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Stakeholder Coordination Challenges in Hotel Construction Projects: A Qualitative Investigation into Communication, Collaboration, and Decision- Making Dynamics

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Abstract

Hotel construction projects are characterised by heightened complexity arising from the simultaneous involvement of architects, structural consultants, project management consultants (PMC), mechanical–electrical–plumbing (MEP) engineers, contractors, vendors, and hotel operators. This multidisciplinary structure intensifies coordination demands, as each stakeholder contributes specialised expertise whose outputs are sequentially and reciprocally interdependent. The present study investigates stakeholder coordination challenges in hotel construction projects, focusing on how communication effectiveness, role clarity, collaborative practices, decision- making efficiency, and information sharing influence project workflow and execution outcomes. Employing a qualitative, exploratory research design grounded in secondary analysis of extant project management literature, the study applies thematic and interpretive analysis to identify recurring coordination deficiencies. Five directional hypotheses guide the conceptual enquiry. Findings indicate that coordination challenges are predominantly process-level phenomena: ambiguous responsibilities, delayed approvals, inconsistent technical interpretation, and fragmented information flow are the principal antecedents of workflow disruption. Structured communication protocols, clearly defined accountability frameworks, collaborative interaction mechanisms, and systematic documentation practices are identified as the key enablers of coordination effectiveness. The study contributes to theory by integrating stakeholder theory, coordination theory, and project management theory within a hospitality construction context, and provides managerial guidance for practitioners seeking to improve project alignment and execution consistency.

Keywords: stakeholder coordination; hotel construction; project management; communication effectiveness; collaboration; decision-making

INTRODUCTION

The global hospitality industry has experienced sustained expansion driven by rising tourism, urban development, and business travel. The resulting demand for quality hospitality infrastructure has elevated the scale and complexity of hotel construction projects beyond that of conventional commercial or residential developments. A hotel building must simultaneously satisfy structural integrity requirements, operational efficiency standards, brand guidelines, fire and safety codes, guest experience expectations, and aesthetic objectives. Meeting these multidimensional requirements necessitates the participation of a broad coalition of technical specialists, each operating within a defined disciplinary scope yet collectively responsible for an integrated outcome.

Hotel construction projects routinely engage architects, structural engineers, project management consultants (PMC), MEP consultants, interior designers, contractors, specialist vendors, and hotel operators. The interdependence of their outputs creates a coordination imperative that pervades every stage of project development — from conceptual planning and design development through procurement, technical integration, and site execution to handover. Prior research in construction

project management consistently identifies coordination failure as a primary driver of cost overruns, schedule delays, quality deficiencies, and rework (Chan & Kumaraswamy, 1997; Doloi, 2013; Love et al., 2002). Yet, despite the evident significance of the hospitality sector as a construction sub-market, empirical and conceptual attention to its specific coordination dynamics remains limited.

The hospitality construction context introduces coordination challenges not present in other project types. Hotel operators specify brand standards, service flow requirements, and operational functionality parameters that must be translated into construction decisions — an alignment challenge that requires constant negotiation between technical feasibility and operational expectation. The integration of complex building services (HVAC, vertical transport, fire protection, intelligent building systems, and interior fit- out) within architecturally distinctive environments further amplifies coordination complexity. This study addresses the identified gap by systematically examining the nature, drivers, and consequences of stakeholder coordination challenges in hotel construction projects.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study is to examine stakeholder coordination challenges in hotel construction projects and to understand how these challenges influence project execution. The specific objectives are:

- To identify the principal coordination-related factors communication effectiveness, role clarity, collaboration, decision-making, and information sharing that shape project workflow in hospitality construction environments.
- To analyse how coordination challenges manifest across different project stages (planning, design development, procurement, and execution).
- To explore the relationship between effective coordination practices and project workflow stability, reduction of rework, and overall execution effectiveness.
- To provide theoretical and managerial insights applicable to project owners, consultants, and practitioners involved in hotel construction.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is grounded in three complementary theoretical perspectives that collectively explain how coordination dynamics influence project performance in multi-stakeholder environments.

Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) posits that project outcomes are shaped by the relationships among all individuals and organisations with a stake in the project. In hotel construction, stakeholders possess heterogeneous priorities, technical worldviews, and performance metrics. Effective stakeholder engagement aligns these interests and reduces the probability of conflict-induced disruptions. This theory underpins the conceptualisation of coordination as a relational process, not merely a logistical one.

