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A STUDY OF CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT AND IT'S IMPACT ON COSTING AND SCHEDULE OF CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

[1]Rajat Butani, [2]Prof. Chintan Raichura,
[1]P. G. Student, [2]Assistant Professor
[1]Civil Engineering Department,
[1]Darshan University, Rajkot, India

Abstract: Construction equipment plays a pivotal role in the timely and cost-efficient execution of infrastructure and building projects. This research investigates the influence of construction machinery on project performance, with a focus on schedule adherence, cost control, and productivity enhancement. The study combines primary data obtained through a structured questionnaire survey of 87 construction professionals with a detailed case study of a mechanized residential high-rise project. Key factors such as equipment breakdowns, late mobilization, fuel consumption, and operator skill were evaluated using the Relative Importance Index (RII) method. The case study compared mechanized and manual construction methods, highlighting a 2–2.5 times improvement in daily output and an 8-month reduction in project duration with mechanization, despite higher upfront costs. The results underscore the need for integrating equipment planning, preventive maintenance, and real-time monitoring tools into early project stages. The findings contribute to a better understanding of how effective equipment management can lead to substantial gains in project efficiency, profitability, and return on investment.

IndexTerms – Construction Equipment, Project Scheduling, Productivity, RII Analysis, Cost Optimization, Mechanization, Maintenance, Time-Cost Trade-off

I. INTRODUCTION

Construction equipment plays a vital role in modern infrastructure development by enhancing productivity, reducing costs, and ensuring timely project completion. With the increasing scale and complexity of projects, traditional labor-intensive methods are being replaced by mechanized operations, enabling faster and safer construction.

Machinery such as excavators, cranes, and concrete pumps now form the backbone of project execution. Equipment-related costs can account for 30–40% of a project's budget and significantly influence scheduling and resource utilization. Efficient equipment management ensures better task execution, reduces delays, and improves overall profitability.

Technological advancements have transformed the construction equipment industry. Automation, GPS tracking, hybrid machinery, and IoT-based maintenance tools are optimizing equipment performance and enabling data-driven decisions.
Construction equipment can be categorized based on function—earthmoving, material handling, concreting, roadwork, and tunneling. Proper selection based on project needs and site conditions is essential for maximizing efficiency.

Despite these advancements, many projects still suffer from cost and time overruns due to poor equipment planning, lack of skilled operators, and maintenance issues. This study aims to examine how equipment usage impacts project outcomes and proposes strategies to improve performance and cost-efficiency.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of construction equipment in project success has been extensively explored in recent literature. Research highlights the significance of proper equipment selection, productivity optimization, cost control, scheduling, and the integration of advanced technologies in enhancing project performance. The following review categorizes key studies based on their thematic focus:

2.1 Equipment Selection and Its Impact

Elgendi and Mohy (2022) presented a case study of a road project in Egypt where improper equipment selection led to a 71.5% cost increase and 72% schedule delay. Their research stresses the importance of strategic equipment planning, integrating equipment decisions during the design phase, and implementing training programs to improve selection accuracy. Similarly, Elsharkawy and Elbeltagi (2013) analyzed equipment productivity in road and building projects, proposing a decision-support model to aid in effective equipment planning based on terrain, cost, and capacity.

2.2 Equipment Cost Monitoring and Life-Cycle Analysis

Krajňák and Bašková (2015) introduced stochastic S-curves for real-time cost monitoring of construction machinery. Their approach offers more accurate forecasts and flexibility than traditional deterministic models. O'Connor (2015) emphasized life-cycle cost analysis (LCCA) as a critical tool in equipment procurement and budgeting, suggesting that comprehensive evaluation of ownership, operation, and maintenance costs improves long-term cost efficiency.

2.3 Productivity Optimization and Influencing Factors

Al-Hussein et al. (2023) applied structural equation modeling to assess the factors influencing equipment productivity. Their findings showed that maintenance practices, operator training, and equipment age significantly affect output. ElSahly et al. (2023) further reviewed time-cost optimization models, recommending hybrid algorithmic approaches for balancing time and cost constraints in planning.

2.4 Equipment Monitoring and Technological Advancements

Kawashima et al. (2021) reviewed digital monitoring systems and highlighted the benefits of real-time data analysis, automation, and machine learning in construction equipment management. Sherafat et al. (2019) developed a data fusion model to automatically recognize equipment activities using audio and motion sensors, aiding in real-time productivity and cost tracking. Patil and Patil (2016) confirmed that effective equipment monitoring and operator training are essential for project cost control, particularly in dam construction.

