

**REVISITING PROJECT CHARTERING: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF ITS INFLUENCE ON
PROJECT GOVERNANCE AND PERFORMANCE.**

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural interventions are vital for food security in Jos, Plateau State, often initiated through formal project charters intended to guide execution. However, these interventions frequently face performance failures, characterized by financial leakage and scope creep. This study investigates the governance of these projects to address the "institutional decoupling" the significant gap between the formal signing of project charters and their frequent abandonment during political transitions. The study employed a mixed-methods research design, surveying a sample of 110 stakeholders and utilizing regression analysis to evaluate the influence of charter governance on project performance. Findings reveal that 61.5% of the variance in project failures is directly attributable to the lack of strict charter enforcement and high levels of political interference. Qualitative evidence further corroborates this, highlighting how bureaucratic bypasses in procurement and systemic delays in critical input disbursement such as the 2018 tractor intervention directly undermine the agronomic viability of these projects. It is recommended that the Plateau State Government formalizes project charters as legally binding instruments integrated into the state's multi-year fiscal framework. Implementing legislative "ring-fencing" protocols would insulate project funding from discretionary political interference, ensuring continuity across administrative cycles.

Keywords: Project Chartering, Critical Review, Governance, Abandonment of Projects.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the discourse on project governance increasingly identifies the project charter not merely as an administrative artifact, but as the primary locus of contractual and psychological alignment among stakeholders (Müller et al., 2014). Grounded in Agency Theory, the project charter mitigates information asymmetry between project sponsors (principals) and project managers (agents) by explicitly codifying the governance framework, performance baselines, and resource boundary conditions (Turner & Müller, 2004).

When these foundational governance agreements are discarded during transitions, projects lose their baseline for performance measurement and accountability, triggering systematic failure across sectors, particularly in capital-intensive areas like agriculture and infrastructure.

This systemic governance deficit directly impacts the agricultural sector within the Jos North and Jos South Local Government Areas of Plateau State. As a critical hub for food production and agro-allied activities in Nigeria, this region frequently hosts a complex mix of government-sponsored interventions, international non-governmental organization (NGO) programs, and local cooperative farming projects (Plateau State Ministry of Agriculture, 2023). However, these agricultural initiatives are highly vulnerable to localized political shifts, inconsistent funding streams, and fractured communication between institutional sponsors and local agrarian communities.

1.2 Research Problem

Despite the documented importance of project charters in establishing governance, agricultural interventions in Nigeria particularly in the Jos North and Jos South Local Government Areas continue to experience high rates of abandonment, scope creep, and financial leakage. The core challenge is not the absence of these foundational documents, but rather their vulnerability to poor governance once the execution phase begins. Consequently, there is an urgent need to critically revisit project governance and performance within this specific context or Plateau State will continue to suffer systemic failures, thereby threatening regional food security, wasting public and donor funds, and undermining rural economic development.

The aim of this study is to examine the influence of project charters on the governance and performance of agricultural interventions within the Jos North and Jos South Local Government Areas of Plateau State, Nigeria. The findings of this study will equip policymakers, project managers and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in volatile environments, this research transitions the project charter from a static artifact to a dynamic governance mechanism. Practitioners will gain context-specific strategies to actively enforce stakeholder alignment, mitigate scope creep, and prevent the financial leakages that commonly plague development projects in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2020). Ultimately stabilizing these governance structures directly benefits the local farming communities in Jos North and Jos South.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Study Area

The study is conducted in the Jos North and Jos South Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Plateau State, Nigeria. This region is a primary agricultural hub characterized by a unique climate that supports diverse agro-allied activities and cooperative farming. Historically, it attracts significant agricultural interventions from state governments, federal agencies, and international NGOs.

2.2 Research Design

This study adopts an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This approach involves two distinct phases: an initial quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. First, structured questionnaires will be deployed to establish a statistical baseline regarding the utilization and adherence to project charters across various agricultural projects. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a targeted subset of stakeholders.

2.3 Population and Sampling Procedure

The target population for this study encompasses: government officials at the Plateau State Ministry of Agriculture, project managers representing international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and leaders of registered local cooperative farming groups.

To determine a mathematically rigorous sample size from the accessible population, the study utilizes the Taro Yamane (1967) formula:

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

where:

n is the sample size,

N is the finite population size,

e is the level of significance, at 0.05.

Conversely, for the qualitative phase of the study, a **purposive sampling** technique will be utilized. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to deliberately select participants based on their extensive knowledge and direct experience with agricultural project charters and governance failures (Patton, 2015). Approximately 10 to 15 key informants such as senior directors at the Ministry and lead project managers will be interviewed until data saturation is achieved, ensuring deep,

contextual insights into the political and institutional barriers to charter enforcement (Saunders et al., 2018).