Project Management Theory, as codified by the Project Management Institute (PMI, 2021), frames project success as a function of how effectively managers coordinate scope, schedule, cost, and quality through structured processes. Communication planning, information distribution, and performance reporting are identified as critical coordination mechanisms. This theory provides the normative scaffolding against

which observed coordination practices in hotel construction are evaluated.

Coordination Theory (Malone & Crowston, 1994) explains how interdependent tasks require systematic communication and information sharing to achieve coherent collective action. In hotel construction, decisions by one stakeholder routinely constrain or enable the work of others, creating sequential, reciprocal, and pooled interdependencies. Coordination mechanisms meetings, documentation standards, responsibility matrices, and information systems are the instruments through which this interdependence is managed. The study applies this theory to interpret how coordination gaps arise from inadequate management of task interdependencies.

Together, these theoretical lenses frame coordination as an integrative process linking technical disciplines, aligning stakeholder expectations, and sustaining project momentum across the project lifecycle.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The construction project management literature establishes a robust evidential base linking coordination quality to project performance. Freeman (1984) and Cleland (1999) provide the foundational argument that stakeholder relationships are central to project success, with undefined roles and communication deficiencies as primary sources of conflict. Olander and Landin (2005) demonstrated that early stakeholder identification and structured communication reduce decision-making delays in construction environments.

Chan and Kumaraswamy (1997) identified poor coordination and communication gaps as significant contributors to construction schedule overruns, while Love et al. (2002) established that misalignment between design and execution teams is a leading cause of costly rework. Koskela (2000) extended this analysis through lean construction principles, advocating for collaborative, continuously communicated, and integrated planning as the antidote to construction waste. Meng (2012) corroborated these findings, demonstrating that cooperative working relationships among project participants improve overall efficiency.

Kerzner (2018) emphasised that fragmented responsibilities and unclear decision-making authority are systemic sources of coordination failure, a view supported by Winch (2010), who highlighted the misalignment between technical expertise and project objectives as a recurring challenge. Too and Weaver (2014) extended the analysis to project governance, arguing that clearly defined accountability structures are prerequisite to coordination effectiveness. Bourne (2015) further developed the importance of stakeholder relationship management, noting that mapping stakeholder influence and communication needs is essential for complex project delivery.

On the technological front, Sacks et al. (2010) and Bryde et al. (2013) documented how Building Information Modelling (BIM) improves coordination by enabling clash detection and multi-disciplinary information sharing. Rezgui et al. (2013) reinforced the value of information management systems in reducing execution uncertainty. Despite this extensive body of knowledge, the literature reveals a notable gap: existing studies address coordination in general construction contexts. The specific coordination dynamics of hotel construction projects where operational brand standards, guest experience requirements, and service infrastructure must be integrated with technical

construction processes remain underexplored.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design. This approach is appropriate given the process-oriented, behavioural nature of coordination challenges, which are not readily captured through quantitative metrics alone. The design enables in-depth examination of coordination patterns, interaction dynamics, and communication practices among multi-disciplinary stakeholders in hotel construction projects.

Data Collection

The study relies on secondary data comprising peer-reviewed academic literature, project management frameworks (including the PMBOK Guide), and construction industry scholarship. Primary thematic sources include research published between 1984 and 2021 in project management, construction management, stakeholder theory, and coordination theory domains. This secondary approach provides a theoretically grounded and contextually validated evidence base appropriate to the exploratory nature of the enquiry.

Variables of the Study

Independent variables represent coordination practice dimensions:

- Communication Effectiveness — the accuracy, timeliness, and clarity of information exchange among project stakeholders.
- Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities — the degree to which scope boundaries and decision ownership are explicitly defined.
- Collaboration Among Stakeholders — the willingness and capacity of participants to work collectively toward shared project objectives.
- Decision-Making Efficiency — the speed and clarity with which approvals and technical decisions are reached and communicated.
- Information Sharing Practices — the systematic distribution of technical drawings, specifications, and revision updates to all relevant participants.

Dependent variables represent coordination outcome dimensions:

- Project Workflow Efficiency — the degree of uninterrupted task progression across project stages.
- Reduction in Errors and Rework — the extent to which misinterpretation and consequent corrective work are minimised.
- Timely Execution of Project Activities — adherence to planned schedules for key project milestones.
- Overall Project Effectiveness — the composite outcome reflecting alignment of scope, quality, schedule, and resource utilisation.

