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Stakeholder Communication Strategies and Their Impact on Project Success across Different Sectors

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ABSTRACT:

Effective communication with stakeholders is widely regarded as an essential factor contributing to project success. In today’s modern project environments, communication is considered not only as the exchange of information but also as a strategic decision that builds trust, transparency, and cooperation among team members and stakeholders. Communication practices differ across industries due to organizational culture, project complexity, and stakeholder expectations. Consequently, many organizations continue to experience inconsistent project outcomes and an incomplete understanding of how communication strategies function in different contexts. This thesis examines stakeholder communication strategies to identify how effective approaches can be adapted to project success across four industries: manufacturing, information technology (IT), telecommunications, and construction.

A qualitative, multi-case study methodology was conducted, and the analysis was based on Stakeholder Theory, Stakeholder Salience Theory, Contingency Theory, and the Project Success Framework. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis, focusing on stakeholder involvement, communication tools, frequency of communication, transparency, and responsiveness. The findings indicate that although IT projects often depend on fast and real-time communication, both manufacturing and construction usually involve more structured and organized processes. The key challenges were identified, including tool fatigue, fractured teams, and slow decision-making. The results show that there is no common communication strategy, and rather, the successful implementation of any strategy will depend on the ability to adapt those strategies and approaches to project characteristics, stakeholder needs, and industry characteristics. Recommendations include encouraging an open communication culture, flexible communication planning, and training teams in digital collaboration capabilities, and early stakeholder engagement to increase productivity and success of projects over time. This research provides guidance for project managers who want to communicate more effectively and deliver better results in different types of projects in different types of project environments.

KEYWORDS: Stakeholder Communication, Project Success, Industrial Sectors, Agile, Contingency Theory, Stakeholder Theory, Project Management, Communication Strategies

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1 Introduction

1.1 Research background

Good communication is a key factor in project success. In every industry, projects involve multiple stakeholders such as clients, team members, investors, and regulators who need to collaborate effectively. When communication breaks down, it can lead to misunderstandings, delays, higher costs, or even the failure of the project (PMI, 2017). Yet, each type of industry has a unique language and communications need, and they need different strategies for communication.

An example of this is construction, which necessitates structured communication between contractors, engineers, and government regulators (Handford, 2014) to ensure safety and efficiency. Effective and timely coordination between physicians, nurses, and policy authorities is very important in healthcare for effective patient care, in order to avoid adverse medical events (Dingley et al., 2008; Manojlovich, 2019; Alder, 2023). Meanwhile, the IT industry requires rapid and flexible communication for managing rapid changes in projects (Reich et al., 2008). The literature mostly concentrates on one industry rather than comparing approaches to communicate across sectors, given the high significance of stakeholder communication.

This study seeks to bridge this gap, examining stakeholder communication strategy by examining across industries. It would also recognize the critical success factors, compare challenges in each sector, along with a suggestion for the need to improve communication in project management. This research will support project managers in developing efficient processes that reduce the time it takes the managers to implement and help the project improve its success through studying the management styles of different sectors to handle stakeholder communication.

1.2 Problem statement

Even though communicating with stakeholders is highly important, there is no single correct approach that applies to every industry. Managing stakeholder interactions presents a number of difficulties for all industries. In every aspect of life, communication must be kept clear before problems begin. Communication deficiencies in construction can be harmful to safety and also to regulatory compliance (Handford, 2014). It may also have an impact on medical errors and patient care in the healthcare industry (Alder, 2023). According to Reich et al., (2008), an unsuccessful IT project is one made where people have not established goals and an idea.

With most previous studies focused on communication in the specific organization only, little has been addressed regarding how communication strategies are implemented and their effect on projects across various industries (Turner, 2016; PMI, 2017). As Eskerod and Jepsen (2013) state, the majority of existing literature is oriented towards quantitative data generated from surveys and similar methods, resulting in the neglect of the complexity of stakeholder interfacing and real-world communication problems.

This research will serve to fill these gaps by analyzing cross-sector stakeholder communication strategies. This research will advance an understanding of effective stakeholder communication in project management by looking at communication problems, standards, and results across sectors.

1.3 Research questions and objectives

The following research questions serve as a guide for the study in order to achieve this goal:

Research questions

1. How do stakeholder communication strategies impact project success across different sectors?

2. What are the key factors that determine their effectiveness in achieving project goals?

Research objectives

1. To identify common stakeholder communication strategies used across different sectors.
2. To evaluate the impact of stakeholder communication strategies on project success.
3. To recommend effective communication strategies for improving project success across different sectors.

By achieving these goals, the study will advance both the theoretical and applied knowledge of communication strategies in project management. Researchers, business leaders, and project managers who want to use better communication to increase stakeholder participation and project outcomes will find this interesting.

1.4 Limitations

Although this research provides some information about stakeholder communications in various sectors, there are some limitations that need to be recognized. The study examines only a limited number of industries, where findings may not fully represent communication practices in all sectors. In addition, variations in communication styles within each industry may add further uncertainty to the conclusions.

Another drawback is that some organizations may prefer to keep their communication procedures private. This means the research might not be able to gather all the information needed. Also, because the study uses interviews and qualitative analysis, the findings could be influenced by personal opinions. In order to reduce this, steps will be taken to guarantee that the analysis stays impartial, objective, and reliable.

2 Literature review

Stakeholder communication is key to the performance of all projects. There is a range of theories from which organizations can derive new strategies for the management of stakeholders, communication processes, and the measurement of a project's performance beyond traditional indicators. It discusses stakeholder communication approach to project management based on the project success framework, contingency theory, stakeholder salience theory, and stakeholder theory in this part of the writing.

2.1 Project success framework

Traditionally, projects were measured through the "iron triangle" (scope, cost, and time). De Wit (1988) argued that such standards were not suitable as they disregard the long-term effects of such a project and beyond in the expectations of its broader stakeholders. As such The Project Success Framework expands the scope of understanding project success to involve additional dimensions such as stakeholder satisfaction, long-term benefits, and sustainability. Stakeholder satisfaction, according to Turner and Zolin (2012), means satisfying the expectations and needs of key stakeholders, and the long-term benefits assess a project's influence beyond its immediate deliverables (Ika, 2009). And sustainability and ethical considerations should now also apply to them, as the environmental and social impacts have become so influential to determine whether a project can be considered successful.

Fulfilling a project to the plan, according to the schedule, and on a budget basis does not necessarily equate to a successful outcome if the stakeholders don't appreciate the usefulness of the completed results. For instance, a software project implementation could satisfy all technical specs but still fail as a result of users not adopting the software (Wateridge, 1998). In the same way, a government infrastructure project with a timely completion still may face resistance to be successful when it is found harmful to the environment or local communities (Olander, 2007). These examples demonstrate that project success also encompasses how effectively stakeholders' expectations and societal values are met, in addition to operational efficiency.

As illustrated by Aziz (2022) and Kandengwa and Khoza (2021), clear and consistent communication in agile software projects enhances stakeholder satisfaction. But real-time sharing not only ensures scope clarity but instills creativity and trust, which are one of the basic pillars of project success that are far more important than conventional metrics, as it is a part of the key components of that real-time communication.

The integration of sustainability and ethical considerations further redefines project success. Bernat et al. (2023) argued that long-term value and environmental responsibility should be included in success evaluation, and that this is only achievable through transparent and inclusive stakeholder communication. Similarly, Waseem et al. (2024) emphasized that project communication enhances innovation, which in turn contributes to both short-term performance and long-term success.

Eskerod et al. (2015) assert that the success of a project needs to be evaluated along with the satisfaction of stakeholders and its long-term value creation. According to them, involving stakeholders has immediate effect on projects, as constructive communication enhances teamwork, reduces arguments, and helps to sustain the project indefinitely. Project managers need to engage stakeholders at all levels of the project to ensure that success can be evaluated beyond cost and schedule performance. Including these viewpoints in communication efforts helps project managers strengthen stakeholder engagement, minimize risks, and improve overall project outcomes.

As projects become more complex, especially in areas like digital transformation, sustainability, and social impact, new ways to measure success have emerged. The Balanced Scorecard Approach (Kaplan & Norton, 1996) looks at success from multiple angles, including financial performance, customer satisfaction, internal processes, and learning. The Agile Success Metrics approach focuses on customer satisfaction, adaptability, and ongoing feedback (Marnewick and Langerman, 2018). Elkington's (1998) Triple Bottom Line (TBL) model promotes sustainability by considering social and environmental impacts alongside financial results. On the other hand, they are specific to technology projects and highlight elements like user engagement, data security, and AI-driven decision-making.

2.2 Stakeholder theory

Based on Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), projects and firms need to think not just about making profits for shareholders but about considering the interests of all people or groups affected by their decisions. Freeman (1984) defines a stakeholder as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives." We extend that to the project sponsors, personnel, consumers, suppliers, governing bodies and local communities.

The Stakeholder theory in project management illustrates the necessity of harmonizing various stakeholder interests, which promote successful performance of the project (Eskerod, Huemann, & Savage, 2015). And because projects involve many stakeholders with sometimes conflicting expectations, effective communication between the parties must be done to minimize conflicts, align and promote collaborative efforts (Bourne, 2016). For instance, the public relations involved in handling relationships with government officials, environmental organizations and local communities is critical for large infrastructure projects to avoid the risks relating to opposition and regulatory delays from the community (Aaltonen, 2011). They argue that project managers should do more than just identify stakeholders, they need to maintain ongoing communication and engagement to achieve positive results. From this point of view, the active participation of stakeholders is more important than passive identification.

Despite its importance, the Stakeholder theory has come under fire for not providing a clear framework for ranking stakeholders because all of them are regarded as being equally significant (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). In order to address the above limitation, Stakeholder Salience Theory presents a structured method for identifying and managing the stakeholders according to their degree of power, legitimacy, and urgency.