2.5 Scheduling and Project Management Integration

Hegazy et al. (1998) developed a resource optimization model focused on labor scheduling for multistory buildings, demonstrating time and cost savings through proper planning. El-Mashaleh and Chasey (1999) compared cleanroom and conventional projects, showing that enhanced cost/schedule control systems lead to better outcomes. Ragavi and Uma (2016) explored the use of project management tools like Primavera and MS Project, showcasing their benefits in real-time tracking and stakeholder coordination.

2.6 Risk Management and Cost Overruns

Purba et al. (2021) conducted a systematic review identifying major cost overrun risks, including poor planning, design changes, and inflation. They emphasized proactive risk identification, accurate cost estimation, and the inclusion of contingency planning to mitigate these challenges. Kumar and Bansal (2020) also emphasized preventive maintenance and training as crucial for managing equipment-related risks.

2.7 Intelligent Systems and AI-Based Solutions

Jiang et al. (2023) proposed an AI-based reinforcement learning model for adaptive equipment and resource management. Their model demonstrated improved cash flow and task allocation in uncertain environments, offering a novel approach to resource optimization in construction projects.

2.8 Summary of Findings:

The reviewed literature collectively highlights that equipment selection, monitoring, and management are critical to construction efficiency. Studies support the integration of digital tools, lifecycle cost analysis, and advanced modeling techniques to enhance decision-making. Additionally, operator training, preventive maintenance, and data-driven planning play essential roles in minimizing risks and optimizing project schedules and budgets.

III. Research Methodology

This research investigates the impact of construction equipment on project cost and schedule performance by combining both primary and secondary data sources. A structured methodological approach was adopted, including a detailed case study of a B+G+12 residential building project and a quantitative questionnaire survey targeted at construction professionals. The research aims to explore how construction equipment usage contributes to productivity, cost-efficiency, and timeline adherence in real-world construction scenarios.

The primary objectives of the study are to identify commonly used construction equipment across different project stages, evaluate their impact on project timelines—both positively and negatively—analyze their cost implications, and study on-site inefficiencies in equipment management. Additional objectives include collecting experiential insights through professional surveys and recommending strategies to improve equipment planning and usage.

The scope of the study is limited to mid-sized and large-scale projects, such as residential buildings, commercial complexes, highways, and infrastructure development, primarily within the Indian construction sector. The study excludes technical design considerations of machinery and instead focuses on equipment selection, planning, utilization, and cost-related issues. It covers machinery types including earthmoving (excavators, bulldozers), concreting (mixers, pumps), lifting (cranes), and transportation (dumpers, tippers).

The research design follows a quantitative and descriptive methodology. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed among engineers, project managers, contractors, consultants, and site supervisors. Secondary data was sourced from published journals, project reports, government guidelines, and equipment catalogs. The inclusion of a case study offered practical validation of survey insights and provided in-depth understanding of equipment usage patterns and challenges in a real project setting.

Data collection involved purposive sampling, targeting professionals with active roles in construction planning and equipment management. A total of 80 to 100 responses were obtained from various urban and semi-urban project sites in India. The questionnaire consisted of five main sections: general information, equipment usage patterns, impact on project schedule, cost implications of owning or renting machinery, and perception-based questions using a Likert scale to evaluate satisfaction and identify common challenges.

The tools used for analysis included the Relative Importance Index (RII), applied to rank key factors influencing schedule and cost variations, and average rating methods for interpreting Likert scale responses. A correlation matrix was used to explore relationships between variables such as equipment type, delays, and cost fluctuations. The results were visualized using bar graphs, pie charts, and ranking diagrams to enhance interpretation.

Respondent distribution ensured a balanced perspective across different roles in the project lifecycle. Site engineers constituted 31.3% of respondents, followed by project managers (22.5%), contractors (18.8%), supervisors (15%), and consultants (12.5%). This ensured comprehensive input from those involved in planning, execution, and oversight.

To ensure data reliability, the survey was pilot-tested with 5 to 10 professionals, and only complete and consistent responses were included in the final analysis. However, the study does have limitations, including restricted sample size, geographic concentration, and potential biases inherent in perception-based responses.

Ethical considerations were duly addressed. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed about the academic purpose of the research. Confidentiality was maintained, and data collected was used solely for the scope of this study.

