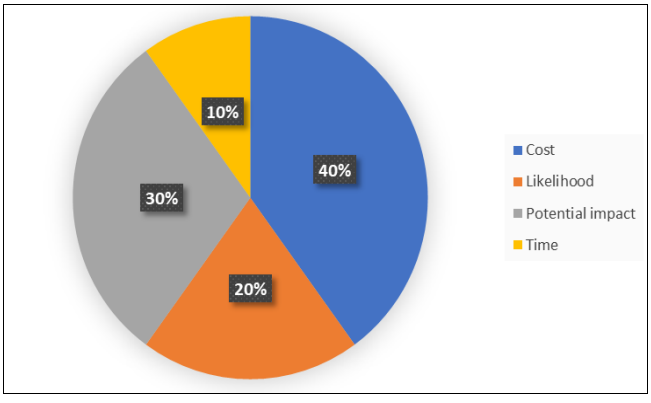

Fig 4.3.9: Factors influencing choice of mitigation strategy

4.4 Effects of risk management on project performance

Schedule adherence and budget control were cited by 15 respondents each (30%), quality standards by 10 respondents (20%), stakeholder satisfaction by 5 respondents (10%), and safety compliance by 5 respondents (10%). This shows that risk management primarily enhances operational efficiency and cost control.

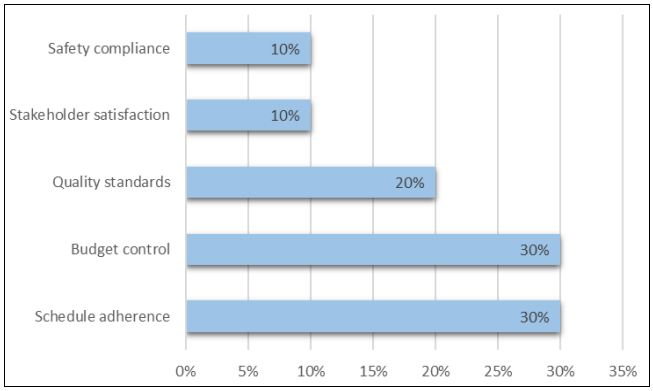

Fig 4.4.1: Project performance areas improved

Schedule/budget comparison was used by 20 respondents (40%), reduction in risk incidents by 15 respondents (30%), stakeholder feedback by 10 respondents (20%), and internal audits by 5 respondents (10%). This emphasizes quantitative measures over subjective assessments.

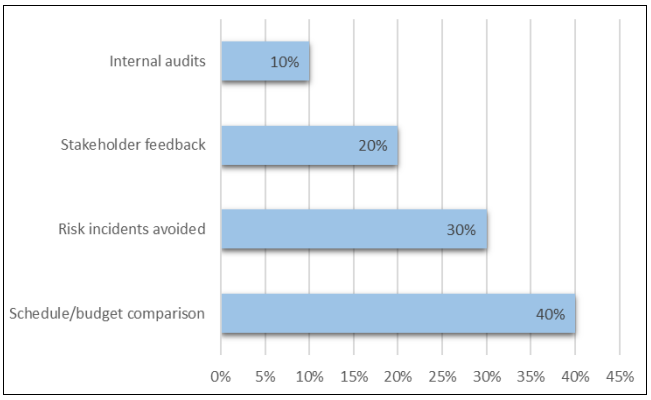

Fig 4.4.2: Performance measurement after risk management

Risk mitigation was most cited by 20 respondents (40%), risk identification and monitoring by 10 respondents each (20%). This shows that active mitigation is the most influential factor for project success.

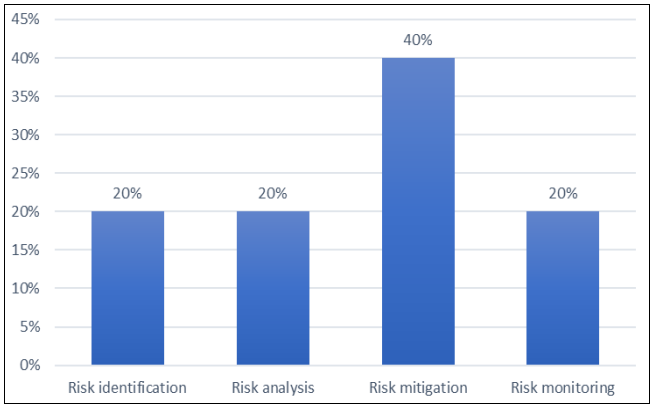

Fig 4.4.3: Risk management activity contributing most to success

The chi square analysis shows a statistically significant relationship between the methods used to measure project performance after risk management and the risk management activities contributing most to project success ($\chi^2 = 96.667$, df = 6, p = 0.003). The significant chi square result indicates that emphasis on active risk mitigation is closely associated with the use of objective, measurable performance indicators, confirming that project success is mainly assessed through cost and schedule control rather than subjective assessments.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	**df**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**
Pearson Chi-Square	96.667[a]	6	.003
Likelihood Ratio	112.288	6	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.820	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	100		

The project team benefited most (20 respondents, 40%), contractors, local community, and government each benefited for 10 respondents (20%). This shows that risk management positively impacts multiple stakeholders.