Recent studies have extended the theory to include inclusive, sustainable, and cooperative stakeholder behavior. According to Bernat et al. (2023), involving stakeholders and clear communication are better facilitators of completing the project in virtual and sustainability-oriented projects. To that end, Waseem, Saeed, and Iqbal (2024) indicated that communication is an intermediary mediator of the relationship of stakeholder engagement on project performance in IT projects, stressing communication as an instrument, not merely an action.

The contemporary stakeholder theory acknowledges the role of digital communication technologies as well. According to Project Management AI SLR (2023), tools such as cloud-based dashboards and AI-powered communication platforms help stakeholders collaborate and share information continuously, especially in projects spread across different locations. These innovations reflect Freeman’s idea of dynamic stakeholder networks, demonstrating how stakeholder relationships adapt and transform throughout various projects.

Importantly, stakeholder theory today includes ethical and sustainability perspectives, too. Adhi and Muslim (2023) emphasized that sustainable project communication must consider social and environmental responsibilities, not only performance metrics. This broader view reflects the shift from transactional communication to relational and value-oriented stakeholder engagement.

Savage et al. (1991) state that stakeholders are often divided into primary and secondary categories, as seen in Figure 1-A generic stakeholder map. Secondary stakeholders may not be directly involved in an organization's performance, but they can still be affected by its actions and influence how it interacts with key stakeholders. Primary stakeholders have direct responsibilities to an organization and are essential to its sustainability. In the public sector, these relationships are more complicated due to multiple administrative layers and competing interests (Dixit, 2002).

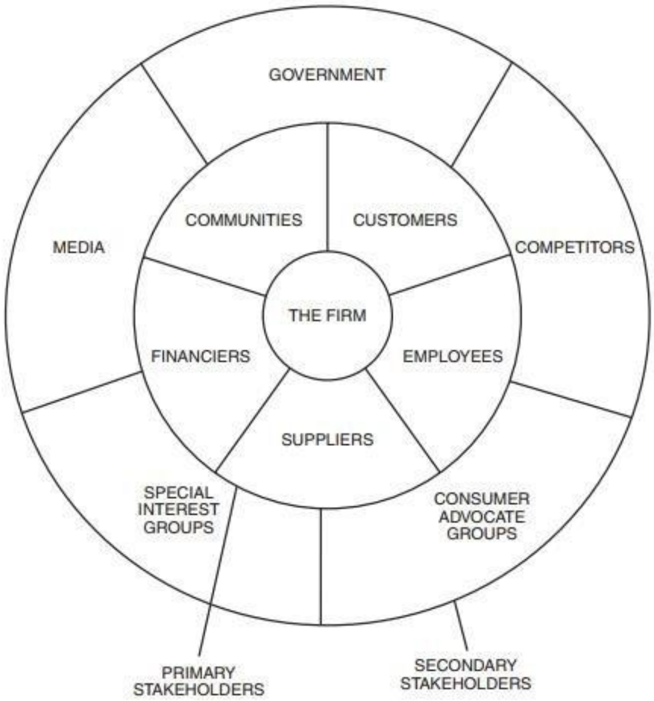

Figure 1. Generic stakeholder map (Freeman et al., 2007, p. 7).

The model shown in Figure 2 below states that strategic decision-making, communication, and leadership must all be balanced throughout a project. Stakeholder theory serves as a guide for the design and implementation of communication strategies in this setting during the course of the project lifecycle (Goleman 2018).

Effective leadership requires project managers to engage stakeholders while ensuring progress is monitored and directed appropriately. This involves adjusting how information is shared, depending on what matters most to each group and their influence. Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory explains that it is important to adjust the approach for each group in order to meet their needs and keep good relationships.

Equally critical is the alignment of project scope with stakeholder expectations. External pressures such as consumer demands or regulatory requirements often evolve during a project, necessitating scope adjustments even when resources such as time, budget, or personnel remain constant. Maintaining open communication supports better control of the project scope and improves the chances of success.

Managing risks is also an essential aspect. When risks come up during the project, the project manager should inform the right people and share ways to reduce or handle those risks. Furthermore, adapting communication practices to reflect the varying degrees of stakeholder interest and influence aligns with core principles of stakeholder theory and enhances risk control.

Finally, assessing progress and including stakeholder feedback helps the project stay focused on its objectives. The team maintains flexibility through frequent updates and transparent communication, which also fosters accountability and confidence among stakeholders.

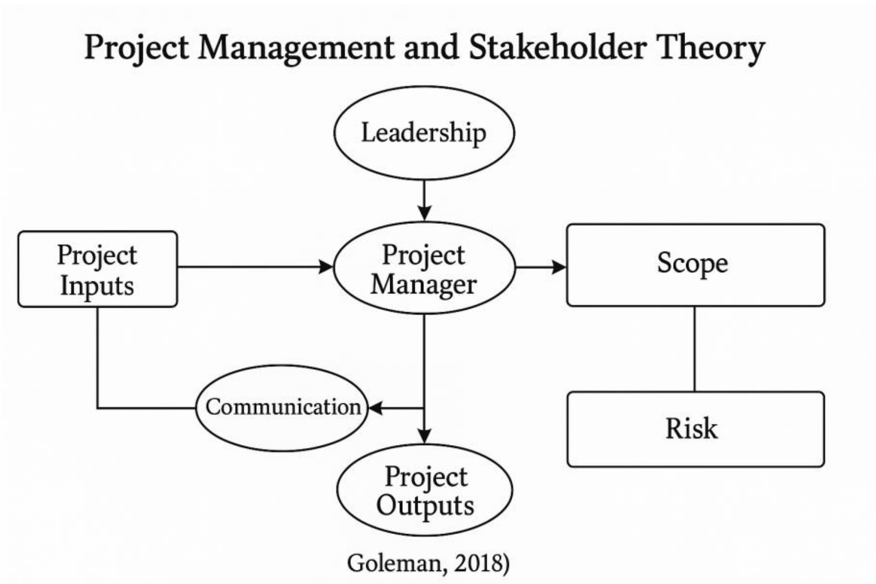

Figure 2. Project management model (Goleman 2018)

2.3 Stakeholder salience theory

The Stakeholder salience theory by Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997), which further expands on Freeman's Stakeholder Theory to assist enterprises determine which stakeholders deserve the most attention. Whereas Stakeholder Theory stresses the role of involving all stakeholders, Stakeholder Salience Theory acknowledges that various stakeholders are not of the same stature and/or urgency in a project.

This theory establishes that there are three fundamental elements to stakeholder classification, namely power, legitimacy, and urgency. Power is the ability of a stakeholder to influence whether a piece of the project's decision would be achieved or failed. Legitimacy is the stakeholder's rightful involvement or recognised relationship with the project. Urgency describes how quickly the stakeholder's needs or concerns need attention.

According to Mitchell et al. (1997), stakeholders who possess all three attributes are called "definitive stakeholders" and should be prioritized, while those with only one or two attributes may not need as urgent attention.

More recent work has further improved this model for complex, multi-sectoral projects. According to Prebanić and Vukomanović (2023), in infrastructure projects, salience is dynamic stakeholders' power and urgency shifts across project phases and, therefore, can be addressed with adaptive modes of communication. Similar to each other, Yang, Wei, and Zhang (2023) investigated that communication serves as the good mediator between powerful stakeholders with a positive effect on relationship quality and construction performance.

Project managers can use Stakeholder salience theory to better allocate resources and focus on the most influential stakeholders, which is particularly useful for creating stakeholder communication strategies (Neville, Bell, & Whitwell, 2011). A local community organization with legitimacy but little authority might need to be involved at certain project stages, but a project sponsor with significant financial resources and urgency (because of tight deadlines) needs frequent communication (Olander & Landin, 2005).

Eskerod and Jepsen (2013) criticize the Stakeholder salience theory for focusing too much on powerful stakeholders while ignoring those who may not have as much influence now but could have a big impact later. Project managers must maintain a balance between meeting stakeholder needs and ensuring equitable and moral participation for all.

According to Eskerod et al. (2015), traditional methods of ranking stakeholders often overlook those who seem less important or less urgent, rendering these methods flawed. They believe that all stakeholders should be included, even if they have less power. Ignoring them can lead to problems, like resistance or harm to the project's reputation.

Recent findings point out that the Stakeholder salience theory can focus on resilient and long-term stakeholder management. A fourth factor suggests that of proximity, which describes how involved a stakeholder is in day-to-day activities (Almarri & Blackwell, 2014). Others contend that progress on sustainability, justice, and trust towards decision-making depends on including weaker stakeholders.

Agile and participatory management are two more recent project management philosophies that emphasize regular stakeholder check-ins and feedback collection. To this end, the project teams are continuously adapting so everyone's view is listened to and the weaker stakeholders, in fact, are accounted for.

New studies suggest that the traditional idea in salience theory is that powerful stakeholders matter the most, but may no longer be fully accurate. Bhimani (2024) suggests that fair and ethical communication should include even low-power stakeholders, such as community groups and end users, in discussions. The sustainability agenda in modern project governance aligns with this inclusive approach, known as stakeholder democratization (Bernat et al., 2023).

Stakeholder salience theory is highly practical in application, but it cannot be relied upon entirely because it requires continuous assessment of communication, including who is in control at different times, their needs, and how to maintain open and transparent communication through adaptive channels. This way, all other pertinent voices are heard, minimizing risk and increasing social acceptance.

2.4 Contingency theory

According to contingency theory (proposed by Fiedler in 1964), there is no one best way of communicating with stakeholders. The degree to which one communicates is effective, however, varies greatly and is based on the project scope, stakeholder interactions, and industry challenges.

