



## **Effect of Project Kickbacks on Quality Delivery in Construction Projects: An Engineering– Policy Case Study of Cross River State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

Project kickbacks represent a significant governance challenge that undermines quality delivery in public construction projects, particularly in developing economies. This study investigates the effect of project kickbacks on engineering performance and policy compliance in selected construction projects in Cross River State, Nigeria. Engineering indicators assessed include material compliance, workmanship quality, cost variation, and structural performance, alongside procurement and contract administration practices. The findings reveal that kickbacks adversely influence contractor selection, weaken adherence to technical specifications, and reduce the effectiveness of construction supervision, resulting in premature defects and increased lifecycle costs. The study recommends strengthened technical audits, transparent procurement systems,

and strict enforcement of regulatory frameworks to enhance construction quality and infrastructure sustainability.

## **Keywords**

Project kickbacks; Construction quality; Procurement policy; Infrastructure delivery

## **1. Introduction**

Quality delivery is a fundamental objective of construction project management, ensuring safety, durability, and value for public investment. In many developing countries, particularly within Africa, unethical practices such as project kickbacks continue to undermine engineering standards and policy objectives. Project kickbacks involve illicit payments or benefits offered to influence contract awards, supervision decisions, or payment certifications. These practices distort procurement processes, weaken technical oversight, and compromise quality assurance mechanisms. Consequently, infrastructure projects executed under such conditions frequently experience substandard materials, poor workmanship, cost overruns, and reduced service life. This study examines the combined engineering and policy implications of project kickbacks on construction quality using selected projects in Cross River State, Nigeria, as a case study.

## **2. Literature Review**

Previous studies identify corruption as a major contributor to poor performance in construction projects. Engineering-focused research links kickbacks to inadequate material quality, reduced concrete strength, insufficient reinforcement detailing, and non-compliance with specifications. Policy and governance studies emphasize weak procurement enforcement, political interference, and limited accountability as enabling factors. In the Nigerian context, ineffective implementation of the Public Procurement Act and limited technical audits have been identified as key challenges. However, limited studies integrate both engineering performance indicators

and policy frameworks, particularly within the African construction sector. This study addresses this gap by adopting an integrated engineering–policy approach.

### **3. Methodology**

A case study research design was adopted for this study, focusing on selected public construction projects in Cross River State, Nigeria. Data were obtained through review of project documents, drawings, and bills of quantities, as well as field inspections and engineering quality assessments. Structured interviews were also conducted with engineers, contractors, and regulatory officials to assess procurement and contract administration practices. Key indicators evaluated included material specification compliance, workmanship quality, frequency of defects, cost variations, and adherence to procurement regulations. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively to establish relationships between kickback practices and quality outcomes.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

The findings reveal a strong relationship between project kickbacks and compromised construction quality. Projects influenced by kickback practices exhibited frequent deviations from design specifications, inferior material usage, and inadequate supervision. Engineering assessments indicated higher defect rates and reduced structural performance compared to projects with stronger procurement controls. From a policy perspective, weak institutional oversight, limited transparency in contractor selection, and inadequate enforcement of procurement regulations were identified as major contributing factors. These results confirm that kickbacks not only violate governance principles but directly translate into engineering deficiencies and increased lifecycle costs.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study demonstrates that project kickbacks significantly impair quality delivery in construction projects by undermining both engineering standards and policy frameworks. The consequences include premature defects, reduced service life, and inefficient use of public resources. To mitigate these effects, the study recommends mandatory independent technical audits at critical construction stages, digitized and transparent procurement systems, and strict enforcement of procurement and quality control regulations. Integrating robust engineering quality assurance mechanisms with effective policy enforcement is essential for achieving sustainable infrastructure development in Africa.

### **Authors' Contributions**

Apeh Ahmed Monday conceived the study, developed the research design, conducted data collection and analysis, and drafted the manuscript. Ben Ngene contributed to the literature review, methodology refinement, technical review of engineering content, and critical revision of the manuscript. Both authors read, reviewed, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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