



Full length article

# Conflict Resolution Practices and Project Performance in Kigali Innovation City Project

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## Article Info

Received: 09.12.2024

Accepted: 30.01.2025

Available online: 28.02.2025

## Keywords:

Conflict resolution, practices, project performance, Rwanda

## DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.59857/HDDZ2954>

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** The study aimed to evaluate the influence of conflict resolution practices on the success of the Kigali Innovation City (KIC) Project. **Methodology:** A mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative data from structured questionnaires with qualitative insights from interviews. All 96 KIC staff members participated. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and regression to determine relationships between conflict resolution practices and project performance. **Findings:** The study revealed that 70.83% of respondents agreed communication frequency supported coordination (mean = 4.76, SD = 0.0), with similar findings for clarity and accessibility. Conflict coaching was highly rated, with 54.17% strongly agreeing on its effectiveness (mean = 4.42, SD = 0.74). ADR also proved effective, with 50.96% strongly agreeing (mean = 4.48, SD = 0.75). Regression analysis showed conflict coaching had the greatest impact on project performance ( $\beta = .750$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by ADR ( $\beta = .362$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while communication channels had a lesser effect ( $\beta = .162$ ,  $p = .075$ ). Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship ( $r = 0.841$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), accounting for 84.1% of project performance variance. **Conclusion:** Effective communication, conflict coaching, and ADR practices are crucial for enhancing project success. Conflict coaching emerged as the most impactful factor, followed by ADR, highlighting their roles in fostering collaboration, addressing challenges, and achieving better outcomes within large-scale projects like the KIC.

## 1. Introduction

Projects are essential components of business and management, designed as temporary initiatives aimed at delivering a specific product, service, or result. By their nature, projects have a clear beginning and end, and they conclude once objectives are met, are deemed unattainable, or when the need for the project ceases (Lewis, 2022). Despite their finite nature, projects often involve complex dynamics that can lead to challenges throughout their lifecycle.

According to Coget, Tschang, and Desautels (2019), projects typically encompass common elements such as goals, teams, schedules, budgets, and interdependencies. While these components are critical to project success, they also create opportunities for conflicts and obstacles to arise. One of the most common pitfalls in project management is the failure to adequately define the problem at the outset. As Coget (2019) suggest, an unclear problem definition can jeopardize the entire project, much like constructing a building on unstable ground.

In project management, understanding the nature of conflicts within project teams and their impact on project success is crucial. As Coget (2019) highlights, conflict is fundamentally a matter of perception. It is not an objective, concrete entity but rather a subjective construct that depends on the awareness of the parties involved. If none of the stakeholders perceive a conflict, it is widely accepted that no conflict exists.

Conflict, often arising from disagreements, tensions, or other challenges between two or more parties, can significantly influence a project's outcome. It typically emerges when individuals or groups perceive obstacles to their goals, and this perception can manifest in various forms. Conflicts may be private or public, formal or informal, and rational or irrational, each type carrying unique implications for team dynamics and project success.

### **1.1 The Nature of Conflict in Projects**

Conflict, an inherent facet of organizational dynamics, can be a double-edged sword within a project context. On one hand, conflict can be a serious problem that disrupts the harmonious functioning of an organization. It can create chaotic conditions that make it nearly impossible for employees to collaborate effectively. On the other hand, conflict also has a well-known positive effect, serving as a catalyst for necessary organizational developments. The intricate relationship between conflict and projects is further elucidated by Patzak (2022). He argues that conflict is essentially a clash of different expectations, a clash that leads to severe emotional involvement. This emotional engagement can often hinder rational negotiations, especially in the realm of project management.

Project environments, by their very nature, are predisposed to the emergence of conflicts. The uniqueness of each project, their contrast to daily business operations, and the challenging framework conditions they operate within all contribute to the fertile ground for conflicts to sprout. The pressure for change, frequently present in projects, serves as a breeding ground for diverse sources of friction, and it's important to note that these conflicts are intrinsic to projects. While conflicts are often considered disturbances due to the negative emotions they elicit, such as anger, they are also catalysts and driving forces for necessary developments (Patzak , 2022).

Pinto (2022) expounds on the intricate relationship between projects and conflict, highlighting how they intertwine throughout the project lifecycle. Projects, with their defined schedules, budgets, and specifications, often find these elements in conflict with each other. The needs and desires of the client can frequently clash with those of the project team. Moreover, senior management within the organization conducting the projects and other stakeholders who may have a less direct stake in the project can introduce additional layers of conflict. It is imperative to recognize that projects and conflict are inseparable companions, and their coexistence creates an environment that is unsuitable and uncomfortable for those who seek to avoid or neglect conflict management.

Saylor and Barkley (2021) emphasize the principle of conflict management. They posit that not all conflicts can be resolved, but learning how to manage conflict effectively can significantly decrease the odds of non-productive escalations. The authors introduce the notion that conflict management is not merely a reactionary process; rather, it involves the acquisition of skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and the establishment of a structured approach to manage conflicts within an organizational environment.

## **1.2 Conflict Management in Project Teams**

Within project teams, the process of managing conflict is a dynamic and vital component. The first step in effective conflict management, as highlighted by Saylor and Barkley (2021), is the recognition that conflict exists. Acknowledging the existence of conflict is a critical milestone, as it sets the stage for addressing and managing the conflict effectively. A successful conflict resolution process hinges on recognizing common responses to conflict and understanding the techniques that enable individuals and teams to make productive use of conflict itself.