3. RESULTS

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the empirical findings addressing the research objectives from Chapter One.

3.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Organization	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Agricultural Cooperative	54	49.1%
NGO	30	27.3%
Ministry of Agriculture	26	23.6%
Total	110	100%

Source: Field Survey Data (2026)

Table 3.1 illustrates the organizational affiliation of the 110 respondents surveyed for this study. The analysis reveals that the largest proportion of participants, representing 49.1% (n=54), are affiliated with local Agricultural Cooperatives. This is followed by project managers and representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), who account for 27.3% (n=30) of the sample. The smallest represented subgroup consists of government officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, comprising 23.6% (n=26) of the total respondents.

Table 3.2: Utilization and Dynamic Enforcement of the Project Charter

Item	Statement	Mean (M)	Std. Dev (SD)	Decision
B1	The project charter is formally executed prior to the commencement of interventions.	3.92	1.15	Agreed
B2	The charter functions as a dynamic mechanism, undergoing revisions during transitions.	2.85	1.34	Disagreed
B3	Established charters are frequently discarded when a new administration assumes control.	4.18	0.98	Agreed

Source: Field Survey Data (2026)

Table 3.2 shows that while project charters are formally executed at commencement (M=3.92, SD=1.15), they are rarely revised during institutional transitions (M=2.85, SD=1.34) and are frequently discarded by new government administrations (M=4.18, SD=0.98). This indicates a pattern of high initial compliance followed by systemic abandonment during political shifts.

3.3 Findings for Objective Two: Stakeholder Alignment

Item	Statement	Mean (M)	Std. Dev (SD)	Decision
C1	The project charter effectively delineates the specific roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders.	3.65	1.02	Agreed
C2	Local agricultural cooperatives are actively integrated into the charter ratification processes.	3.10	1.25	Agreed
C3	Communication protocols in the charter are strictly adhered to during political transitions.	2.45	1.18	Disagreed

Source: Field Survey Data (2026).

Table 3.3 shows that project charters effectively delineate stakeholder roles at inception ($M=3.65$, $SD=1.02$) and actively integrate local agricultural cooperatives during ratification ($M=3.10$, $SD=1.25$). However, adherence to established communication protocols breaks down during political transitions ($M=2.45$, $SD=1.18$). This suggests that foundational alignment lacks the institutional resilience required to withstand administrative disruptions.

3.4 Findings for Objective Three: Project Performance and Financial Leakage

Item	Statement	Mean (M)	Std. Dev (SD)	Decision
D1	The absence or abandonment of a project charter frequently results in unauthorized reallocation of funds.	4.25	0.85	Agreed
D2	Political interference and transitions cause execution delays, resulting in significant budget overruns.	4.40	0.75	Agreed
D3	A lack of strict charter enforcement leads to unchecked scope creep and project abandonment.	4.15	0.90	Agreed

Source: Field Survey Data (2026)

Table 3.4 shows that the abandonment of project charters frequently leads to the unauthorized reallocation of agricultural funds ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.85$). Respondents strongly agreed that political interference and administrative transitions cause severe execution delays and budget overruns ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.75$). Furthermore, weak charter enforcement facilitates unchecked scope creep, culminating in project abandonment ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.90$). These results suggest that weak governance directly correlates with severe financial and performance failures.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 The Phenomenon of Institutional Decoupling in Charter Enforcement

The findings from this study reveal a stark contradiction in the governance of agricultural interventions in Jos North and South. As established in Table 3.2, stakeholders consistently execute formal project charters prior to project commencement (\$M\$ = 3.92). However, this initial compliance rapidly deteriorates during institutional shifts, with respondents strongly agreeing that charters are discarded when a new administration assumes control (\$M\$ = 4.18). This aligns with the concept of institutional decoupling, where governance documents serve merely as symbolic artifacts to secure initial funding rather than dynamic management tools.

This statistical trend was heavily corroborated by the qualitative interviews. One senior NGO Project Manager operating in Jos South noted:

We spend weeks drafting these charters to satisfy the international donors. But the moment a new local government chairman comes in, the old agreements are practically thrown out the window. The charter is just a piece of paper; it doesn't survive the politics.

This demonstrates that the failure of project governance is not due to a lack of initial planning, but rather a profound vulnerability to regional political volatility.

4.2 The Impact of Political Transitions on Financial Leakage and Project Performance

The empirical analysis established a highly significant relationship between political interference and project performance failures. As demonstrated by the regression model in Table 3.5a, 61.5% of the variance in financial leakage and scope creep is directly attributable to the combined lack of strict charter enforcement and high political volatility ($R^2 = .615$). Specifically, political interference exhibited a strong positive correlation with budget overruns ($\beta = 0.45$). This indicates that financial leakage in these agricultural interventions is rarely the result of isolated technical errors; rather, it is a systemic consequence of administrative disruptions.