The last few years have seen the study of the contextual content of the communication. Zwikael et al. (2023) demonstrated that communication effectiveness weakens when stakeholders cannot understand the project management terminology, indicating that communication needs to be situational according to the specialized capabilities of his or her audience. Suvvari and Saxena (2023) also argued that project managers should adopt the communication style, mode and frequency with stakeholders as they differ according to the desired preferences and project stage to improve the level of participation.

With COVID-19, the principles of contingency had become much more focused on remote and hybrid teams. Bernat et al. (2023) show sustainable virtual projects can flourish if communication practices are designed according to the needs of remote collaboration platforms and time zones. Likewise, Project Management AI SLR, (2023) has established that digital communication flexibility is associated with speedy decisions and higher stakeholder alignment.

Then there are the industries that have contingencies for success in communicating. In manufacturing, there are structured meetings and documentation that guarantee reliability, but that also do not allow flexibility. Agile communication (daily stand-ups, digital dashboards) enables quick adjustment in IT (Highsmith, 2009; Kandengwa & Khoza, 2021). These distinctions reflect a contingency where the communication context dictates it.

In addition, cultural context influences stakeholder communication greatly. In 2023, cross-national research that was conducted by Adhi and Muslim found that cultural values moderate communication style (direct vs indirect) on the impact of trust between stakeholders regarding sustainable construction. As a consequence, contingency theory suggests that effective communication patterns are contextually driven; they need to fit with cultural, organizational, and technological contexts.

One of the communication models that resists this theory is Shannon and Weaver's (1949) transmission model that emphasizes information correctness and efficiency over other criteria. In other words, instead of a single model with a monolithic definition, Butt, Naaranoja, and Savolainen (2016) contend that contingency theory emphasizes the necessity to tailor communication strategies to the conditions of individual projects. Different industries and projects, for example, might call for varying communication practices.

The following summarizes how different industries and projects shape the way communication should be conducted.

Table 1. Summary of communication practices across different industries.

Industry	**Communication approach**	**Reason for necessity**	**Citation**
Government Projects	Formal and structured communication	Government work follows strict laws and rules, so clear documentation is required.	Aaltonen & Kujala (2016)

Manufacturing	Wearable technology and real-time alerts	Facilitates improved communication between stakeholders (plant managers, workers, and suppliers) while ensuring quick responses to maintenance and operational updates to maintain and ensure system compliance.	Samsung Insights (2019)
Construction	Accurate record-keeping and documentation	Ensures all personnel have the current information regarding the project details, progress, changes, and the state of major projects	RCS-CM LLC (n.d.)
IT (Software Development)	Agile communication using daily meetings and collaboration tools	Enables teams to make fast decisions, update progress, and troubleshoot.	Highsmith (2009)
Telecommunication	Multi-channel communication (email, chat, video calls, real-time network alerts)	Helps teams manage large network systems across different locations.	Laudon & Laudon (2020)
Healthcare	Electronic Health Records (EHR) and instant messaging	Doctors, nurses, and staff need to have fast and secure access to patients' health data to provide the best treatment.	McGonigle & Mastrian (2021)
Retail	Customer relationship management (CRM) and real-time sales tracking	Facilitates stores to keep track of inventory, sales, and customer preferences in order to deliver better service.	Kotler & Keller (2022)
Finance & Banking	Secure digital communication (encrypted emails, chatbots, online banking)	Guarantees swift and secure transactions while protecting customer information.	Mishkin (2019)
Education	Learning management systems (LMS) and virtual classrooms	Enables students and teachers to communicate and share learning resources online.	Bates (2019)

Eskerod et al. (2015) explain that, depending on the situation, the different ways you engage stakeholders change. Various projects need different methods, likewise, consistent with Contingency Theory, an approach to management that claims there is not really a single, right way to treat stakeholders. Communication should no longer be static, but instead should be fluid and tailored to each project and to the needs of all of its stakeholders.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

This research project employed a qualitative approach to investigate how strategies for communicating with stakeholders affect project success across various sectors. The qualitative method helps to better describe the complexity, complications, and effectiveness of communication techniques in a real project context. A typical explorative approach was taken in project decision analysis aimed at understanding trends and similarities with regard to communication strategies and the consequences these have on successful implementation. As all sectors have different expectations, hierarchies, and communication arrangements among different stakeholders, the multiple case study method proved appropriate for comparison analysis.

This topic lends itself strongly to qualitative research, such as is well-suited to communication. Communication entails relational exchange, subjective experiences, and organizational settings that are difficult or impossible to quantify. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative inquiry is best at trying to establish how people experience something, which is a phenomenon. Therefore, this method made it possible to understand the stakeholders' as well as project managers' views of and how their own industries use communication strategies.

Furthermore, as mentioned in previous paragraphs, a multiple case study approach to study how different industries, such as communications, IT, manufacturing, and construction, manage communication has been adopted for this study. This analysis was a way to examine the unique features, barriers, and states of affairs in various industries individually and to facilitate meaningful comparisons between how different industries manage communications, rather than treating all industries the same way. Information was obtained through semi-structured interviews with project managers, industry experts, and stakeholders.

3.2 Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather primary data. This method allowed participants to communicate their ideas and experiences in detail while maintaining a certain amount of consistency throughout the interviews. When unexpected topics emerged during the interview sessions, the researcher was able to probe further by requesting additional information or clarification. This flexibility was important because communication patterns among stakeholders are often complex and vary across industries. Feedback from the academic supervisor was used to refine the interview guide to ensure that the questions used were theoretically relevant and practically relevant, and we used this to design the interview guide. Focusing on the following key issues:

- Stakeholder identification and engagement strategies
- Communication frequency, tools, and channels
- Challenges in stakeholder communication
- Impact of communication on project performance and outcomes
- Best practices and lessons learned across industries

Participants were invited to provide detailed, example-based answers and to reflect on both successful and challenging project experiences. This contributed to capturing not only what strategies were adopted, but why they were successful or problematic.

The interview guide (Appendix 1) had some open-ended questions like:

- How did you identify and engage stakeholders throughout a project?
- Which communication tools and platforms did you use, and why do you think they were effective?
- What difficulties did you face in communicating with stakeholders, and how did you address them?
- How did you measure the effectiveness of communication in your projects?

- In your opinion, how important was communication to the overall success of the project?

In addition, the combination of questions was flexible enough to allow each participant to communicate their own thoughts or experiences, and the main study questions.

3.3 Sampling and participants

A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents experienced in project management, stakeholder involvement, and communication. This study focused on the professionals involved directly with the planning, implementation, and supervision of projects. This approach enabled respondents to give more significant, experiential input on how the focus of the study was realized

Ten individuals were interviewed, focusing on specific industries from manufacturing, construction, Information technology, and telecommunications. This combination allowed for meaningful cross-sector comparisons in a mixed fashion and ensured participants were varied from a variety of tasks to responsibility levels. Engineers, project managers, quality and operations managers, communication specialists, and site coordinators were the types of professionals who were interviewed. These varied professional backgrounds allowed for both strategic and practical perspectives on communication to be thoroughly represented

In order to ensure confidentiality and ethical compliance, all interviewees are identified through numeric identifiers (e.g. Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2). Only general or sector-specific roles are mentioned, not personal details. This is to ensure that a relevant contribution of each person is made while not revealing their personal identity, organization, or any other details.

A purposive sampling technique is adopted in order to access the sample that has an experiential focus on speaking to stakeholders, as stakeholders are directly involved in project management. The sample included project managers, industry contacts, and other experts, involving a total of ten individual interviews across at least three specific industries.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. All of this takes first reading the transcripts multiple times to see who said what. Next, the main ideas were sorted by dominant themes. To ensure accuracy, some transcripts are critiqued by peers to ensure consistency and reliability. This process helps identify patterns and relationships across different industries.

Table 2. Summary of interview participants.

Interviewee	Sector	Position	Interview date	Duration	Format
1	Manufacturing	Assistant Engineer	31.03.2025	22 Min	Zoom
2	IT	Senior Project Manager - ELV	01.04.2025	36 Min	Zoom
3	IT	Chief Engineer - ICT	04.04.2025	18 Min	Zoom
4	Telecommunication	Project manager – Audio/Visual	10.04.2025	32 Min	Zoom
5	Construction	Civil Engineer	18.04.2025	25 Min	Zoom
6	Telcommunication	Pre-Sales Engineer	22.04.2025	20 Min	Zoom
7	Manufacturing	Managing Director	24.04.2025	26 Min	Zoom
8	IT	Project Manager - ICT	28.04.2025	34 Min	Zoom
9	Construction	Quantity Surveyor	05.05.2025	21 Min	Zoom
10	IT	Systems Engineer – Customer Support	08.05.2025	28 Min	Zoom

All interviews were conducted via Zoom between March and May 2025. Each session was recorded and transcribed with participants' consent.

This thesis investigates case studies involving in different companies across various sectors such as telecommunications, information technology, manufacturing, and construction. As every industry has its own unique organizational structures, project environments, and communication frameworks, cross-sectoral comparison benefits greatly from this diversity.

These companies have a lot of experience working on projects where achieving project objectives which requires effective stakeholder participation and clear communication. That was the reason behind the choice of these organizations. This study looks at how various industries communicate to determine the unique problems that each one faces as well as the common elements that lead to effective project outcomes.

The selected companies represent diverse industries from engineering and IT service firms to manufacturing and construction enterprises, and differ in size and scope. This diversity provides a richer understanding of how organizational culture, project complexity, and the use of tools influence communication processes. While each case company provides unique viewpoints, this study aims to identify commonalities among comparable industries with similar stakeholders and communication barriers.