Conflict management, as an integral part of team communication, plays a pivotal role in facilitating cooperation. This cooperation is crucial for project teams to reach their goals effectively. The ability to navigate conflicts and leverage them as opportunities for growth and development sets successful project teams apart from those that falter due to unresolved disputes. Barkley (2021)

When conflicts arise within project teams or between project teams and external parties, the consequences can be far-reaching. Conflict has the potential to reduce morale, lower productivity, increase absenteeism, and even lead to small or large-scale confrontations that can have severe repercussions, potentially escalating to violent crimes. As highlighted by Turk in 2018, it is estimated that managers spend at least 25 percent of their time resolving workplace conflicts. This substantial allocation of time and resources to conflict resolution undoubtedly affects the productivity of both managers and team members and can have a profound impact on project or organizational performance.

Cobb (2022) underscores a key challenge that project leaders often face – they can become so engrossed in task responsibilities that they overlook social-psychological problems until these issues grow to a point where they begin to undermine the performance of the projects they oversee. This oversight, driven by a hyper-focus on task-related responsibilities, can create an environment in which conflicts fester and grow, leading to detrimental outcomes.

Leaders within the realm of project management must maintain open lines of communication, not just on task-related issues but also on social-psychological aspects. This broad approach to communication enables leaders to identify issues early, making them far easier to address than when they reach a critical stage. Cobb (2022).

## **1.3 Addressing Social-Psychological Problems in Projects**

Marchewka (2021) argue that when a project begins to experience social-psychological problems, coordination becomes increasingly difficult. Communication within the team and with project leaders may start to suffer, absenteeism can surge, and team members might start to engage in mutual complaints rather than addressing task-related issues. These issues often serve as signals of underlying people problems. Just as with task-related

problems, addressing social-psychological problems early in their development is far more manageable than dealing with them later when they have already permeated the project's culture and dynamics.

Snyder (2020) introduces the concept of team performance assessment as a tool to evaluate individuals, segments of the team, or the team as a whole. The insights gained from such assessments, coupled with performance reports for the projects, provide valuable information regarding where the project manager should focus their attention to improve performance at the resource level. These improvements in resource-level performance have a direct correlation to enhanced project performance in terms of scope, schedule, cost, and other project objectives.

Conflict, as a pervasive phenomenon, can exist whenever two or more individuals come together. Saylor and Barkley (2021) note that conflict can take on various forms, and it is critical to understand that positive outcomes can emerge from conflict, just as negative consequences can result from agreement, a phenomenon commonly referred to as groupthink. The diversity of individuals within work teams, while a strength, can also introduce the potential for dysfunction. Page (2018) highlights that teamwork, while promoting collaboration, often increases the potential for conflicts. The workplace is rife with different priorities and work styles, and these differences can lead to uneasiness and conflict, particularly when one individual must depend on another to achieve their own objectives or recognition.

#### **1.4 Sources of Conflict in Projects**

Sources of conflict in projects are diverse, stemming from competition for limited resources, breaches of organizational norms, disagreements regarding goals and methods, personal disputes, job security concerns, and entrenched biases. Pinto (2022) emphasizes the importance of understanding these varied sources for effective conflict management. Conflicts are not merely disruptive but often indicate underlying issues that must be addressed to ensure the project's success. For project managers, recognizing these sources early can facilitate timely interventions that mitigate potential conflicts. In an African context, such as in Nigeria, conflicts arise frequently in large-scale projects due to competition for resources among various stakeholders, as noted by Onukwube and Omoregie (2021) in their study on project conflicts in the construction industry. Similarly, Akintoye and Main (2020) highlight that personal disputes and misunderstandings can significantly hinder project execution in South African construction projects.

Effective conflict management strategies are vital for reducing conflict within project environments. Mantel (2018) suggests that careful project planning is crucial, where project managers anticipate potential conflict points and devise mitigation strategies. Engaging relevant stakeholders through participative management fosters ownership and collaboration, reducing tensions. Moreover, establishing clear communication channels among all parties involved is essential. Transparent communication ensures that conflicts are recognized and addressed promptly, contributing to a more cohesive project environment. In Kenya, project managers often implement stakeholder engagement strategies to preempt conflicts, as discussed by Karanja (2019), who points out that involving local communities in decision-making processes can significantly reduce resistance and foster project support. Furthermore, in Tanzania, Makulu (2018) underscores the necessity of cultural sensitivity in communication, noting that misunderstandings rooted in cultural differences can lead to conflicts in collaborative projects.

Additionally, building strong relationships and trust among team members can significantly reduce conflicts. Maintaining an open dialogue about potential issues can lead to better understanding and cooperation. Effective project management involves not only addressing conflicts as they arise but also creating an environment where conflicts are less likely to occur. Implementing structured conflict resolution practices within the team can help sustain a collaborative atmosphere, ultimately enhancing project performance. According to Akinci and Tanyas (2022), strong interpersonal relationships among team members in Ghanaian construction projects can mitigate conflicts significantly. They argue that trust-building activities, such as team-building exercises, foster a collaborative culture that diminishes the likelihood of disputes. This is further supported by the work of Essuman and Osei-Tutu (2019), who found that fostering mutual respect and understanding among team members was crucial in conflict prevention in West African project settings.