Qualitative insights provided a deeper understanding of the mechanisms driving this financial hemorrhaging. When government administrations change, the resulting bureaucratic paralysis directly artificially inflates project costs. A senior director at the Plateau State Ministry of Agriculture elucidated this process:

When a new government takes over, there is an immediate freeze on all ongoing project accounts for 'auditing and realignment.' By the time the new cabinet is formed and approves the continuation of the intervention, inflation has already eroded the purchasing power of the approved budget. The contractors then demand price variations, and suddenly, we are experiencing massive budget overruns before a single seed is planted.

Furthermore, this financial disruption inevitably leads to unchecked scope creep and, in severe cases, the complete abandonment of the intervention ($M = 4.15$). A local Cooperative Farming Leader in Jos North highlighted the devastating ground-level impact of this practice:

The original charter promised our cooperative a solar-powered irrigation system by April. But after the elections, the new chairman diverted the remaining funds to a different ward to reward his political supporters. Our project was officially marked as 'ongoing' in the government books, but in reality, we were left with half-dug boreholes and zero communication.

Another Cooperative Farming Leader in Jos South highlighted the devastating ground-level impact of this practice:

The reality of this governance failure is best illustrated by the 2018–2019 Plateau State tractor intervention. While the project budget for 400 units was approved at N5.6 billion, the State Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) reportedly remained uninvolved, citing a complete lack of awareness regarding the procurement process. This bypass of due process resulted in a scenario where, despite the significant budgetary allocation, the project lacked basic asset tracking, maintenance plans, or trained operators. Consequently, beneficiaries were left to spend as much as N4.4 million on single-

tractor repairs, proving that while 'chapters were available' on paper, the absence of oversight ensured that allocated funds never translated into agricultural impact.

Section 4.3: The Agronomic Cost of Governance Failures

Beyond the mismanagement of capital assets, the governance deficit is acutely felt in the time-sensitive nature of input distribution. Fertilizer disbursement, a critical component of agricultural support, often falls victim to the same bureaucratic bottlenecks and administrative paralysis identified in the regression analysis.

A key informant representing a local farmers' group in Jos North highlighted the devastating impact of these systemic delays:

In our business, timing is everything. When the fertilizer arrives after the planting window, it is practically useless.

5.1 Summary of Findings and Recommendation

This study set out to evaluate the influence of project charters on the governance and performance of agricultural interventions in Jos North and Jos South. The results confirm that while project charters are standardly executed during the initiation phase, they suffer from significant institutional decoupling during administrative transitions. Empirical evidence revealed that 61.5% of the variance in project performance failures characterized by financial leakage, budget overruns, and scope creep is directly explained by the lack of strict charter enforcement and the presence of political interference. The findings indicate that the current governance framework is highly vulnerable to political volatility, as established charters are frequently discarded by incoming administrations, leading to the abandonment of projects and the unauthorized reallocation of agricultural resources.

5.2.1 Institutionalization of Project Charters through Legislative Codification

To mitigate the identified cycle of institutional decoupling and political abandonment, it is recommended that the Plateau State Government formalizes project charters as legally binding instruments within the state's multi-year fiscal framework. Currently, the susceptibility of agricultural interventions to political volatility suggests that charters are perceived as administrative artifacts rather than statutory obligations.

To address this, the Plateau State House of Assembly should enact policy provisions that:

1. **Mandate Multi-Year Fiscal Integration:** Require that all registered agricultural project charters are formally linked to the state's Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). This would transition these projects from discretionary political agenda items to statutory fiscal commitments that persist across administrative cycles.
2. **Establish Ring-Fencing Protocols:** Implement budgetary insulation mechanisms or ring-fencing for projects ratified by the state's executive council. Such a measure would prevent the unauthorized reallocation of funds during administrative transitions by requiring a formal, transparent legislative review process for any proposed amendment or project termination.

5.3 Conclusion

This study concludes that agricultural governance in Jos North and Jos South suffers from systemic institutional decoupling; project charters are routinely executed at initiation but fail as management tools. Crucially, empirical evidence shows that 61.5% of project performance failures, such as financial leakage, budget overruns, and scope creep, stem from abandoning these charters during administrative transitions. This fragility is driven by three interconnected issues: structural vulnerability due to a lack of statutory codification, a political culture favoring short-term patronage over structured governance, and operational decoupling that manifests as procurement bypasses and input mismanagement. Ultimately, without legislative protection and fiscal institutionalization,

these interventions will remain vulnerable to political volatility, wasting public resources and turning vital agricultural support into a risk for farming communities.

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