3.4 Reliability and validity

Several methods were practiced for making this research reliable and valid. A suitable protocol for interviews and questions was developed in accordance with theory and literature to guarantee content validity. All interviews were conducted and transcribed consistently, and the data were structured in a thematic analysis for interpretation. Credibility was achieved by having subjects from four separate domains involved so that the cross-case comparison and triangulation could be facilitated through inclusion, which supported comparisons and triangulation of findings. Dependability was ensured through detailed record-keeping of the research process of coding and the development of themes. Transferability was facilitated by providing contextualized descriptions of the cases and participants and confirmability was ensured by minimizing researcher bias via reflexive analysis and following ethical protocols.

3.5 Use of AI in the thesis

In this thesis, I used AI tools only to help with the literature review and when organizing information. The AI helped me find relevant articles more quickly and gave short summaries of some of the texts I had already selected. This made it easier for me to understand the key ideas and compare different studies. I also used AI to help turn my own notes into clearer sentences and to organize tables based on information I had written myself. All interpretation, critical analysis, comparison of theories, and final arguments were done by me, and AI did not write any sections of the thesis or analyse any empirical data. I followed the University of Vaasa’s rules for responsible AI use, making sure that my own thinking guided the thesis, that all suggestions were carefully reviewed, and that no personal or sensitive data were entered into AI tools.

4 Data analysis

4.1 Communication frequency by industry

The frequency of communication plays an important role in how well the project stakeholders are provided with information and positioned to be able to respond to challenges. This chapter looks at the impact of frequency of communication changes towards project coordination and progress using interview findings from four sectors of manufacturing, IT, telecommunications, and construction.

4.1.1 Manufacturing: Structured weekly meetings

In industrial sectors communication is very organized and it is done every week. Team progress report / weekly face-to-face meetings to inform team progress reporting and to address issues and to coordinate between the manufacturing, logistics, procurement, and quality control functionalities are the main way of keeping teams informed about the progress and resolving problems. By having the same regular pattern of approach, you are able to retain control over the delivery timeframe and your deliverables. The scheduled meetings, besides facilitating the efficient work process and the alignment of departments, allow project managers to track progress on KPIs using progress dashboards and reports.

A limitation of this approach is that it minimizes flexibility. Unexpected issues between planned meetings will not always be resolved straight away and this will cause problems. This becomes very difficult when several departments need to work together, with urgent matters delayed till the next meeting. Though it ensures transparency, this is not as good for crisis or unexpected challenges. In addition, delaying decisions until the next team planning will slow the project's overall progress.

4.1.2 IT: Daily stand-ups and agile practices

Communication is more frequent and much more dynamic in IT. Most teams employ agile processes, conducting short daily standups to discuss issues, report on progress, and update plans as necessary. These check-ins can help everyone in the system stay informed and can surface issues before they become problems, and spot those issues early on. Having these meetings on a regular basis helps keep a focus on the goals of the project and reinforces a sense of teamwork as well as progress, especially for remote or dispersed teams.

We often facilitate these meetings, and weekly sprint planning and review meetings also provide a lot of communication in terms of a new way to schedule and organize them. This task can be improved on the digital platforms Slack and Microsoft Teams because with such platforms, updates happen quickly and information can be easily shared. While such approaches encourage fast responsiveness and adaptability, they can become counterproductive if not structured well. Teams need motivation not to confuse information with distractions.

4.1.3 Telecommunications: Mixed frequency according to the need of the project

There is a mixed communication between the telecommunications industry which changes the extent of a gathering based on project task urgency and stage. In normal circumstances, team members usually meet about once a week, which might be helpful for planning and execution. Teams must stay disciplined to avoid communication overload.

However, the communication becomes hourly or even daily in emergency response (network outages) and a time of high priority. Remote members respond through calls and IM and they can work together to solve some of the things quickly. This flexible style of communication facilitates speedy solution but also needs to be synchronized and documented. Poor management of official and informal communication can lead to poor records and absence of information.

This industry follows a mixed pattern, sometimes scheduling meetings but sometimes sending last-minute communications if needed. Given the adaptable nature of this design, teams are well-prepared to tackle challenges in both growth and maintaining technological infrastructure on different geographies simultaneously in terms of scaling or sustaining infrastructure over time.

4.1.4 Construction: Monthly on-site reviews and informal coordination

In construction, formal communication usually occurs at monthly on-site review meetings, which see a variety of stakeholders, contractors, engineers, architects, and, in some cases, clients. Sessions are used to take stock, review the status, address design and resource issues, and monitor the timing to make sure that project timelines are being followed. The series of reviews is usually backed by detailed reports and visual inspections to track progress and inform status, and make decisions.

However, In reality, monthly inspections are largely done through continued casual communications via telephone, email, and site visits and discussions with team members. This ad-hoc coordination helps teams respond to the smallest of problems at the earliest, without requiring formal meetings. Although this quick, informal communication helps to solve small issues, it is always difficult to monitor, which can lead to confusion and missed information. Because of this, official decisions or paperwork may take longer.

4.2 Communication tools and channels

When assessing the management tools and technologies used by both clients and project teams, it becomes clear that the success of communication processes depends heavily on the tools and technologies applied. Organizations deploy tools according to how they communicate, how they form their teams, and the needs of the work they do. Some rely on the latest digital applications like project management software or instant messaging, and others prefer a traditional approach face-to-face meetings or paper-based reports. The instruments chosen often reflect the company's operating requirements and culture.

4.2.1 Manufacturing: Traditional tools and face-to-face preference

Traditional communication methods are still used in the industrial sector. Printed or emailed reports support weekly meetings, which occur mainly in person. On the manufacturing floor, communication tools like whiteboards, printed charts, and spreadsheets are standard. This direct, tangible way keeps work in motion and teams on task. But applying these tools can sometimes restrict how quickly you receive information, especially since people in a team will be sharing information in a wide variety of places, which is challenging to share in real time.

Though acceptance is still modest, numerous manufacturing companies have started adding digital tools such as dashboards and mobile apps. Most team members continue to prefer face-to-face communication and are not entirely adept at working with new technologies. So while these traditional solutions promote open in-person communication, they can also cause lag in information dissemination and lower the efficiency in keeping all those dispersed teams informed.

4.2.2 IT: Digital communication with agile tools

The IT sector employs a communication strategy that emphasizes digital content. Slack, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Jira, and Trello are some of the key tools that organizations use for delegation of duties, such as work assignments and workflow. They bring team members in different locations and time zones together in real-time to communicate, hold video meetings, as well as track project progress. They are a must to keep IT projects predictable and flexible overall, especially for the Agile frameworks.

Communications in IT teams encompass both formal and informal exchanges. Hanging out and video chatting as well as the sharing of files and chats, and even daily updates keep things getting closer and longer. There is a lot of communication going on, which needs to be coordinated so that there is not an overload. However, IT professionals are demonstrating the successful application of digital tools to communicate effectively.

4.2.3 Telecommunications: Location-based and multi-channel and tools

Communication technologies exist, depending on the roles people play on the ground and the location they are set up within. Telecommunication is utilized in telecom depending on the roles and localities of the team. The field engineering and technical staff communicate via telephoning, phone calls, SMS, and apps such as WhatsApp to manage immediate issues and coordinate the response in the event of outages, equipment failures, and damage. But those people working in offices also have shared files, project dashboards, and emails for official reporting and documentation. Usually, the weekly updates are presented on cloud-based storage or PowerPoint slideshows.

This combination of tools enables teams to maintain formal records while still responding quickly to urgent, real-time issues. But if team members have different reliance on different technologies, constant communication has to be maintained. Making sure that all updates are put together at the center remains a serious difficulty, though some attempts are underway to foster better coordination through the regular use of shared structures.

4.2.4 Construction: Physical tools and reports supported by email

In construction work, the essential forms of communication continue to be direct face-to-face meetings and physical documentation. Verbal directions, hand-drawn schematics, and site visits are routinely used, especially in the early stages of a project. Project managers use Microsoft Project, Excel, AutoCAD, and so on to track schedules and budgets. Architects and customers are typically updated by email, and a large shift in project scope is typically set in records in written reports.

And while these approaches supplement the hands-on, practical work of construction, they do not provide the immediacy and collaboration that today's digital technology provides. Occasional video conferencing is used with off-site stakeholders, but currently, video conferencing is not a part of standard practice. Consequently, on-site coordination is good, but documentation and communication are likely to be slow, especially as updates need to be approved by several layers.

4.3 Stakeholder involvement and transparency

Stakeholders, the participation of the project stakeholders, and openness are also important to make it clear and transparent that the project objectives are clear and informed at every stage as to what the project intends. This chapter discusses the role of stakeholders in how various sectors, including interest groups and keep the project open throughout the life of the project and how they affect the project.

4.3.1 Manufacturing: Structured involvement, limited transparency

For manufacturing stakeholders, there exists a defined and formal process. Staff from inside an operation, including production managers and logistics coordinators, and quality assurance staff, meet once a week about the state of development, the problems that make the production process difficult, and what are the deadlines. Clients and suppliers, therefore, often get to know and take notice of updates through a standard email system or written reports. It builds intraorganizational team cohesion and ensures professionally controlled communication with external partners.

But sometimes there is little transparency, particularly with regard to communicating with external stakeholders. Information is commonly held back until trouble sets in or issues have been resolved as a way of avoiding confusion or apprehension. And while it is important to mitigate such uncertainty, it can slow down the ability to access support or solutions on the part of outsiders. Cautiousness in this way with information can make collaboration more challenging, as well as slow response time in crucial emergencies.

4.3.2 IT: High involvement and continuous transparency

Stakeholder engagement in the IT world involves considerable participation and is firmly embedded in the project. Agile methods facilitate the sharing of information between developers, clients, product owners, and other team members over time. Jira, Trello, and joint dashboards are all examples of technologies that enable users to view real-time updates on their projects, track progress, and make informed decisions about the entire project. This transparency, end-to-end, results in a better way in which stakeholders can feel engaged and given constant feedback about their work.