### **1.5 Diverse Sources of Conflict in Project Management**

Conflict within project management often arises from specific areas of concern that project teams must navigate. Klastorin (2024) outlines seven fundamental areas of conflict, including scheduling and sequencing, where disagreements over timelines can escalate tensions among team members. Administrative procedures often create friction, especially when inefficiencies or disagreements arise regarding project processes. In many African projects, particularly in the public sector, delays and inefficiencies in administrative processes can lead to significant conflicts. As highlighted by Mbeki (2022), public sector projects in South Africa often experience bureaucratic delays that exacerbate tensions among stakeholders. Additionally, conflicts related to manpower and staffing, such as roles and responsibilities, can lead to misunderstandings and disputes that undermine team dynamics. A study by Chikaire and Onyebuchi (2020) on project management practices in Nigeria reveals that unclear role definitions often result in conflict and confusion, leading to project delays.

Financial considerations, such as budget allocations and cost overruns, frequently serve as significant sources of tension within projects. Disputes may arise not only from disagreements over financial resources but also from different priorities regarding the allocation of those resources. In Uganda, for instance, Akulova et al. (2019) found that budgetary conflicts often stem from misalignments between project objectives and available funding, resulting in significant project delays. Furthermore, personality conflicts present another layer of complexity, where incompatible interpersonal dynamics can disrupt collaboration and focus on project objectives. The tension arising from personality differences is echoed in a study by Musonda and Mpeha (2021), who noted that personality clashes within teams significantly hinder project performance in Zambia. Recognizing these sources of conflict and addressing them proactively is essential for maintaining project cohesion.

The intensity and nature of conflicts can evolve throughout a project's lifecycle. Certain conflicts, particularly those related to personality and project priorities, may persist from initiation through completion. As the project progresses, conflicts over schedules and budget issues tend to intensify, particularly during critical phases. In Kenya, Karanja (2019) observed that conflicts often peaked during the project execution phase, particularly related to resource allocation and scheduling. Conflicts related to project priorities can also escalate during this phase, as team members may have differing opinions on task importance. Administrative processes, in contrast, generally yield less conflict as organizations gain more experience with project management practices. Understanding these dynamics allows project managers to implement appropriate strategies at various stages of the project, ultimately fostering a more effective working environment. Research by Ssemakula and

Byaruhanga (2020) supports this, highlighting that organizations in Uganda that employ adaptive project management strategies are better equipped to handle conflicts that arise as projects progress.

### **1.6 Conflict Resolution practices**

In the context of conflict resolution, individuals and teams utilize various strategies learned from early experiences that often operate unconsciously. Page (2018) categorizes five primary conflict resolution strategies, including avoiding, competing, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating. Each strategy serves different purposes, depending on the context of the conflict. For instance, the avoiding strategy is often used in situations perceived as no-win, while the competing strategy may assert one's interests at the expense of others. Understanding when to employ these strategies is vital for effective conflict management. In various African cultures, for example, the concept of "Ubuntu" promotes collaborative and inclusive conflict resolution, encouraging individuals to consider the collective well-being rather than solely their own interests (Khumalo, 2018).

Fundamental principles guide successful conflict resolution practices across cultural and contextual boundaries. Page (2018) emphasizes the importance of upholding values such as integrity, humility, and reconciliation in conflict situations. Key principles include prioritizing peace and collaboration, recognizing one's own shortcomings before addressing others' faults, and fostering an environment that encourages forgiveness and understanding. These principles serve as the foundation for building a harmonious team environment where conflicts can be managed constructively. In the context of conflict resolution in African organizations, Adom and Musah (2020) argue that integrating traditional conflict resolution mechanisms alongside modern strategies can enhance the effectiveness of resolution efforts. They advocate for the inclusion of cultural rituals and community involvement in conflict resolution processes, which resonate with the local population and foster greater acceptance of the outcomes.

Different approaches to conflict resolution can significantly impact both immediate outcomes and long-term relationships among team members. Newell (2018) outlines five approaches: forcing, smoothing, compromise, problem-solving, and withdrawal. Each approach offers varying degrees of effectiveness and can shape the overall dynamics within the team. For example, the forcing approach may resolve conflicts quickly but can leave lingering resentment, while problem-solving fosters collaboration and strengthens relationships. Understanding these approaches enables project managers to select the most appropriate strategy based on the specific context of the conflict, promoting a healthier team dynamic and enhancing project outcomes. In Ghana, Adjei et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of the problem-solving approach in fostering collaborative work environments, arguing that when project managers encourage open dialogue and inclusive decision-making, the likelihood of long-term project success increases. This perspective aligns with broader findings across African contexts that highlight the critical role of cultural sensitivity in conflict resolution strategies (Tenkorang, 2018).

### **1.7 Diverse Approaches to Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution encompasses various strategies, each with its distinct methodologies and implications. Forcing, as described by Newell (2018) in *Conflict Resolution: A Practical Guide*, relies heavily on the use of power and authority to enforce a resolution. This approach is often employed in hierarchical settings where one party has significantly more power than the other. While it can lead to swift resolutions, the downside is

that it may breed resentment and hinder future cooperation between the parties involved. The aggressive nature of forcing can create a temporary solution, but it often leaves underlying issues unaddressed, leading to further conflicts in the future.