IV. Implementation and Data Analysis:

To evaluate the real-world impact of construction equipment on project performance, a structured questionnaire was distributed to 87 professionals working in the Indian construction industry. The questionnaire included 30 items, grouped into six thematic sections: General Equipment Usage, Schedule Impact, Cost Impact, Operator and Maintenance Efficiency, Equipment Planning and Monitoring, and Perception and Satisfaction. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

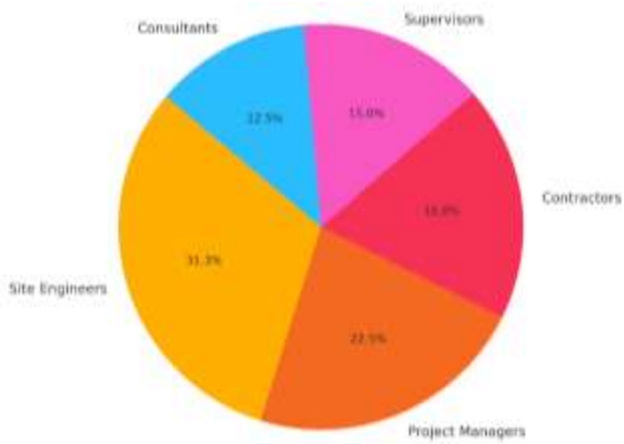

Figure 1 Respondent Composition

Table 1 Average Rating & RII

Question	Average Rating	RII
Q1	2.88	0.576
Q2	3.04	0.608
Q3	3.12	0.624
Q4	3.01	0.602
Q5	2.86	0.572
Q6	2.93	0.586
Q7	2.99	0.598
Q8	2.97	0.594
Q9	2.91	0.582
Q10	3.09	0.618
Q11	2.87	0.574
Q12	2.93	0.586
Q13	2.95	0.59
Q14	3.01	0.602
Q15	3.08	0.616
Q16	3.09	0.618
Q17	3.02	0.604
Q18	3	0.6
Q19	3.01	0.602
Q20	3.07	0.614

The respondent composition (Figure 1) included site engineers, project managers, contractors, consultants, and supervisors, providing diverse insights across project execution roles. The responses were analyzed using average rating and Relative Importance Index (RII) methods. As shown in Table 1, the average ratings ranged from 2.86 to 3.12, while RII values spanned 0.572 to 0.624. Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of average ratings, while Figure 3 presents the corresponding RII values, enabling a clearer comparison of perceived equipment impact across variables.

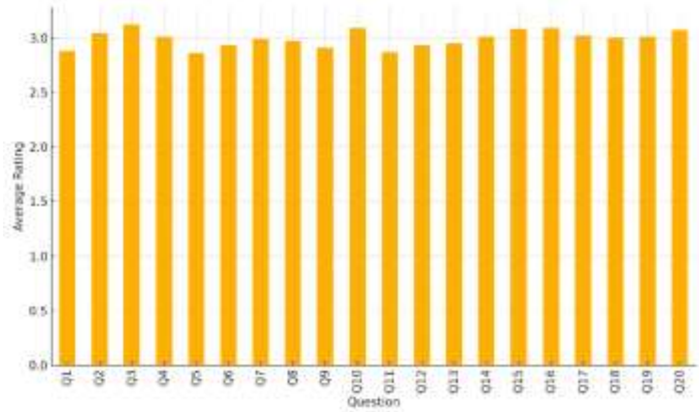

Figure 2 Average Ratings - Question Wise

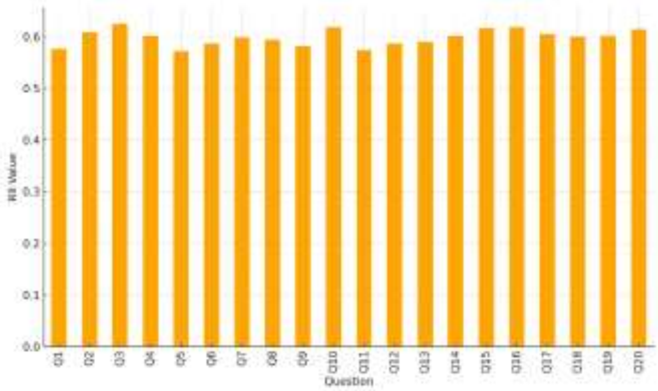

Figure 3 Relative Important Index - Question Wise

Interpretation of the responses revealed that while equipment selection and planning were moderately effective, there is a lack of standardization across projects. Schedule-related issues, including equipment breakdowns and delays in mobilization, were frequently cited. Cost-related concerns primarily stemmed from repair costs, fuel consumption, and idle equipment. Operator training and maintenance practices showed inconsistency, with limited use of real-time monitoring tools such as GPS or IoT devices. Overall, perceptions indicated that while construction equipment positively influences project performance, areas such as planning, monitoring, and training need significant improvement.