Transparency lies at the center of most IT projects, too. Through collaborative tools, teams openly discuss challenges, delays, and technical troubles. As features are released, the clients are kept in the loop and can shape development (feedback, testing). This openness fosters trust and reduces the risk of rework. But it is also about all stakeholders remaining involved and responsive, so we are all pulling in the same direction.

4.3.3 Telecommunications: Partial involvement with role-based transparency

Participation of actors in the telecom sector usually differs by project stage and is role-based. From the beginning, teams of technical experts, like field technicians and network engineers, are involved in planning and implementing the project at every stage. Business stakeholders, such as marketing and finance, usually enter this stage later in the delivery and review stages.

Although these two steps allow for a technically efficient performance, this sequence is not for getting a good understanding of business; the early on approach to understand the business side of how the project is being conducted. Telecom projects retain transparency at the role-based level. Operational teams receive regular technical updates, and higher-level stakeholders receive summaries. For example, only the official documents are used to share news with external parties, like the client or the regulators. This keeps communication clear and straightforward, but if the same information is not provided equally for all roles, it will cause delays as well as duplicated work.

4.3.4 Construction: Client-focused transparency with variable contractor involvement

In the construction industry, stakeholder engagement largely depends on the individuals involved and the location of the particular project. At major milestones, the clients are often informed via site visits, visual reports, and summaries of documents. Most decisions are made at the spot level by the architects, engineers, and contractors, who are also responsible for coordinating day by day. The level of collaboration depends largely on the project's size and complexity, but this structure allows operations to be closely controlled.

Generally, transparency aims to give clients and regulatory bodies a broad, high-level overview of the project. There may be some minor delays or problems occurring on site that are dealt with internally before they are reported formally. This makes communication easier, reduces unnecessary concern, but could also leave a lot of stakeholders unaware of threats until they have emerged. Keeping subcontractors and remote teams aligned and on the same page is another struggle that continues to escalate.

4.4 Flexibility and responsiveness

Flexibility and responsiveness encompass a team's adaptability to new change and how they will deal with surprises and make decisions quickly. These skills are highly dependent on the team's communication style and the business culture. This section reviews how those in the manufacturing, IT, telecom, and construction sectors demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness from the findings of the study.

4.4.1 Manufacturing: Controlled communication, limited agility

In the manufacturing sector, communication follows a structured and rule-based approach. Weekly meetings are the key method for discussing issues, sharing updates, and reviewing progress. While this method supports careful planning and control, it can slow down decision-making. Urgent problems like equipment failures, supply delays, or quality concerns often must wait until the next scheduled meeting, which can disrupt operations and reduce efficiency. Although this approach promotes thorough planning and control, it can also slow down decision-making. While this systematic way of working does help to keep the processes organized, it does not offer flexibility and can no longer respond quickly to unexpected situations.

While certain manufacturing facilities are also starting to switch to some of the digital aspects of messaging apps, mobile dashboards, the transition is slow. Formal processes and approval systems are the backbone, and the traditional way of working makes it inflexible to deal with unforeseen issues instantly. The application runs smoothly when operating under a general operating environment; however, when responses are quick and urgent, changes may be necessary. The application is likely to experience a slowdown.

4.4.2 IT: Flexible communication via agile methods

On the other hand, IT uses Agile methods, which enable much more flexible communication. With Agile techniques, ICT has become dynamic and flexible. Teams need this help to detect issues early and adapt swiftly throughout the day with continual feedback, sprint reviews, and daily stand-ups to keep pace at work, with data-driven adjustments. Real-time digital tools such as Jira, Slack, and Microsoft Teams offer instant

communication, allowing distributed teams to be able to stay informed in multiple time zones by allowing them to communicate in almost real-time with their colleagues.
This model allows IT teams flexibility to respond in real-time to client requests from clients, to address bugs, and to manage a variety of priorities. Work can be reallocated easily, making decisions together in real time. The response like that is how IT culture and processes are set up with data-oriented, fast-paced, and timely solutions, so teams continue to work and meet their deadlines.

4.4.3 Telecommunications: Moderate flexibility with role-based responsiveness

The response that the telecoms can make to that change depends on different roles and situations. Technicians and engineers in the field are often compelled to act quickly when equipment fails or networks go offline. They use mobile tools to instantly share updates, photos, and solutions, allowing technically related problems to be resolved quickly.

The office-based teams and project managers who normally follow more structured processes are slower. But that can mean that when problems are not as pressing, problems and/or routine updates in the process may go through a slower process. Telecom teams only have as much scope as they can maneuver around, and the urgency of what is happening and the authority of the team involved heavily influence how nimbly telecom teams will respond.

4.4.4 Construction: Limited flexibility, slow response time

In construction, flexibility is limited by regulations, safety protocols, and a range of stakeholders. Plan and timeline modifications would typically require sign-offs to be made by a range of people (clients, engineers, safety officials, among them), and this would slow things down when it comes to those key decisions to act upon.

While small issues can be swiftly dealt with on-site, any other change in the form of a formal change may need a lot of paperwork and documentation for approval. For another example, you might just talk about 'material' or reworking some designs in an informal setting, but they can not go into effect until they have been sanctioned. An approach such as this makes safety and accountability stronger but diminishes the flexibility to respond to sudden problems.

4.5 Challenges in communication

Although successful communication is critical to project efficiency, each organization has its own challenges relating to operational culture, team structures, and tools. This section summarizes the key communication challenges that emerged from interviewing the participants in manufacturing, telecommunications, construction, and information technology.

4.5.1 Manufacturing: Disorganized information flows and heavy engagement in physical meetings

In manufacturing, the communication has a pattern to be slow because projects all too often are a backup, where people meet in person. The most critical concerns might linger: Information is generally transmitted only in weekly meetings, and escalation is more likely.

Another challenge is dependence on reports that are paper-based and verbally oriented. These reporting methods are conventional, but the more traditional approaches risk misinterpretation or bad follow-ups. Further, if informative information were to be shared in an informal manner rather than with documentation, key elements might not be remembered. So, teams spread across sites or shifts will find it more difficult to communicate this kind of information.

4.5.2 IT: Information overload and tool fatigue

In IT, the problems with communication may arise for two reasons. There are too many tools and messages. Team members can be confused with the overload of incoming information from emails, Jira, and Slack, to get it in their heads which messages matter. This overloading can detract from productivity and result in missed or misinterpreted information.

Then there is tool fatigue, which occurs when individuals are required to manage multiple communication channels simultaneously. Secondly, it can be difficult to see who exactly is responsible for what in cross-functional teams because of sometimes difficult-to-identify roles. This confusion of the process may delay decision-making and lead to inefficiencies in processes.

4.5.3 Telecommunications: Disconnected communication across teams

Disconnected Communication Cross-Team Coordination of field/office teams is frequent in telecom projects, which leads to some special challenges to communication. Field engineers can immediately resolve technical issues, but office employees are not always informed of these developments on time. This lack of coordination can lead to incomplete recordkeeping or redundancies.

And also, technical jargon is used in a way that the business team or client may not understand. When teammates use different tools or tools for communicating information in one of a number of different ways, it makes it that much harder to stay in touch. The information is lost to each other, which can slow down or eliminate the flow of information. If a team changes communication to communicate across tools for each group member instead of through different channels, that may also result in miscommunication and a lack of shared work among teams. It becomes more difficult to keep everything integrated.

4.5.4 Construction: Divided teams and delayed delay

Construction teams are often dispersed, with multiple organizations such as consultants, subcontractors, and contractors, responsible for different tasks. Keeping these groups aligned can be challenging. But without clear communication, teams can proceed without timely or accurate updates and run the risk of spending even greater amounts of money on rework.

Decision-making is often slow because approval is required from multiple parties. Even when problems are visible on a construction site, action may be delayed until the necessary documents are reviewed and approved. In international projects, language differences and cultural misunderstandings are further obstacles that can worsen the chances of errors and communication breakdowns.

4.6 Impact on project success

Effective management of communication is crucial for the success of projects in any field. The process of communication management not only influences budgetary and scheduling management but also stakeholders' satisfaction and risk control. This part of the communication approaches shows what communication methods make project performance in construction, IT, manufacturing, and telecom industries successful.

4.6.1 Manufacturing: Communication and on-time delivery

Teams can stay up to date on tasks, available resources, and possible operational hazards by holding weekly meetings. Teams are more likely to finish tasks on schedule and maintain high production quality when there is frequent and open communication. There are fewer misunderstandings and better departmental coordination.

On the other hand, a lack of communication or delay in communication will result in errors at a production level, delays in shipment, and customer dissatisfaction. Meanwhile, when communication slows down, as it often does, production and customer issues can occur with missed deliveries, delayed shipments, or unhappy customers. By failing to inform relevant teams when their equipment fails or materials, e.g. when raw material shortages occur, they are notifying appropriate teams at an early stage, missing deadlines and thus also costs. Therefore, clear and regular communication is essential to maintain efficiency and ensure timely decision-making.

4.6.2 IT: Agile communication drives project speed and satisfaction

Frequent and transparent communication in IT fosters high-speed project execution and a high level of client satisfaction. Continuous interaction with different interested parties in Agile models, which require constant stakeholder engagement, guarantees that project requirements are being reviewed and revised on a regular basis. This minimizes scope creep and rework as much as possible. Moreover, the development process may better fit the user's expectations to keep it on track.

The IT sector is based on frequent and open communication so that clients are satisfied, as well as projects completed expeditiously. Not only does this reduce scope creep and rework, but it also ensures that the development process remains up to par with what users want.