Smoothing is another prevalent approach that emphasizes minimizing differences and highlighting commonalities. This strategy can be effective in fostering an amicable environment, allowing parties to find a path toward resolution without delving into contentious issues. By focusing on shared goals or interests, smoothing facilitates a collaborative atmosphere that can pave the way for ongoing partnerships. However, as identified by Rahim (2022) in *Toward a Theory of Managing Organizational Conflict*, while smoothing may provide a short-term resolution, it risks neglecting deeper issues that require attention, potentially leading to unresolved tensions that resurface later.

Compromise represents a middle ground in conflict resolution, where all parties make concessions to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution. This approach, as explored by Fisher and Ury (2021) in *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, underscores the importance of flexibility and mutual respect in negotiations. Compromise can enhance relationships, as it demonstrates a willingness to accommodate differing perspectives. However, it may also result in unsatisfactory outcomes if parties concede too much, thus leading to dissatisfaction with the final agreement. Effective compromise requires clear communication and a deep understanding of each party's priorities to ensure that the resolution is acceptable and sustainable.

Problem-solving strategies focus on identifying and addressing the root causes of conflicts, fostering a resolution that meets the interests of all involved. This approach encourages open dialogue and collaboration, allowing parties to explore underlying issues rather than merely addressing superficial disagreements. According to Ury (1993) in *Getting Past No: Negotiating in Difficult Situations*, successful problem-solving necessitates creativity and a willingness to consider innovative solutions that can satisfy the needs of all parties. This method promotes long-term conflict resolution by transforming adversarial relationships into cooperative partnerships, ultimately leading to better outcomes and increased trust.

Withdrawal, the final approach, entails individuals distancing themselves from the conflict, often choosing to avoid it altogether. This strategy can serve as a temporary escape, providing individuals time to regroup and reassess the situation. However, as noted by Thomas (2018) in *Conflict Resolution in the Workplace: A Guide for Managers*, habitual withdrawal can lead to unresolved issues festering and growing over time. This avoidance strategy can ultimately deteriorate relationships and organizational morale if left unchecked. While withdrawal may provide immediate relief, it is crucial for individuals to eventually engage with the conflict to seek resolution and promote a healthier, more collaborative environment.

Each of these approaches presents unique advantages and disadvantages, influencing not only immediate conflict resolution but also the long-term dynamics between the involved parties. Understanding these strategies allows for a more informed selection of conflict resolution methods that align with the specific context and desired outcomes, ensuring effective management of interpersonal and organizational conflicts.

### **1.8 Kigali Innovation City Project as a Unique Case**

According to the report of African Development Bank (2022) Kigali Innovation City (KIC), known as the 'Digital Heart of Africa,' represents an ambitious urban master plan located within Rwanda's Special Economic Zone. This visionary development, spanning 61 hectares, is set to become a multifaceted smart innovation hub, integrating university campuses, top-tier office spaces, research and development facilities, business hotels, retail spaces, student housing, and eco-friendly design elements. It is a pivotal component of the Government of Rwanda's Vision 2020 program, which aims to catalyze digital transformation and stimulate regional economic growth.

The KIC project is a collaborative endeavor between Africa50, an infrastructure investment platform established by the African Development Bank (AfDB) and various African nations, and the Rwanda Development Board. Recognizing JLL's extensive experience in implementing smart city projects across the Middle East and Africa, Africa50 designated JLL as the lead delivery partner. JLL's responsibilities encompass a comprehensive feasibility study of the master plan, tenant engagement analysis, financial planning, and capital allocation, including a strategic approach to the design and implementation of the project. African Development Bank (2022). Furthermore, JLL is entrusted with project management and cost management services for the construction of KIC's inaugural structure, the "First Building." This six-story, 6,036-square-meter facility, situated on a 4,347-square-meter plot, marks the inception of the first phase of KIC's development. JLL's role encompasses the entire project lifecycle, from procuring design consultants and contractors to overseeing design management, project and budget monitoring, and site supervision.

The emerging masterplan for KIC encompasses various elements, including land use planning, architectural themes, land subdivision, urban and landscape design, road networks, infrastructure utilities, and various planning guidelines. Notably, KIC has already secured commitments from esteemed tenants such as Carnegie Mellon University Africa, the University of Rwanda, and Africa Leadership University, with the African Institute of Mathematical Science poised to begin construction shortly (Rwanda Development Board report, 2022).

Upon completion, Kigali Innovation City holds the potential to generate substantial socio-economic benefits, including the creation of over 50,000 jobs, an estimated \$150 million in annual ICT exports, and an influx of over \$300 million in foreign direct investment. Furthermore, KIC is expected to contribute significantly to the tech-savvy talent pool in Rwanda and Africa, with over 2,600 students anticipated to graduate annually from the universities situated within KIC. Alain Ebobisse, CEO of Africa50, underscores the project's significance in fostering innovation and ICT development on the continent, emphasizing its global reach and socio-economic impact. Rwanda Economic Update (2022)

Clare Akamanzi, (2022) CEO of the Rwanda Development Board, highlights KIC's role in diversifying and modernizing Rwanda's economy, positioning the nation as a pivotal business hub in Africa. KIC is envisioned as a platform for investors to pioneer new technologies, test innovative concepts, and scale their ventures within the heart of Africa.

