**Green Challenges: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Obstacles Faced By the UAE Construction Industry in Implementing Sustainable Project Management**

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# Introduction

This study aims to thoroughly examine the dynamics and obstacles related to adopting sustainable project management in the construction sector in the United Arab Emirates. Based on a positivist research philosophy, the quantitative survey approach examines how factors, including stakeholder views, government policies, industry strategies, green technology, cost restrictions, and regulatory hurdles interact. By providing a detailed knowledge of how these elements jointly impact the sustainability environment within the UAE construction sector, the study aims to fill significant research gaps.

# Context

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is not an exception to the rule that the construction sector is crucial to the sustainable growth of a country (Shadeedha et al., 2023). This research will explore the complex network of obstacles impeding the adoption of sustainable project management in the construction industry in the United Arab Emirates. The main subject of attention is the dependent variable, the effective implementation of sustainable project management. The research will examine some independent variables facing the UAE construction sector, such as cost limits, regulatory obstacles, ignorance, and technology limitations. The sector's financial viability is affected by cost limits, which provide a substantial barrier because sustainable practices generally need upfront investments. Regulatory obstacles from an intricate legal framework may hinder the assimilation of sustainable project management methodologies. Furthermore, the industry's lack of understanding and technological constraints prevents using eco-friendly practices and materials (Clark et al., 2018). The study will explore the tactics used by the construction sector to advance sustainability, examining the efficacy of programmes like eco-friendly building practices and green building certifications. In addition, it looks at the use and accessibility of green technology and assesses how they affect sustainable project management.

Furthermore, the research will thoroughly review government policies about sustainable building, including how well they correspond with industry requirements and promote sustainable practices. The attitudes and opinions of stakeholders, such as developers, contractors, and suppliers, about sustainability have a critical role in determining the effectiveness of sustainable project management (Agata et al., 2021). In addition, the research will look into training and education initiatives for sustainable project management in the building sector to evaluate their efficacy and suitability. This study will critically examine the intricate interactions between these factors, drawing on scholarly sources and data to offer insightful analysis that will benefit policymakers, industry stakeholders, and scholars working to improve sustainable practices in the UAE construction industry.

# Literature Review

## Obstacles in Implementing Sustainable Project Management

Research demonstrates that the UAE construction industry has a variety of obstacles in implementing sustainable project management. Cost is a major barrier since sustainable practises sometimes need larger upfront investments. According to Ahmed & Sameh El-Sayegh (2022), the sector is hesitant to absorb these upfront expenses due to competitive price pressures, which hinders the adoption of environmentally friendly practises. Regulatory hurdles, another significant issue, are demonstrated by a complicated legislative framework that is incompatible with long-term goals and creates challenges for compliance (Shadeedha Mohamed Saradara, Mansoor, Rauf, & Qureshi, 2023). Furthermore, empirical research conducted by Bernat et al. (2023) reveals a widespread deficiency of knowledge and comprehension in the sector concerning the advantages and approaches of sustainable project management. Research demonstrates the limits of current technology and highlights how the absence of standardised frameworks has caused the delayed adoption of green technologies. The UAE Construction Industry has a complex landscape that impedes the seamless application of sustainable project management practises. These essential difficulties are supported by empirical evidence.

## Tactics to Advance Sustainability

The building industry uses a variety of strategies to promote sustainability, with green building certifications and eco-friendly building practices emerging as essential initiatives. Studies like the one by Karimi et al. (2023) demonstrate how effective eco-friendly building techniques are in lessening their adverse environmental effects. These methods include using sustainable materials, cutting waste, and designing with energy efficiency in mind. Notwithstanding, particular research indicates that resistance arises from the perception of increased initial expenses (Weerasinghe et al., 2021). Furthermore, green building certifications, such as BREEAM and LEED, aim to standardise sustainability metrics. Maqbool et al. (2023) research indicates that certified buildings have better energy performance. However, some critics contend that certification does not necessarily equate to true sustainability, highlighting the necessity of continual evaluation and adjustment (Del Vecchio, 2022). However, these programmes show promise; maximising their impact and resolving current obstacles to promoting sustainability in the construction industry require sophisticated knowledge backed by academic research.