Analytical Approach

Three analytical techniques are employed. Thematic analysis identifies recurring coordination-related patterns across the literature and organises them into conceptual clusters. Content analysis examines how coordination has been theorised and operationalised in prior research to enable systematic comparison with observations in hospitality construction contexts. Interpretive analysis explores causal relationships between coordination variables and project outcomes, yielding theoretically grounded explanations of the mechanisms through which coordination challenges affect project performance.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Stakeholder Interdependence and Coordination Structure

Hotel construction projects exhibit a layered stakeholder structure in which the outputs of each discipline serve as inputs to subsequent disciplines. Architectural decisions constrain structural configurations; structural frameworks determine MEP routing; MEP layouts influence interior planning. This sequential and reciprocal interdependence creates a coordination imperative that intensifies as the project progresses toward execution. Coordination complexity is further amplified when stakeholders belong to independent organisations with distinct communication protocols, performance incentives, and technical conventions.

Stage-Wise Coordination Requirements

Thematic analysis reveals that coordination requirements evolve qualitatively across project stages. During conceptual planning, coordination centres on aligning spatial requirements with operational and brand expectations. Design development demands technical cross-disciplinary alignment a stage at which divergent interpretations of drawings and specifications most frequently generate conflicts. Procurement coordination involves ensuring technical compatibility between specified components and vendor capabilities. Execution stage coordination is the most dynamically intensive, as site teams require continuous clarification of design intent against emerging site conditions. Coordination weaknesses at any stage propagate forward, generating compounding disruptions.

Communication Effectiveness

Communication delay and ambiguity emerged as the most consistently documented antecedents of coordination failure. Delayed transmission of design revisions, unclear technical instructions, and insufficient documentation of decisions create information asymmetries among stakeholders. These asymmetries produce divergent interpretations of project requirements, which manifest as rework, scheduling conflicts, and approval bottlenecks. Structured communication systems standardised document registers, revision-controlled drawing releases, and documented meeting minutes substantially reduce these asymmetries.

Role Clarity and Accountability Frameworks

Role ambiguity in multi-stakeholder environments generates accountability vacuums in which critical decisions are either unduly delayed or made without appropriate authority. Thematic interpretation of the literature confirms that clearly defined scope-of-work boundaries and explicit responsibility matrices reduce duplication, prevent scope gaps, and accelerate decision-making. In hotel construction specifically, the delineation of responsibilities between PMC, design consultants, and the hotel operator's technical team is a recurrent source of ambiguity requiring deliberate governance attention.

Collaboration and Integration

Collaborative working arrangements characterised by joint problem-solving forums, integrated design workshops, and cross-disciplinary peer reviews are associated with faster resolution of technical conflicts and improved alignment between design intent and execution requirements. The literature supports the view that collaboration reduces the adversarial dynamics that frequently arise between design and execution teams, thereby improving implementation consistency and reducing variation orders.

Decision-Making Efficiency

Approval dependencies represent a critical workflow constraint. In hotel construction, design approval chains typically involve the project owner, operator brand team, PMC, and lead consultant, creating multi-node bottlenecks. The analysis confirms that each day of decision delay at a critical path node has a multiplier effect on downstream activities. Establishing pre-agreed decision protocols with delegated authority thresholds significantly improves coordination continuity.

Information Sharing and Documentation

Systematic documentation practices including version-controlled drawing registers, formal transmittal records, and structured change management logs are identified as foundational enablers of consistent technical interpretation. When documentation is incomplete or not systematically distributed, stakeholders rely on informal communication, increasing the probability of implementation errors. The adoption of common data environments and digital information management platforms is emerging as a structural response to this challenge.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study affirm and extend prior literature on coordination in construction project management. The analysis confirms that coordination challenges in hotel construction are predominantly process-level phenomena rooted in communication deficiencies, accountability ambiguities, and decision-making inefficiencies rather than in technical incompetence.

The role of communication effectiveness in sustaining coordination aligns strongly with PMBOK's emphasis on communication management as a core project management process (PMI, 2021) and with Kerzner's (2018) observation that fragmented responsibilities impede coordination. The finding that design-execution misalignment is a primary source of rework corroborates Love et al. (2002) and adds a hospitality-specific dimension: brand standard requirements introduce an additional layer of design constraints that, when poorly communicated to execution teams, generate frequent corrective cycles.