### **1.9 Problem statement**

Despite the recognized importance of effective conflict resolution practices in enhancing project performance, there remains a critical gap in understanding how these practices are applied and their impact within the context of the Kigali Innovation City Project (KICP). Recent studies highlight a lack of comprehensive frameworks tailored to the unique needs of large-scale innovation projects like KICP, resulting in unresolved conflicts that impede progress and diminish outcomes. Scholarly ideas from Jones (2022) suggest that conflicts in project teams, if not managed effectively, can lead to decreased productivity and team cohesion. Similarly, Smith and Wang (2021) argue that conflicts left unaddressed can escalate, resulting in project delays and cost overruns. These findings underscore the urgency of examining conflict resolution practices at KICP to ensure its successful completion and long-term impact on Rwanda's innovation ecosystem.

Further complicating the issue are situational gaps identified in Rwandan reports and statistics. The Rwanda Governance Board (RGB, 2023) reported a significant increase in project delays attributed to unresolved conflicts, with 65% of projects affected in the past year alone. Additionally, the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR, 2022) found that ineffective conflict resolution mechanisms contributed to a 20% decrease in project efficiency across various sectors, including innovation and infrastructure development. To address this gap, the purpose of this study is to explore and evaluate the existing conflict resolution practices at KICP, identify their shortcomings, and propose tailored strategies to enhance project performance. By leveraging insights from recent research studies and Rwandan reports, this research aims to provide practical recommendations for project managers, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in similar large-scale projects, ultimately contributing to the successful implementation of the Kigali Innovation City Project and similar initiatives in Rwanda.

### **1.10 Objective of the Study**

- i. To assess the influence of communication channels on the overall performance of the Kigali Innovation City Project.
- ii. To investigate the influence of conflict coaching on the overall performance of the Kigali Innovation City Project.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This section outlines the framework for data collection and analysis within the research project. It includes the determination of the sample size, the method employed for sample selection, data collection approaches and instruments, the data acquisition process, and the subsequent data analysis methodology.

### **2.1 Research Design**

To comprehensively investigate the impact of conflict resolution practices on the Kigali Innovation City Project, a mixed-methods research design was employed. The combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods is essential to capture both numerical data and the nuanced experiences and perceptions of project stakeholders. The quantitative aspect involved surveys, while the qualitative aspect included in-depth interviews and document analysis. This dual approach provided a more holistic understanding of the research topic and ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

According to Corlien, (2019) take on Research designs combining quantitative and qualitative methods are often recommended for studies in the realm of project management. Quantitative data can help establish trends and correlations, while qualitative data provides valuable context and insights.

## **2.2 Target Population**

The research population for this study is 96 personnel all-encompassing and is exclusively based in Kigali City District, Rwanda, representing the entire Kigali Innovation City (KIC) project cycle. It spans from the initial procurement of the design consultant and contractor to the subsequent stages of design management, project and budget monitoring, and site supervision. This inclusive approach aims to provide a holistic perspective on the influence of conflict resolution practices on the KIC project's overall success. Design consultants, contractors, design management teams, project and budget monitoring teams, and site supervision personnel, all operating within Kigali City District, are integral parts of the research population, each contributing essential insights and experiences from their respective roles. By engaging with these individuals and groups responsible for different aspects of the project, the study aims to offer a nuanced understanding of how conflict resolution practices, including communication channels, conflict coaching, and alternative dispute resolution, affect the overall success and outcomes of the KIC project.

## **2.3 Sample Design**

### *Sample Size*

The research sample, comprising 96 participants, reflects the diversity and critical roles within the Kigali Innovation City (KIC) project cycle. This sample, meticulously chosen using census approach, including all design consultants, contractors, project managers, budget managers, and site supervisors, all based in Kigali City District. Due to the small number of the research population the sample size has been carefully studied and the researcher decided to consider all as respondents to provide a thorough and representative exploration of the influence of conflict resolution practices on the KIC project's overall success. This approach ensures the research findings' validity and relevance to complex, multi-stakeholder projects like KIC, facilitating the generation of comprehensive recommendations for effective project management in the local context.

## **2.4 Sampling Technique**

To ensure a robust and balanced representation of critical roles within the Kigali Innovation City (KIC) project cycle, including design consultants, contractors, project managers, budget managers, and site supervisors, all based in Kigali City District, a Census approach or sampling technique was employed to consider the entire population as they are (96) and act as participants for this research under investigation. This approach mitigated potential bias, ensuring statistical validity. This approach also ensures that the study's findings are both comprehensive and credible, offering actionable insights for effective project management in the context of complex, multi-stakeholder initiatives like KIC.

## **2.5 Data Collection Method**

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. Survey questionnaires were distributed to project stakeholders to measure perceptions of conflict resolution practices, communication, and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). Semi-structured interviews explored in-depth experiences and perspectives of key stakeholders, while document analysis provided historical

context and complemented the primary data. Participant observations and content analysis of online communications were also considered to observe real-time conflict dynamics.

To ensure reliability, instruments were pre-tested, with expert feedback addressing ambiguities and improving clarity. Content validity was established through guidance from the research supervisor, alignment with study objectives, and pre-testing with a representative sample. This comprehensive methodology ensures robust and reliable insights into how conflict resolution practices impact the success of the Kigali Innovation City Project.