The Relative Importance Index (RII) methodology was applied to rank the significance of each factor affecting equipment performance. Using the formula

$$RII = \frac{\sum W}{A \times N}$$

where $\sum$W is the sum of ratings, A=5 is the highest rating, and N=87 is the number of respondents, RII values helped highlight the most critical pain points. Questions related to breakdowns, idle time, and fuel costs scored the highest, reinforcing the need for proactive equipment maintenance and optimized scheduling strategies.

Table 2 Project Cost Breakdown

Cost Head	**Value (₹ Cr)**
Civil Construction	12
Equipment & Machinery	6.8
Overheads	2.1
Consultant and Legal Fees	0.6
Contingency and Misc.	1.5

A detailed case study was conducted on a high-rise residential project (B+G+12) with a built-up area of approximately 1.75 lakh square feet and a planned duration of 14–16 months. The project used mechanized construction methods to enhance speed and efficiency. As shown in Table 2, equipment and machinery accounted for 29.6% of the total ₹23 crore budget, highlighting the centrality of equipment investment in modern construction.

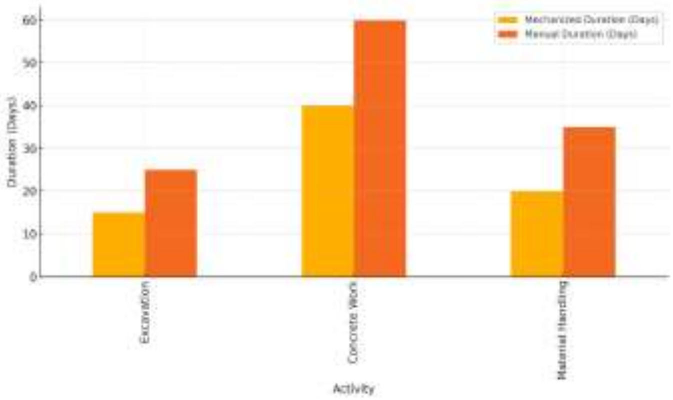

Figure 4 Manual vs Mechanized Duration

Schedule efficiency was significantly improved through mechanization. Figure 4 compare durations for major construction activities under mechanized versus manual conditions. For example, excavation time was reduced from 25 days to 15 days, and overall project time was shortened by approximately eight months. This reduction allowed for faster delivery and earlier occupancy, offering significant commercial benefits.

Table 3 Cost Comparison

Component	Mechanized (₹ Cr)	Manual (₹ Cr)
Equipment Purchase/Rental	3.5	1.8
Fuel and Lubricants	1.2	0.5
Maintenance and Repairs	0.9	0.4
Operator Wages and Training	0.7	0.3
Logistics and Handling	0.5	0.1

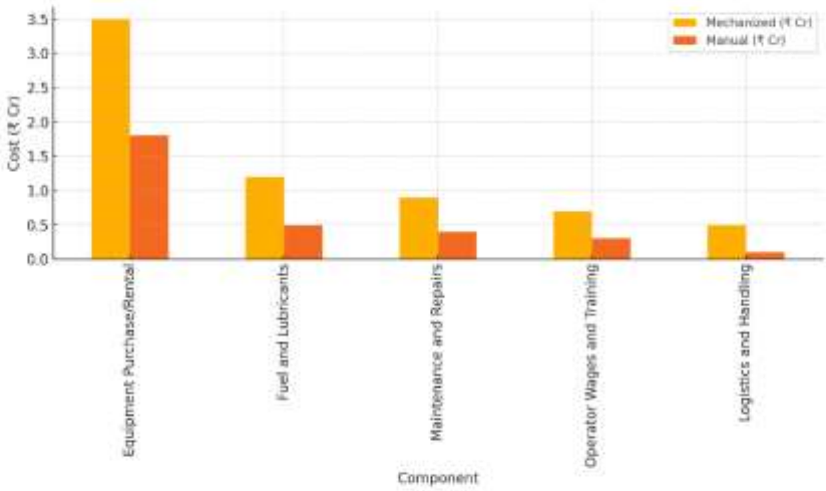

Figure 5 Manual vs Mechanized Cost Comparison

Cost comparison data (Table 3 and Figure 5) further supports mechanization. While equipment-related costs were over double in mechanized projects (₹6.8 Cr vs. ₹3.1 Cr), the return on this investment was justified by improved efficiency, reduced labor dependency, and fewer quality issues. Productivity metrics (Figure 6) reinforce this finding—daily output for excavation and concreting was 2–2.5 times higher using machinery.