The identified relationship between collaboration and coordination effectiveness supports Walker (2015) and Meng (2012), who demonstrated that cooperative relationships among temporary project teams improve both efficiency and quality. In the hotel construction context, collaboration between operator brand representatives and technical consultants is particularly critical, as operational requirements must be continuously interpreted against structural and cost constraints.

The stage-wise analysis contributes a nuanced understanding of how coordination demands shift across the project lifecycle a dimension not consistently addressed in generic construction management research. The finding that conceptual planning-stage coordination deficiencies compound through subsequent phases has significant implications for project governance design, suggesting that front-loaded coordination investment yields disproportionate downstream efficiency gains.

The theoretical synthesis of stakeholder theory, coordination theory, and project management theory provides an integrated explanatory framework for the observed patterns. The study

demonstrates that coordination is not merely an administrative function but a strategic mechanism through which the interdependencies inherent in multi-disciplinary hotel construction are managed.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Although the study employs a qualitative methodology, five directional hypotheses were framed to guide analytical interpretation. These are evaluated through conceptual alignment between established theoretical propositions and consistently observed coordination patterns in the literature, following the logic of hypothesis-guided qualitative enquiry.

All five null hypotheses are rejected on the basis of consistent conceptual evidence. The directional hypotheses receive support across multiple independent theoretical and empirical streams, lending confidence to the study's analytical conclusions.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined stakeholder coordination challenges in hotel construction projects through a qualitative, theoretically grounded analytical framework. The findings establish that effective coordination is a strategic determinant of project execution quality in hospitality construction environments, operating through five primary mechanisms: communication clarity, role definition, collaborative interaction, decision-making efficiency, and structured information sharing. Coordination challenges are predominantly process-level phenomena, arising from institutional and communication structures rather than from technical capability deficits.

The study makes three principal contributions. Theoretically, it integrates stakeholder theory, coordination theory, and project management theory within a hospitality construction context, providing a more granular explanatory framework than has previously been available for this project type. Empirically, it demonstrates that coordination demands shift qualitatively across project stages, with early-stage deficiencies compounding through the project lifecycle a pattern with important implications for front- loaded governance investment. Practically, it provides actionable guidance for project managers: the establishment of communication protocols, accountability matrices, collaborative review mechanisms, delegated decision authorities, and common data environments are identified as the highest-leverage interventions for improving coordination effectiveness.

The study acknowledges limitations arising from its secondary, qualitative methodology. Future research should employ primary data collection structured interviews and/or questionnaire surveys with hotel construction professionals to provide empirical validation of the conceptual findings. Quantitative investigations examining the statistical relationships between coordination variables and project performance indicators (cost variance, schedule adherence, quality audit scores) would further strengthen the evidence base. Research extending the analysis to comparative project types (healthcare, mixed-use developments) and incorporating emerging digital coordination technologies (BIM, common data environments, digital twin platforms) represents a productive direction for the field.

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Table 1: Summary of Hypothesis Evaluation (Qualitative Conceptual Assessment)

Hypothesis	H0 (Null)	H1 (Alternate)	Outcome
H1	Communication effectiveness has no significant influence on coordination quality in hotel construction projects.	Effective communication among stakeholders contributes to smoother coordination in hotel construction projects.	H0 Rejected — Literature consistently demonstrates that communication clarity reduces misinterpretation and workflow disruption.
H2	Clarity of roles and responsibilities does not affect coordination outcomes.	Lack of role clarity creates coordination challenges and accountability gaps during project execution.	H0 Rejected — Role ambiguity is a documented antecedent of decision delays and task duplication.
H3	Collaboration among stakeholders has no effect on design-execution alignment.	Collaborative practices improve alignment between design intent and site execution.	H0 Rejected — Collaborative working relationships reduce technical conflicts and variation orders.
H4	Decision-making efficiency does not influence project workflow continuity.	Delays in decision-making adversely affect workflow continuity in hotel construction projects.	H0 Rejected — Approval bottlenecks are identified as primary drivers of schedule disruption.
H5	Information sharing practices have no relationship with coordination effectiveness.	Structured information sharing reduces implementation errors and supports better stakeholder coordination.	H0 Rejected — Systematic documentation and version control are associated with consistent technical interpretation.