### 2.6 Data Analysis and Procedures

This research utilized statistical methods to analyze the data comprehensively. Descriptive statistics, such as percentages and frequencies, was be employed to provide a clear overview of the data. Furthermore, to test the research hypotheses, inferential statistics was be applied, specifically involving correlational and regression analyses. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) served as the chosen tool for conducting the data analysis. The researcher utilized the Statistical Product & Service Solutions (SPSS) for quantitative data analysis. The data was analyzed using both statistical and narrative methods. A regression model was used to assess the relationship between variables. Narrative analysis was used to explain the qualitative results of the survey.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$$

Where Y = Project performance

$\alpha$  = Model Constant

$\beta_{1-3}$  = Model Coefficients

$\epsilon$  = Error Term (unknown random error assumed as normally distributed)

$X_1$  = Communication Channels

$X_2$  = Conflict Coaching

$X_3$  = Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

## 3. RESULTS

Chapter four presented the research findings and analyzed the demographic profiles of the 96 respondents, achieving a 100% response rate. This complete dataset allowed for a thorough examination of how conflict resolution practices impact the performance of the Kigali Innovation City Project. The full participation of respondents enhanced the validity of the results, underscoring the importance of effective communication, conflict coaching, and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in achieving project success. The section was designed to gather insights through targeted questions, addressing the study's objectives. Overall, the research aimed to deepen understanding of the examined issues by providing detailed insights that aligned with its goals.

### 3.1 Influence of Communication Channels on Project Performance

The study aimed to evaluate the impact of communication channels on the overall performance of the Kigali Innovation City Project. It examined how various communication methods and strategies were employed and their effectiveness in resolving conflicts and enhancing project outcomes. The objective was to understand the role of communication in project performance, particularly in the context of conflict resolution within the Kigali Innovation City Project.

Table 1: Communication Channels and Project Performance

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	
	%	%	%	%	%	Mean	Std
The frequency of communication among project team members is sufficient to ensure effective coordination and collaboration.	-	1 (1.04)	2 (2.08)	25 (26.04)	68 (70.83)	97	4.76
The messages delivered through communication channels are clear and easily understandable by all team members.	-	1 (1.04)	3 (3.13)	24 (25.00)	68 (70.83)	96	4.76
Information related to the project is easily accessible by all relevant stakeholders through our communication channels.	-	1 (1.04)	3 (3.13)	27 (28.13)	65 (67.71)	96	4.73
Communication channels facilitate open and honest dialogue, allowing team members to express their views and concerns.	-	-	2 (2.08)	29 (30.21)	65 (67.71)	98	4.75
Team members can rely on communication channels to resolve issues and make well-informed decisions promptly.	-	1 (1.04)	2 (2.08)	27 (28.13)	66 (68.75)	97	4.76

**Source:** Primary Data (2024)

The findings from Table 1 provide key insights into the effectiveness of communication channels in the Kigali Innovation City project. The data reveals that 70.83% of respondents agreed that the frequency of communication among team members was sufficient to ensure effective coordination and collaboration. This was reflected in a high mean score of 4.76 with no deviation, indicating strong consensus. Similarly, 70.83% of respondents found the messages delivered through communication channels clear and easily understandable, with an identical mean score and standard deviation.

Accessibility of information was also rated positively, with 67.71% of respondents agreeing that project-related information was easily accessible through the communication channels. This aspect received a mean score of

4.73, again without any deviation. Additionally, 67.71% of respondents felt that the communication channels facilitated open and honest dialogue, allowing team members to express their views and concerns, earning a mean score of 4.75.

Lastly, 68.75% of respondents agreed that the communication channels were reliable for resolving issues and making informed decisions promptly, achieving a mean score of 4.76. Overall, these findings demonstrate that the communication channels were effective in fostering collaboration, transparency, and problem-solving, which significantly contributed to the project's overall performance.

### 3.2 Effect of Conflict Coaching on Project Performance

The study aimed to examine the impact of conflict coaching on the overall performance of the Kigali Innovation City Project. It sought to analyze how conflict resolution practices, specifically through coaching, influenced project outcomes. Through a detailed investigation, the study assessed the effectiveness of conflict coaching in enhancing project performance and achieving project goals within the context of the Kigali Innovation City Project.

Table 2: Conflict Coaching and Project Performance

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	
	%	%	%	%	%	Mean	Std
Our organization offers accessible and effective conflict coaching services to project team members.	1 (1.00)	3 (3.00)	5 (5.00)	35 (36.46)	52 (54.17)	4.42	0.74
Employees actively participate in conflict coaching sessions, seeking guidance and resolution for project-related issues.	-	2 (2.00)	7 (7.37)	39 (40.63)	48 (50.00)	4.44	0.74
The quality of conflict coaching provided to employees significantly contributes to the successful management of project-related conflicts.	1 (1.00)	1 (1.00)	10 (10.42)	42 (43.75)	42 (43.75)	4.38	0.73
Conflict coaching encourages employees to develop better conflict resolution skills, which positively impact project outcomes.	1 (1.00)	3 (3.13)	11 (11.46)	40 (41.67)	41 (42.71)	4.38	0.74

Conflict coaching is seen as a valuable resource that empowers employees to address project-related challenges effectively.	-	2	11	43	40	4.37	0.75
		(2.00)	(11.46)	(44.79)	(41.67)		

**Source:** Primary Data (2024)

The findings from Table 2 emphasize the significant role of conflict coaching in improving project performance in the Kigali Innovation City Project. The data reveals that a substantial majority of respondents 54.17% strongly agreeing and 36.46% agreeing believe their organization provides accessible and effective conflict coaching services. This is reflected in a mean score of 4.42 with a standard deviation of 0.74, indicating high satisfaction and perceived efficacy of these services.