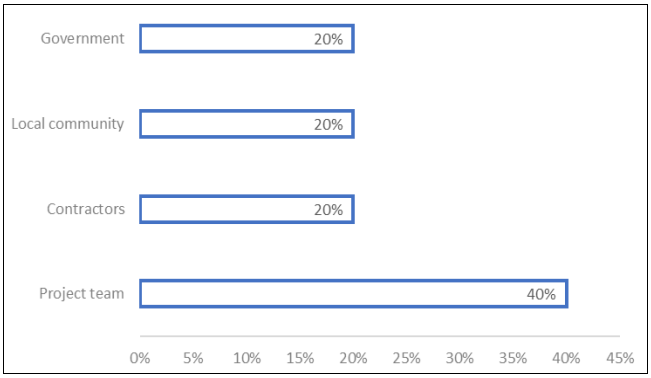

Fig 4.4.4: Beneficiaries of effective risk management

Risk register analysis was cited by 20 respondents (40%), Earned Value Management by 15 respondents (30%), Monte Carlo simulations by 10 respondents (20%), and post-project audits by 5 respondents (10%). Structured documentation and performance analytics are key for assessing impact.

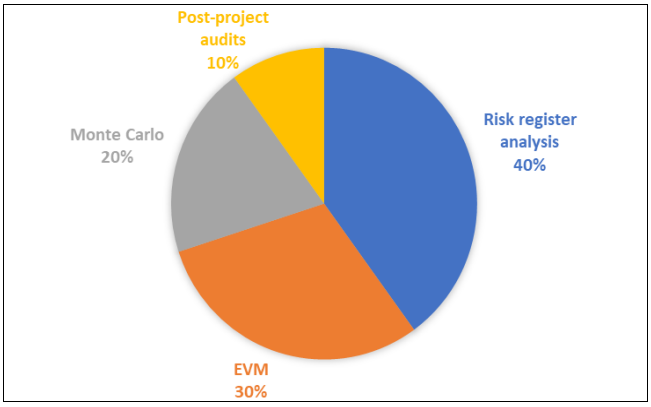

Fig 4.4.5: Tools linking risk management to performance

Preventive and corrective actions were each reported by 15 respondents (30%), contingency planning by 15 respondents (30%), and knowledge transfer/training by 5 respondents (10%). Proactive and responsive measures are critical for performance.

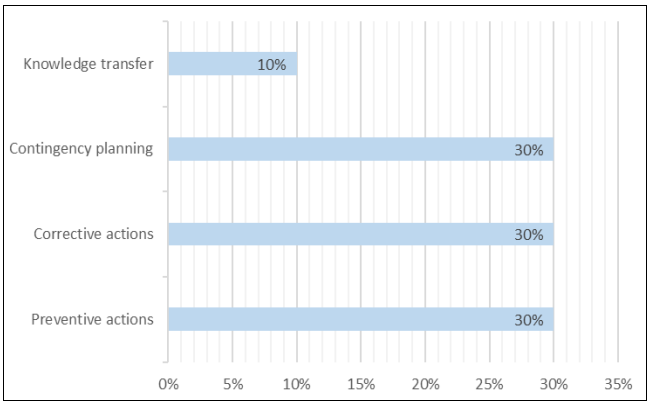

Fig 4.4.6: Risk management actions with greatest impact

Management reports, dashboards, and stakeholder meetings were each used by 15 respondents (30%), while project reviews were used by 5 respondents (10%). Multiple communication channels ensure transparency and stakeholder engagement.

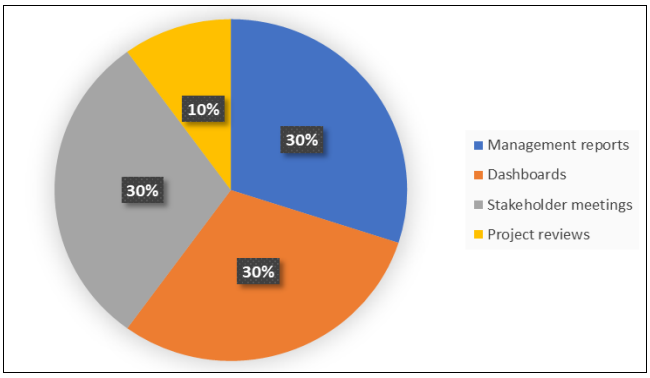

Fig 4.4.7: Reporting of project performance improvements

Limited team capacity and poor stakeholder involvement were each reported by 15 respondents (30%), inadequate tools by 10 respondents (20%), and insufficient budget by 10 respondents (20%). Human and participatory constraints limit the effectiveness of risk management interventions.