## Government Policies and Stakeholder’s Attitude

Government initiatives about environmentally friendly building have a significant impact on the sector. According to Wu & Tham's (2023) research, strict laws can encourage creativity and push for implementing sustainable practices. Nevertheless, problems occur when regulations are inconsistent or do not meet business requirements; this might hinder advancement (Evelyn et al., 2023). Comparably, the study by Alvin Baskoro Adhi Muslim (2023) shows how essential stakeholders' attitudes and perceptions are to sustainability and how positive stakeholder involvement increases the industry's openness to sustainable solutions. However, divergent opinions on the economic feasibility of sustainability and competing stakeholder interests may obstruct advancement (Lizano et al., 2019). The interaction between government policies and stakeholder attitudes, corroborated by academic research, highlights the necessity for policies that balance industry flexibility and regulation while encouraging a cooperative strategy that unites many stakeholders' interests with sustainable building objectives.

## Education and Training Programs

The construction industry places great importance on education and training programmes for sustainable project management, as they provide a workforce with the necessary skills to handle intricate sustainability issues. According to research by Jonny Nilimaa (2023), these programmes improve professionals' comprehension of environmentally friendly practices, technology, and legal requirements. Reza Kiani Mavi et al. (2021) point out that difficulties still exist and emphasise the necessity of constant adaption to changing sustainability requirements. In order to provide industry practitioners with the information and abilities necessary to effect significant change and guarantee that sustainable practises are smoothly incorporated into the construction industry, a vital education backed by scholarly sources is crucial.

### Research Gap

Although there is a wealth of literature on the barriers to sustainable project management in the UAE construction sector, there needs to be more study vacuum regarding the complex interactions between these issues. In particular, a thorough examination of the interactions and tensions between financial restrictions, legal hurdles, low awareness, and technology limits is required. Furthermore, the dearth of research on the impact of education and training initiatives on the industry's ability to surmount these obstacles underscores a chance for the current study to close the knowledge gaps and offer a comprehensive picture of the challenges associated with implementing sustainable project management in the United Arab Emirates.

# Research Question

What is the impact of obstacles, tactics, rules, regulations, stakeholder perceptions, and educational initiatives on sustainable project management in the construction sector in the United Arab Emirates?

# Research Objectives

1. Examine how the UAE construction industry implements sustainable project management and the effects of economic restraints, regulatory obstacles, a lack of knowledge, and technology restrictions.
2. Assess how well the tactics used by the construction sector to promote sustainability are working and how much they have helped to overcome implementation obstacles.
3. Examine how the availability and impact of green technology have shaped the sustainable project management environment in the construction industry in the United Arab Emirates.
4. Examine how education and training initiatives, stakeholder attitudes and perceptions, and government regulations affect the developing of a sustainable project management environment in the UAE's construction industry.

# Methodology

In the context of this specific research project, the quantitative methodology utilising survey methodologies is in line with the positivist research philosophy that has been selected. Positivism focuses on the objective assessment of observable phenomena, which aligns well with the study's variables' quantitative character (Park et al., 2023). The survey approach helps collect numerical data from a sizable sample, which makes statistical analyses easier to do in order to identify trends and correlations between variables (Aithal & Aithal, 2020). A survey enables a thorough and organised investigation of the obstacles, tactics, policies, regulations, stakeholder perspectives, and educational initiatives impacting the dependent variable implementation of sustainable project management, given the wide variety of independent variables (Table 01).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Independent Variables | Dependent Variable |
| 1. Challenges such as cost constraints, regulatory barriers, lack of awareness and technological limitations
2. The construction industry’s strategies to promote sustainability
3. Availability of green technologies
4. Government Policies related to sustainable construction
5. Stakeholders’ attitudes and perceptions towards sustainability
6. Education and Training programs for sustainable project management
 | Implementation of sustainable project management in the UAE Construction Industry |

*Table 01: Dependent and Independent Variables; selected for the study*

According to APA PsycNet (2023), quantitative research helps identify causal links and gives statistical generalizability. This approach will create a solid dataset, facilitating statistical analyses that can identify patterns and possible causes between independent and dependent variables. It is essential to acknowledge that the building business has a multitude of stakeholders, each with unique viewpoints, to rationalise the selected technique. A quantitative survey guarantees a comprehensive representation by providing insights into the combined experiences of industry experts, legislators, and other stakeholders.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1- SMART Reflection on Proposal



## Appendix 2- GANTT CHART for Research Probable Time Scale

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| Weeks | 1-2 | 2-4 | 4-6 | 6-8 | 8-10 | 10-12 |
| Identification of Research Objectives |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Formulation of Research Question and Selection of Variables |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Writing Research Proposal |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Detailed Literature Review |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Development of Questionnaire  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Data Collection via Survey |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Data Analysis |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Draft Write-up |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Final Dissertation  |  |  |  |  |  |  |