Once teams can keep lines of communication open via digital tools and feedback that works, they can rapidly respond to new requests and rectify things with minor disturbances or distractions. But a communication breakdown occurs if requirements are not communicated clearly, or updates are not common, there is the risk that things are not what they are. The team runs the risk of adding the wrong feature and wasting both time and energy. Therefore, effective communication techniques have a direct impact on the success of IT projects.

4.6.3 Telecommunications: Communication affects problem resolution and efficiency

Quality of service and the management of technical issues in telecommunications can be guaranteed by effective communication. Field teams and support employees are able to find and respond in real time, to avoid widespread disruption and consumer complaints, as their own communications allow them to quickly detect a problem. Successfully communicating project-based insights and experience across departments and between parts of a project can greatly help.

However, poor communication can delay troubleshooting, cause misaligned scheduling, and lead to repeated work. For example, if fieldwork is started before the approval is reached, resources may be lost and costs may be incurred.

4.6.4 Construction: Impact on safety, coordination, and budget

Communication directly affects all operations in project safety, organization, and budget in the construction industry. Construction information and messages get to build-as-you-code communication protocols in order to help mitigate the risks from risks (e.g., building delays/disruptions, equipment shutdowns). Teams can then avoid some safety risks, go with established processes, and ensure contractors are using the right materials through regular updates. Open communication helps everyone to stay on the same page and handle issues before they turn into crises.

However, delays in communication are one major cause of rework, legal risks, or budget overruns. For instance, if revised drawings and modifications to designs do not make it to the construction team on time, the subcontractors can continue with their own designs to specifications that lead to delays in work and budget. It is necessary to communicate clearly, promptly with the workers to operate to the safety and productivity standards.

A deeper thematic analysis was conducted, to better understand how communication approaches impact project success across the four industries, a deeper thematic analysis was conducted. In addition to identifying cross-sector similarities and differences in stakeholders' communication behavior, this research aimed to combine the patterns discovered during the initial rounds of coding. The process followed Braun and Clarke’s

(2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis to engage in the systematic recognition of themes in the interview data.

4.7 Expanded findings and thematic analysis

Thematic analysis was performed based on the six steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), which included familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting. From the ten interviews in manufacturing, IT, telecommunications, and construction, there were seven key themes. These are shared views of how communication strategies affect project outcomes.

4.7.1 Emergent themes from the data

The themes observed in the data collected were based on the interviews, as identified through thematic analysis, and showed several common patterns that illustrate how stakeholders communicate in diverse domains. These themes reflect collective and sectoral approaches to facilitating the flow and coordination, and engagement of information along the various dimensions of stakeholders. The themes that emerged from the qualitative findings are shown in Table 3, along with their definitions, key participant quotes, and the sectors in which each theme was most frequently observed.

Table 3. Key themes identified from interview data.

Theme	Definition	Representative	Related Sector
Structured Communication and Control	Structured Communication and Control: Reliance on pre-arranged, scheduled, documented meetings for standardization and accountability	“In production, nothing moves unless it’s in the weekly report.” (Interviewee 1, Manufacturing)	Manufacturing, Construction
Real-Time Digital Collaboration	Instant messaging, dashboards and	“Every issue goes straight on Jira; we	Telecom

	cloud tools to get feedback with agility	fix it during the same day." (Interviewee 8, IT)	
Cultural Hierarchy and Information Flow	Respecting seniority and how information travels	"Junior engineers usually wait for the manager's go-ahead before reporting issues." (Interviewee 5, Construction)	Construction, Manufacturing
Transparency and Trust	Open sharing of any progress, issues, and risks	"Clients can see the live dashboard so there are no surprises." (Interviewee 2, IT)	IT
Tool Overload and Fragmentation	Difficulties arising from multiple communication platforms	"Slack, Teams, WhatsApp… sometimes I miss updates because there are too many." (Interviewee 10, IT)	IT, Telecom
Responsiveness to Crisis	Flexibility of communication under urgent conditions	"During a network outage we talk every ten minutes until it's fixed." (Interviewee 4, Telecom)	Telecom
Stakeholder Inclusion and Engagement	Extent of external and internal stakeholders being involved	"Suppliers are only informed once decisions are made, not before." (Interviewee 7, Manufacturing)	Manufacturing, Construction

4.7.2 Cross-sector patterns

Communication practices differ a lot between industries. In the information technology field, daily interactions often occur via brief stand-up meetings and a steady stream of digital messaging. Communication is often established in manufacturing and construction in a fixed pattern as well, and meetings are weekly or monthly. In the telecom sector, communication is adjusted to fit the urgency of the work, more frequent and faster when needed.

The digital maturity of each sector is another significant gap. IT and telecommunications use modern digital tools all the time, while manufacturing and construction still rely partly on traditional methods like written reports and paper documents.

The involvement of the different stakeholders is also diverse. In IT and telecommunications projects, a wide range of stakeholders are included and engaged in decision-making. By contrast, in manufacturing and construction projects, communication is mainly directed through management levels.

Transparency is still another key component of project success. Businesses that communicate what is not on paper (e.g. with dashboards, by making real-time reports on business updates) have better stakeholder satisfaction, lower misunderstandings.
This demonstrates how open communication and solving problems encourage trust and improve project outcomes.

4.7.3 Interpretation of themes

The research revealed a number of major themes that can account for industrial differences in communication. Communication in manufacturing and construction is relatively structured and formal. This ensures clear records and control over decisions, but it can make teams less flexible when problems arise. However, on the other hand, IT and telecommunications teams use more agile communication methods so that they can respond faster and adapt more easily to changes.

The use of digital tools regularly can not only speed up but also make information sharing transparent. But when an excessive amount of tools are used without necessary coordination, it can be confusing. This aligns with the argument by Zwikael et al. (2023), indicating that technology should be managed carefully and within a well-defined project framework.

Transparency and trust also surfaced as major principles. Conflicts are decreased and teamwork is enhanced when stakeholders have access to accurate and current information. This suggests the presence of Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory which posits communication to be a vital mechanism in establishing trust and value with stakeholders.

Cultural factors are also another factor that affects communication styles. Communication in industries such as manufacturing and construction follows managerial hierarchies, which means decisions and approvals often reach senior managers. According to Adhi and Muslim (2023), communication should adapt to cultural norms, and this pattern is clearly visible in these industries.

Lastly, Flexibility under pressure, which is also one significant finding, is especially in the telecommunications industry. Many telecom teams tend to downsize the structures for hierarchy and make decisions faster during these difficult times. This is consistent with the contention from Contingency Theory that organizations should be adjusting communication and management styles accordingly to the new context.

4.7.4 Summary of sectoral differences

Table 4. Sectoral communication practices and their influence on project success.

Sector	Communication mode	Transparency level	Adaptability	Impact on success
Manufacturing	Formal, structured, hierarchical	Moderate	Low	Decisions are trustworthy but slow.
IT	Agile, collaborative	High	High	fast, client-aligned success.
Telecom	Hybrid, responsive	Moderate - High	High	Efficient crisis management.
Constrcution	Hierarchical, documentation-based	Variable	Low	Implementation of the approach is safe, but a delay happens.

The thematic analysis above illustrates the variation in communication practices by industry and how these contribute to the success of a project. These findings ground and guide the empirical study of the following chapter, which evaluates the relationships of the observed behaviours with the existing theoretical concepts, specifically, Stakeholder Theory, Stakeholder Salience Theory, Contingency Theory, and the Project Success Framework.

4.8 Stakeholder communication strategy comparison table

This table analyses and contrasts the stakeholder communication strategies performed in all the industry sectors and their attributes and effects:

Table 5. Comparative analysis of stakeholder communication strategies across industries.

Industry	Communication frequency	Primary tools and channels	Stakeholder involvement	Flexibility and responsiveness	Main challenges	Impact on project success
Manufacturing	Weekly planned meetings	Face-to-face discussions, printed reports, and basic dashboard	Internal stakeholders are involved regularly, and external partners receive formal updates only.	Flexibility is low, follows strict routines	Slow flow of information and a need for meetings to be physical	This helps keep control of schedules, but it also slows reaction time and can cause delays.
IT	Daily stand-ups and weekly Agile meetings	Slack, Teams, Jira, Zoom	Active involvement across all roles, including clients.	Highly flexible because Agile work supports fast changes	Tool fatigue (too many tools), too much information, and unclear roles	Improves project speed, adaptability, and client satisfaction.

Telecommunications	Mixed - Weekly planning, but during outages or urgent issues, updates happen in real time.	Phone calls, SMS, WhatsApp, project dashboards, shared files	Stakeholder involvement is based on the situation.	Moderate flexibility, fast for technical tasks, slower for general work	Disconnected team communication, inconsistent tool use	Real-time updates lead to better problem-solving, but missing documentation can reduce overall efficiency.
Construction	Monthly on-site meetings, informal updates	Paper documentation, email, Microsoft Project, AutoCAD	Clients are involved at key points, and contractors run daily operations.	Flexibility is low because every change needs approval from different stakeholders	Spread teams, slow decisions, delays in documentation	Impact on safety, team coordination, and cost.

4.9 Key factors influencing the communication effectiveness of projects

Effective project management relies on clear communication. It enables teams to work together efficiently, avoid miscommunication, ensure stakeholders remain on the same page, and respond on the spot to evolving problems. However, it does not just describe frequency. It describes the quality and effect of communication. Rather, the internal and external drivers determine how effectively communication flows and serves the project objectives. The following points highlight the main areas that need attention:

4.9.1 Tool accessibility and usability

The quantity and accessibility of communication tools will have a significant impact on how effectively teams can communicate. In fields like manufacturing and construction, people usually have simple tools or, at least, talk to one another in person or on paper.