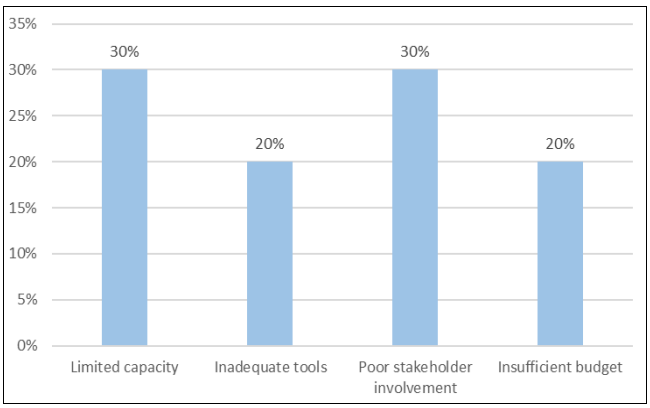

Fig 4.4.8: Factors limiting risk management impact

5. Discussion of study findings

The study findings reveal that stakeholder engagement at Camfed is implemented through structured but often inconsistent participatory practices. While meetings (45%) and monthly consultations (35%) form the backbone of communication, and qualitative feedback methods like interviews and focus groups are prioritized, significant gaps persist. Only 20% of respondents report consistent stakeholder consultation, and perceptions of inclusivity and role clarity remain mixed with just 25% viewing engagement as very inclusive and 30% finding roles very clearly defined. Despite the use of communication plans (45%) and joint decision-making (40%), these operational weaknesses suggest that stakeholder engagement often falls short of the systematic, institutionalized approach recommended in the literature.

The impact of engagement, however, is strongly positive and multi-faceted. It most significantly improves the quality of structures (40%) and fosters stronger local support (35%), while also transferring critical maintenance responsibility to community members (50%). Engagement enhances sustainability through local skills development (30%) and more efficient scheduling and site supervision (30% each). Crucially, transparent communication builds trust (40%), which underpins collaboration and accountability. Quantitative analysis confirms a statistically significant association between consultation frequency and perceived communication effectiveness, demonstrating that meaningful participation directly enhances project relevance, ownership, and outcomes, aligning with global evidence on participatory development.

Nevertheless, formidable barriers impede effective engagement. Resource constraints are paramount, with 40% of respondents identifying insufficient funds as the critical gap, and only 20% deeming resources very adequate. Logistical hurdles, stakeholder time limitations (35%), and low capacity (60% perceiving it as a significant factor) further restrict participation. Deep-seated cultural and social dynamics particularly leadership hierarchy (35%) and gender roles (30%) limit inclusivity, while technological limitations like poor network coverage (30%) hinder digital outreach. These interconnected challenges highlight that achieving consistent, high-quality engagement requires targeted investments in capacity building, adaptive and culturally sensitive strategies, and dedicated budgetary allocations to move from theory to sustained practice.

6. Conclusion

Stakeholder engagement in Camfed projects shows moderate effectiveness but is inconsistent across activities. Consultation occurs sometimes for most stakeholders, with a minority always consulted, indicating gaps in consistent involvement. Communication strategies are generally perceived as effective, and interactive methods such as community meetings and workshops are the most widely used and successful approaches. Respondents report moderate to high clarity of roles and incorporation of feedback, contributing to overall satisfaction and perceptions of inclusivity. Engagement strongly influences project outcomes, sustainability, successful completion, and community ownership. Active feedback, community input, and collaborative decision-making are key factors enhancing project quality, timeliness, and trust. Stakeholders' participation is recognized as critical for ownership and cooperation, which positively affects deliverables and project timelines. However, engagement is hindered by multiple barriers, including limited stakeholder interest, insufficient communication, resource constraints, cultural and language differences, and time limitations. Capacity gaps and ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms further reduce engagement quality. Cultural and contextual factors,

such as local norms, religious beliefs, and socioeconomic disparities, also shape participation levels. To improve engagement, respondents recommend practical measures including training and capacity building, better communication platforms, structured feedback mechanisms, monitoring tools, and incentives. Clear role definition, adequate resources, inclusive planning, and consistent feedback are essential practices for meaningful participation.

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