Furthermore, employees actively participate in conflict coaching sessions to seek guidance and address project-related issues. This engagement is demonstrated by 50% of respondents strongly agreeing and 40.63% agreeing, with a mean score of 4.44 and a standard deviation of 0.74. The quality of conflict coaching is also notable, as 43.75% strongly agree and 43.75% agree that it significantly aids in managing project-related conflicts, resulting in a mean score of 4.38 and a standard deviation of 0.73.

Respondents further acknowledge that conflict coaching empowers them to handle project challenges effectively, with 44.79% agreeing and 41.67% strongly agreeing, achieving a mean score of 4.37 and a standard deviation of 0.75. These findings underscore that conflict coaching is highly valued by employees and plays an instrumental role in enhancing conflict resolution skills, thereby contributing positively to project outcomes within the Kigali Innovation City Project.

### 3.3 Responses from Interview Guide to Staff

Table 3: Responses from Interview Guide to Staff

Answers	Mean	Std
The communication channels in our project are generally effective, but there is room for improvement.	4.33	0.74
Yes, I have participated in conflict coaching sessions, and they have greatly improved my ability to handle conflicts.	4.36	0.70
My experience with our ADR policy has been positive. It has effectively resolved project conflicts.	4.33	0.76
The messages delivered through our communication channels are mostly clear and easy to understand.	4.36	0.70
The quality of conflict coaching has a significant impact on project conflict res-	4.36	0.73

olution and success.

Yes, I have received ADR training, and it has been instrumental in efficiently addressing project conflicts. 4.33 0.75

Communication channels, conflict coaching, and ADR all play crucial roles in the success of our project. 4.35 0.74

**Source:** Primary Data (2024)

The analysis of responses from staff involved in the Kigali Innovation City Project indicates positive perceptions and experiences regarding communication channels, conflict coaching, and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) policy. The majority of respondents, 4.33 out of 5 on average (SD = 0.74), viewed the communication channels in the project as generally effective, with room for improvement. Similarly, a high mean score of 4.36 (SD = 0.70) was recorded for participation in conflict coaching sessions, indicating that these sessions significantly improved individuals' ability to handle conflicts. Regarding the ADR policy, respondents reported a positive experience, with a mean score of 4.33 (SD = 0.76), indicating that the policy effectively resolved project conflicts. Furthermore, respondents found the messages delivered through communication channels to be mostly clear and easy to understand, with a mean score of 4.36 (SD = 0.70). The quality of conflict coaching was also highlighted, with a mean score of 4.36 (SD = 0.73), indicating its significant impact on project conflict resolution and success. Additionally, a high mean score of 4.33 (SD = 0.75) was recorded for the effectiveness of ADR training in efficiently addressing project conflicts. Overall, the findings suggest that communication channels, conflict coaching, and ADR play crucial roles in the success of the Kigali Innovation City Project, as indicated by the high mean scores and positive responses from staff members.

### 3.4 Regression Analysis

Table 4: Regression Analysis

Model	UC		SC	t	Sig.
	B	SE	Beta		
(Constant)	.489	.494	-	1.211	.207
1					
Communication Channels (X <sub>1</sub> )	.889	.061	.162	2.015	.075
Conflict Coaching (X <sub>2</sub> )	.919	.072	.750	13.018	.000
Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) (X <sub>3</sub> )	.491	.088	.362	6.767	.000

a. *Dependent Variable: Performance of The Kigali Innovation City Project in Kigali, Rwanda*

Source: SPSS Data Output, 2024

$$Y = .489 + .889X_1 + .919X_2 + .491X_3$$

In the regression analysis conducted several key findings emerged. The analysis aimed to examine the relationship between communication channels, conflict coaching, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), and the performance of The Kigali Innovation City Project in Kigali, Rwanda. The model included three independent variables: Communication Channels (X<sub>1</sub>), Conflict Coaching (X<sub>2</sub>), and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)

(X3), with the dependent variable being the Performance of The Kigali Innovation City Project. The analysis revealed that Conflict Coaching (X2) had the highest positive impact on project performance, with a beta coefficient of .750 and a significant t-value of 13.018 ( $p < .001$ ). This indicates that for every unit increase in Conflict Coaching, there was a corresponding increase in project performance. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) (X3) also had a significant positive impact on project performance, with a beta coefficient of .362 and a t-value of 6.767 ( $p < .001$ ). Communication Channels (X1) showed a positive but less significant impact on project performance, with a beta coefficient of .162 and a t-value of 2.015 ( $p = .075$ ). The regression model's overall explanatory power was reflected in the constant value (.489) and the respective coefficients for each independent variable. These findings suggest that effective conflict coaching and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms significantly contributed to the success of The Kigali Innovation City Project. The analysis underscores the importance of investing in conflict resolution practices to enhance project performance, particularly in large-scale projects like The Kigali Innovation City Project. These findings align with prior research on conflict resolution and project performance, emphasizing the pivotal role of proactive conflict management strategies in achieving project success. The study's results provide valuable insights for project managers and stakeholders involved in similar projects, highlighting the need to prioritize conflict resolution practices to improve project outcomes.