In digital sectors such as IT, fast tools like Slack, Jira, and Zoom are widely used by teams to collaborate. But even with those tools, communication can fail if other folks do not understand how to use them or don’t feel comfortable using them. And for regular use, tools should be user-friendly and easily workable in daily workflows and accessible to every member of the team.

4.9.2 Stakeholder engagement

Communication works best when important stakeholders are informed and included. This includes asking them to join meetings, sending them updated plans, and letting them help in making decisions. In IT, the Agile method will involve all the stakeholders throughout a project, but in sectors such as manufacturing, they will be all the more formal, and usually come from the top. Without the buy-in of stakeholders, ideas may get missed before they occur, and if they are missed, problems with project goals and satisfaction can creep in.

4.9.3 Communication frequency and timeliness

While some industries, for example, manufacturing, rely on weekly updates, others, like IT, use that information for high-frequency communication (daily stand-ups). But how often people communicate is not the only thing that matters. The timing of communication is just as important, especially when dealing with problems or changes. You can miss deadlines, you can fall flat, spend more, or incur costs by not getting in touch quickly enough.

4.9.4 Clarity of roles and responsibilities

In large or cross-functional teams, tasks may be duplicated without clarity and can be ignored or misunderstood. Setting clear lines of responsibility, including communication responsibilities like who approves information and who shares it with others, helps to streamline the information flow and promote accountability. In fact, such issues can be mitigated by establishing communication protocols early in a project.

4.9.5 Organizational culture

When an organization supports open communication, it builds trust, honesty and helps solve problems more quickly. Team members can share concerns and work together more easily when leaders value good communication. Conversely, strict and hierarchical cultures can suppress free communication that could cause unspoken issues and inadequate coordination. In the manufacturing and construction sectors, there can be seen more informal communication, which often depends on the company's culture and usual practices.

4.9.6 Project complexity and size

Bigger or more complicated projects have more people, tasks, and details, so clear communication plans and reliable tools are very important. Complex projects can overwhelm teams without proper communication, while smaller projects may work fine with simpler communication. Communication strategies need to be adapted to the size and requirements of each project.

4.9.7 Training and support

A communication system cannot function without adequate training. In addition to using the tools, team members must be able to manage digital channels and maintain communication guidelines. Without training, tools may be used incorrectly, become less effective, and important updates can be missed. Onboarding, coaching, and ongoing support help keep communication strong and reliable.

4.9.8 Feedback mechanisms

The success of a project requires two-way communication. The stronger projects are because there are mechanisms to let team members, stakeholders, and shareholders bring up concerns to ask questions or to make changes. With these systems, one may be sure to communicate actively rather than in just a one-directional fashion from the top.

Feedback also occurs during regular sprints and during reviews in IT. Feedback in telecom businesses and construction companies occurs from client inspections or through formal review processes.

5 Discussion

5.1 Linking findings to theoretical frameworks

The results of this study contribute new insights on the communication practices of actual industry and these findings reflect theoretical premises founded on the literature review. The chapter reports the results of research using four theoretical frameworks that were discussed in the thesis, such as Stakeholder Theory, Stakeholder Salience Theory, Contingency Theory and the Project Success Framework.

The document gathers its findings from interviews in industries such as manufacturing, IT, telecommunications and construction while using them as a model for how communication strategy drives project success. The discussion also points out the relationships between stakeholder inclusion, transparency, flexibility and communication technology and ties the results empirically to theoretical analysis together.

5.1.1 Stakeholder theory: Communication as value creation

According to Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), each project has to ensure that all people and groups impacted by its outcome are valued. In a word, the work of this study also corroborates that the fundamental process underlying such value creation is through communication with stakeholders.

Similarly, in IT projects, transparency and regular interaction among users, developers, and clients build trust and satisfaction, illustrating a collaborative stakeholder relationship as proposed by Eskerod, Huemann, and Savage (2015). Real-time updates shared with early feedback loops are relational, not transactional communication.

On the other side, manufacturing and construction projects tend to concentrate on internal communication and top-down reporting. External stakeholders, such as suppliers or clients, are often informed only at formal milestones. This narrow inclusiveness suggests that Stakeholder Theory can be only partially applied, even though the communication is structured and reliable, it does not necessarily lead to a shared understanding or external cooperation.

Telecommunication projects operate in a middle space where engineers, managers, and clients communicate through complex networks that aim to balance quick responses with proper documentation. Although such systems are powerful, they sometimes amplify siloed communication instead of genuine integration.

Collectively, findings support Freeman's (1984) argument that the extent of stakeholder engagement translates into expected project outcomes. Where communication is participative and transparent, as it is in IT, project outcomes tend to exceed commonly accepted performance metrics.

5.1.2 Stakeholder salience theory: Power, Legitimacy, and Urgency in communication

According to Stakeholder Salience Theory (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997), stakeholders are considered powerful, legitimate in relation to other stakeholders by three dimensions, power, legitimacy and urgency, to obtain interest and investment for attention. The study shows how these three dimensions dynamically impact communication strategies among sectors.

Urgency and power also coexist in IT, which is quite distinct when it comes to IT, where clients or product owners who directly fund the projects also need frequent updates. Through these daily stand-ups, high-salience stakeholders are constantly engaged and informed. But lower-salience groups, such as end-users, for instance, can surprise themselves by having influence with their feedback shaping the products adopted, showing how salience can change throughout the lifecycle of a project.

Legitimacy is everything in construction. Formal communication, documented reports and official site reviews are the tools for regulators, clients, and safety inspectors. To ensure compliance, contractors, clients, or safety inspectors need detailed reports and/or visits from the people doing these inspections. While these powers ensure compliance, they can also slow down responses to daily challenges.

Manufacturing concentrates on internal power structures, and project managers and senior engineers control the flow of information. This provides some predictability, but also discourages horizontal communication between departments, often leading to delays when rapid cross-functional decision-making is necessary.

Stakeholder priorities in telecommunication projects change depending on the situation. Normally, corporate clients and management are the top stakeholders, but during network crises, technical engineers have the immediate and temporary urgency and power. However, communication transitions quickly from hierarchical to flat, providing further proof of Prebanić and Vukomanović's (2023) contention that stakeholder salience is a dynamic and contextually dependent phenomenon.

Therefore, this study contributes to the expansion of Stakeholder Salience Theory by demonstrating how the frequency and transparency of communication may naturally change in relation to stakeholder salience, especially as it does in projects of a time-sensitive or technology-intensive nature.

5.1.3 Contingency theory: Communication as contextual adaptation

Contingency Theory (Fiedler, 1964) posits that there is no universally effective communication strategy; success depends on situational fit. The results of this study strongly confirm this proposition.

In manufacturing, a formalized communication structure with regular meetings and reports of progress is a good solution, as the sector is an organized and structured one.

On the other hand, this method could reduce flexibility in IT, where fast changes require quick, ongoing communication.

Telecommunications companies use a mix of communication methods, adjusting how and how often they communicate based on the project stage and urgency. During network crises, voice calls and instant messages are most common, while emails and dashboards are preferred for regular operations. The adaptive nature of communication is consistent with Zwikael et al. (2023), which focuses on tailoring communication formality and media to project contingencies.

Construction is constrained by legal and safety regulations, leaving limited room for flexibility. However, some interviewees identified a gradual shift towards more blended approaches, combining traditional documentation with digital tools for collaboration (e.g., BIM platforms), signaling a cultural shift towards greater contingency awareness.

This research also confirms the main principle of the Contingency Theory in the context of this work when it comes to communication: it must be situationally matched to the characteristics of the project, expectations of stakeholders, and dynamics of the environment in order for it to succeed.

5.1.4 Project success framework: Beyond the iron triangle

The Project success framework (De Wit, 1988; Turner & Zolin, 2012) extends the classic “iron triangle” of cost, time, and scope to take into consideration stakeholder satisfaction, long-term value, and sustainability. The findings support the relevance of communication quality in shaping these wider success factors.

In the four sectors, key stakeholders stressed that transparency, clarity of communication, and frequency of impact on perception of their success directly. For instance, IT and telecom projects that used shared dashboards and kept the environment up-to-date had higher trust and made faster decisions. Unlike this, however, manufacturing and construction projects usually succeeded with the time and cost targets but did not delight external stakeholders since the transparency was limited and reports arrived later.

These results were similar to Eskerod et al. (2015), who insist that success cannot be determined by mere technical completion, but should describe stakeholder satisfaction. It appears that communication equity, the need for all meaningful voices to be heard, is an essential part of project value.

In addition, projects in which ethical and sustainable communication practices are incorporated, such as in construction and manufacturing, were deemed to have a better legitimacy among stakeholders and generate sustainable long-term goodwill. Effective communication thus serves as a link between outcomes on the operations side and the overall concept of sustainable project success.

6 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how stakeholder communication strategies correlate with overall project success in the manufacturing, IT, telecommunications, and construction industries. From the interviews analyzed in this section, along with the comparative analysis of industry practices, project outcomes have been mainly influenced by communication. However, no universal communication approach exists. What the industry, the project, and the people involved all do is make communication very successful.

In the IT business, for instance, teams engage in daily meetings and have access to electronic tools such as Slack or Jira to keep in touch. They enable them to respond rapidly to shifts in the industry, identify issues and issue solutions quickly, and keep everyone in the loop, resulting in faster progress and more efficient results. Yet industries such as manufacturing and building depend more heavily on scheduled meetings, such as weekly or monthly ones, which have structured, recorded conversations. While this aids in maintaining control, it can complicate decision-making when unexpected events occur.

The telecommunications sector uses different communication approaches depending on the situation. For normal tasks, they may meet once a week, but in emergencies (network issues or outages, for example), they talk fast and continuously.

The key conclusion of this research is that reaching early and preserving stakeholder involvement throughout the project would be of utmost importance. Projects that actively involve stakeholders in the planning, decisions, and reviews generally yield better results, incur fewer disputes, and are more likely to be successful. Such approaches can be observed in various information technology projects that utilize agile principles emphasize continuous feedback and collaboration.

However, many challenges were also identified. Industries struggling to communicate informativeness quickly find it difficult because they rely too heavily on face-to-face meetings or old technology. IT is also a small community that is suffering from data overload with all the platforms and communication being everywhere. This can be paralyzing and result in poor news, too many updates being missed. In industries such as telecom and construction, there's potential for friction between field teams and office staff for both issues, and misunderstandings can occur when gaps exist as well.

These concerns highlight the fact that successful communication is not a matter of frequency alone, as much as clarity, timing, the type of communication tools used, and how comfortable they are being used. And of transparency, too, and good communication also means everyone needs to know their job and what kind of things like that; you want to know, too, so everyone knows their job, whether everyone should have access to the right information, not to mention being comfortable speaking up and speaking out.

We find that communication is an important factor of project success and not a supporting activity. When communication is efficient, it encourages trust, drives teams to find solutions more quickly, enhances coordination, and improves stakeholder satisfaction. Well-planned projects can also face problems when poorly executed.

This thesis develops a practical project management framework through an analysis of communication practices within selected sectors. It shows how important it is to build on the best communication strategies available, to engage stakeholders with no end in sight, and to develop an open communication climate. And by allowing project managers to maintain and track projects, we can see more impact that projects can or can have from an execution standpoint on timing, budget, and outcomes, whilst providing value to stakeholders long-term.

6.1 Recommendations

Several recommendations are presented to help organizations enhance their communication with stakeholders and manage projects effectively, based on the findings of this study. That is what team leaders, project managers, and different industries need to have in mind before running businesses. Communication must be planned, tailored to needs, and supported by the right people, resources, and culture. This is the main takeaway.

One of the key recommendations is to align communication strategies with both the nature of the project and the industry's characteristics. Each industry has its own priorities, communication needs, and workflows. Such a customized communication style is necessary for the specific challenges that the project aims at, stakeholder concerns, decision-making time, speed of intervention, and decision-making urgency. In fast-paced workplaces, such as IT, using real-time tools like Slack or Jira, along with regular short meetings, helps retain an agile environment within teams that responds quickly. Such industries as construction and manufacturing, by contrast, benefit from structured weekly reviews but also must retain the ability to address urgent issues temporarily. The best-performing telecommunications projects are highly decentralized and do so in a hybrid manner, integrating planned meetings and quick response methods (e.g. mobile communication for field teams).

Stakeholder engagement and involvement early is also key to the project outcome. The chance of success is much higher if stakeholders are engaged early and remain closely involved during project delivery. They can not only enhance support, but also expose danger in a good time and gather the right data. Stakeholders also need to be involved at the earliest stages of the planning process and given frequent updates at each step in the project. Depending on the target, communication should be customized. technical teams often require detailed information, whereas clients typically need only summary updates. It is also important to provide clear and accessible channels for feedback and concerns, such as online surveys, discussion forums, or shared dashboards.

Clear and consistent communication is very important to prevent misunderstandings and keep everyone accountable. Miscommunication can cause serious problems or even project failure, but this can be avoided if teams set clear rules about how and when to communicate, while still allowing space for quick, informal updates. Tools like a communication guide can highlight who shares what information, when, and through which channels. Selecting and sticking to common tools such as email, chat platforms, or project management systems reduces the risk of missed or mixed messages. Besides meetings, teams should also use written updates, visuals, and dashboards to keep everyone informed and coordinated.

To use communication tools effectively, organizations need to start proper training and technical support. Even the most advanced communication tools will not be effective if people do not know how to use them correctly. This is especially important in sectors that may be slower to adopt digital technology, such as manufacturing and construction. Organizations can support by providing clear, easy-to-follow training on tools like project management software, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams. Finally, all communication tools should be accessible to everyone involved, including external stakeholders and those who are less familiar with modern technology.

Organizational culture also plays a major role in how communication is used. Teams function best in a culture of openness and transparency, where members can share ideas, raise concerns, and discuss problems freely. This openness improves project transparency and problem-solving by allowing issues to be raised and addressed promptly. Leaders play a key role by promoting open discussions, holding regular check-ins, and modeling honesty about successes and failures. The culture is further strengthened when teams that communicate effectively are recognized and rewarded.

Furthermore, the communication planning should remain flexible and adaptable. Even well-designed plans will face unexpected challenges or changes. Teams should regularly review how communication is working and be ready to adjust it when needed. If some approach does not work, e.g. sending too many emails or confusing messaging, teams should know they can make changes. This is even more important to ensure there are backup methods if the communication goes wrong, for last-minute decisions or technical issues.

Finally, while each sector has its own communication approach, there are lessons to be learned by others. Traditional sectors can also take into account useful practices from telecom on real-time responsiveness, or IT on agile working practices. Project management professionals should seek opportunities to learn about colleagues in a host of departments or industries by finding out about networking, workshops, or industry events through which they can learn from colleagues, other than from professionals in their respective professions. They should then apply what they know to improve their own communication. Looking at successful projects elsewhere can inspire new ideas and improvements for your team's plan.

6.2 Managerial implications

Their findings offer several actionable implications for managers and organizations to promote better stakeholder communication when seeking to strengthen stakeholder engagement.

First, communication planning should be treated as a strategic activity integrated into the project initiation and planning phases. A structured communication framework should clearly define who communicates what information, how frequently, and through which channels. Establishing such clarity at the beginning reduces confusion and ensures consistency throughout the project.

Leadership and organisational culture are also essential for promoting open communication. It is important for upper management to foster an environment of open communication and trust. In those higher-hierarchical industries such as manufacturing and construction, leader behavior will directly affect the extent to which team members feel more encouraged to report trouble early. Managers must model transparency through what they do well and where they fail.

Effective technology governance further supports communication efficiency. Organisations should provide standardised digital tools and establish policies for their use, including version control and information management. Checking regularly how well the tools work and how satisfied users are can help keep communication clear and avoid confusion or misuse.

Ethical and sustainable communication should be part of every project. Communication should address not only technical progress but also social and environmental impacts, compliance issues, and ethical considerations. Regular reporting of sustainability metrics and stakeholder engagement results helps to enhance credibility and accountability.

Finally, managers should encourage cross-sector learning and provide institutional support for communication training. By studying industries with advanced communication practices, like IT and telecommunications, sectors such as construction and manufacturing can enhance their agility and responsiveness. Organizations should also assist employees in developing essential communication skills, including digital literacy, cultural awareness, and negotiation. Regular workshops and simulations can help sustain these skills throughout each project phase, ensuring communication remains effective and adaptable to changing project requirements.

6.3 Gap analysis and future research

Even though this study provides valuable insights, there are still many opportunities for further research. These results are based on a small sample size and qualitative material, and thus, future studies could use a mixed-method or quantitative design to test the statistical association between communication methods and project results. Expanding the research to include international or cross-cultural comparisons would also provide valuable insights into contextual variations. Furthermore, a future analysis could explore which emerging technologies, like AI-driven communication platforms, contribute to better stakeholder engagement. Finally, another important area for research is to examine the relationship between sustainable project practices and communication effectiveness. This includes understanding how stakeholders are managed and communicated with in modern projects that prioritize sustainability, which could provide valuable insights for both researchers and practitioners.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Guide

This appendix explains the semi-structured interviews, which were the main method used to collect data for this study, and outlines the framework behind them. This interview guide was designed as part of a research objective to understand how a firm's stakeholder communication strategies impact project success in several sectors (manufacturing, IT, telecommunications, and construction).

Data were collected via Zoom and transcribed using its in-built transcription feature, with agreement from participants. The interviews lasted about 25–40 minutes in duration and were semi-structured in nature, which allowed open and exploratory questioning by an interviewer but also provided space for discussion in terms of personal reflection.

Before the meetings, interviewees were explicitly informed that responses would be kept confidential and no names or organization-specific roles would be mentioned in the thesis. Participants, instead, are identified through numerical sign numbers (e.g., Interviewee 1, IT sector).

Interviewees were invited to reflect on their experience using stakeholder identification and communication tools, transparency, and responsiveness, and gave examples of how they have communicated successfully as well as in situations when communication was difficult. The flexibility of the interview allowed the researcher to get detailed details of sectoral practices and ensure comparability for each case.

Interview Questions

- Can you briefly describe your role and experience in project management and what types of projects have you managed, and in which sectors?
- How do you identify the key stakeholders in a project?

If possible, could you share an example from your experience that illustrates how you identified stakeholders in a specific project?

- What are your communication methods for involving stakeholders in your projects? Give an example of how one of these techniques went well for an actual project.
- How do you identify the best form of communication for the various partners? Can you provide one example of what you chose and how you executed that method of communication well?
- How often do you interact with stakeholders, and through what medium? If applicable, what was the impact of this on your project decisions on how frequently, often or by which channel communication or what method and how did it affect results?
- Do you use any tools or technologies for communicating with stakeholders that affect project success? Can you offer an example of one tool or technology that was extremely impactful in managing stakeholder communication?
- How do you determine if a communication strategy is working, and what are the indicators that support this assessment?
- Can you share an example of a project where clear communication led to success?
- Were some aspects of stakeholder communication difficult? If so, how did you deal with them?
- What factors affect the effectiveness of stakeholder communication across your industry?
- From your own experience, what are the best practices you see regarding communicating with project stakeholders in your particular sector?
- In your opinion, what aspects of stakeholder communication could be improved?
- What suggestions or ideas do you have for improving your communication practices in your projects or in your industry?