### 3.5 Correlation of Analysis between Conflict Resolution Practices And Performance Of The Kigali Innovation City Project

Table 5: Correlation Analysis

		Conflict Resolution Practices	Performance Of The Kigali Innovation City Project
Conflict Resolution Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	0.841**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	96	96
Performance Of The Kigali Innovation City Project	Pearson Correlation	0.841**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	96	96

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source:** Primary Data (2024)

In the Table 5, the correlation analysis between conflict resolution practices and the performance of the Kigali Innovation City Project was conducted, revealing a strong positive correlation of 0.841\*\*. This indicates a significant relationship between the two variables at the 0.05 level of significance. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.841\*\* suggests a very strong positive linear relationship between conflict resolution practices and project performance, implying that as conflict resolution practices improve, project performance also tends to improve. This finding aligns with the expectations and theoretical frameworks in project management, which emphasize the importance of effective conflict resolution in enhancing project outcomes. The high correlation

coefficient of 0.841\*\* indicates that 84.1% of the variance in project performance can be explained by conflict resolution practices. This suggests that a substantial portion of project performance variability can be attributed to how conflicts are managed and resolved within the project team. The sample size for this analysis was 96, providing a robust dataset for drawing reliable conclusions. These findings underscore the critical role of conflict resolution practices in determining the success of the Kigali Innovation City Project, highlighting the importance of investing in strategies and mechanisms to effectively manage conflicts in project teams to enhance project performance.

## **4. DISCUSSIONS**

### **4.1 Communication Channels and Project Performance**

The findings from Table 1 on communication channels and project performance in the Kigali Innovation City Project revealed a high level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of communication among project team members. The frequency of communication was deemed sufficient by 70.83% of respondents, with a mean score of 4.76 and a standard deviation of 0.0, indicating a strong consensus. This aligns with the work of Pinto and Slevin (2018), who emphasized the critical role of communication in project success. Similarly, the clarity and understandability of messages were rated highly, with 70.83% of respondents agreeing, yielding the same mean score and standard deviation. This is consistent with Turner and Müller (2024), who noted that clear communication channels are essential for effective project management. Furthermore, the accessibility of project-related information through communication channels was agreed upon by 67.71% of respondents, with a mean score of 4.73 and a standard deviation of 0.0. This echoes the findings of Kerzner (2019), who highlighted the importance of accessible information for project stakeholders. The facilitation of open and honest dialogue was also rated highly, with 67.71% agreement and a mean score of 4.75 (SD = 0.0), supporting the arguments of Fisher and Ury (2021) on the significance of open communication in conflict resolution. Additionally, the reliability of communication channels in resolving issues and making informed decisions was affirmed by 68.75% of respondents, with a mean score of 4.76 and a standard deviation of 0.0, reinforcing the views of DeChurch and Marks (2021) on the impact of effective communication on decision-making processes. These findings suggest that the communication channels in the Kigali Innovation City project significantly contributed to the project's performance by fostering collaboration, transparency, and problem-solving among team members.

### **4.2 Conflict Coaching and Project Performance**

The results from Table 2 indicated that conflict coaching played a crucial role in enhancing project performance within the Kigali Innovation City Project. A majority of respondents, 54.17%, strongly agreed and 36.46% agreed that the organization offered accessible and effective conflict coaching services, with a mean score of 4.42 and a standard deviation of 0.74. This aligns with the findings of Jehn (2019), who emphasized the positive impact of conflict management training on team performance. The active engagement of employees in conflict coaching sessions was evidenced by 50% strongly agreeing and 40.63% agreeing, resulting in a mean score of 4.44 (SD = 0.74).

This supports the research by Rahim (2022), who noted that conflict coaching enhances employees' ability to handle conflicts effectively. The quality of conflict coaching was also highlighted, with 43.75% strongly agreeing and 43.75% agreeing, yielding a mean score of 4.38 and a standard deviation of 0.73, aligning with

the work of Wall and Callister (2019) on the effectiveness of conflict resolution training. The empowerment of employees to address project-related challenges effectively was agreed upon by 44.79% and strongly agreed upon by 41.67%, with a mean score of 4.37 (SD = 0.75), echoing the views of Deutsch (2021) on the importance of conflict resolution skills in improving team dynamics. These findings show that conflict coaching was viewed positively by employees and was instrumental in improving conflict resolution skills, thereby positively impacting project outcomes within the Kigali Innovation City Project.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The study on the Kigali Innovation City Project highlighted the pivotal role of conflict resolution practices communication channels, conflict coaching, and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in enhancing project performance. Clear and frequent communication fostered collaboration, accessibility, and trust among stakeholders. Conflict coaching empowered team members with skills to effectively manage project-related issues, while ADR practices improved resolution capabilities and reinforced trust through targeted training. Regression analysis revealed conflict coaching had the greatest positive impact, followed by ADR and communication channels. A correlation coefficient of 0.841 emphasized the strong link between conflict management strategies and improved project outcomes, underscoring their importance.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance project performance in the Kigali Innovation City Project, organizations should establish clear communication channels and provide regular training on effective communication. Institutionalizing conflict coaching as a core practice ensures employees can manage conflicts effectively. Investing in alternative dispute resolution (ADR) training fosters trust and supports conflict resolution. Regularly updating these mechanisms to meet evolving project needs is vital. Future research should examine these practices across different projects to refine conflict resolution strategies and improve project outcomes.

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