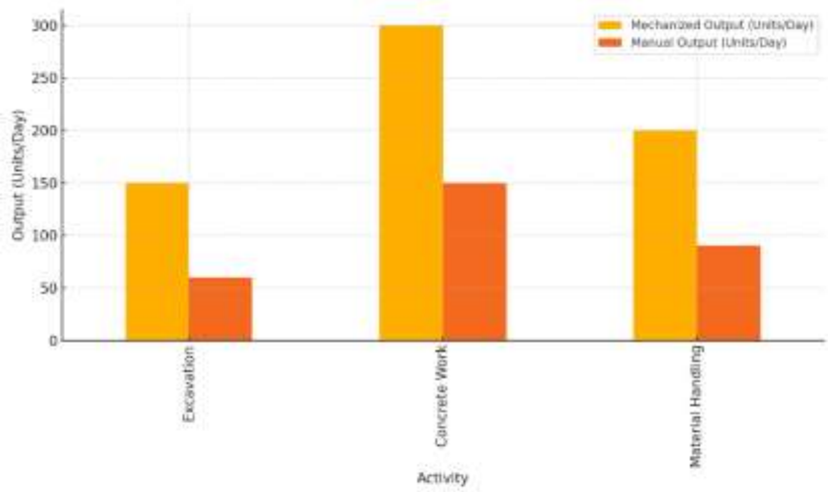

Figure 6 Productivity Comparison

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents a combined analysis of the questionnaire survey and the case study to interpret the role of construction equipment in influencing project cost, schedule, and productivity. The findings offer critical insights into performance gaps, key influencing factors, and areas where mechanization adds value.

5.1 Case Study Summary and Comparative Insights

A comparative assessment was conducted between mechanized and manual approaches based on a real high-rise residential project. As shown in Table 4, the mechanized project incurred a total cost of ₹23.0 crore, slightly higher than the manual alternative at ₹22.0 crore. However, the mechanized execution reduced the total project duration from 22 months to 14 months, lowered labor requirements by 45%, and achieved a productivity improvement of 2 to 2.5 times. The increased upfront investment in equipment (₹6.8 crore vs ₹3.1 crore) yielded a higher return on investment due to faster delivery, earlier revenue generation, and reduced rework.

Table 4 Mechanized vs Manual Project

Aspect	Mechanized Project	Manual Project
Total Project Cost (Cr)	23	22
Project Duration (Months)	14	22
Equipment Cost (Cr)	6.8	3.1
Productivity Improvement	2x – 2.5x	Baseline
Manpower Requirement	Reduced by 45%	Full Labor
Return on Investment	High	Moderate

5.2 Questionnaire Findings Summary

Data collected from 87 construction professionals was analyzed using Relative Importance Index (RII) and average rating techniques. The most critical factors affecting project outcomes were identified using RII scores, as shown in Table 5. Equipment breakdown delays (RII = 0.872), fuel costs (0.845), and late equipment mobilization (0.838) were among the top concerns, followed by idle equipment (0.826) and operator skill (0.792). These findings reflect the industry's ongoing struggle with planning, maintenance, and training.

Average ratings further validated the concerns highlighted by RII. Equipment planning received a moderate score of 3.04, while maintenance schedules were rated lower at 2.91, suggesting that preventive practices are not consistently applied. Productivity improvement from machinery was acknowledged with a relatively higher score of 3.09, while the use of modern tracking tools like GPS and IoT remained underutilized, scoring only 2.65.

Table 5 Key Influencing Factors

Factor	RII
Equipment Breakdown Delays	0.872
Fuel Cost Impact	0.845
Late Equipment Mobilization	0.838
Equipment Idle Time	0.826
Operator Skill	0.792

5.3 Cost and Time Performance Analysis

Mechanization resulted in a higher equipment cost of ₹3.7 crore but enabled a substantial reduction of 8 months in project completion. This shorter duration translated into lower interest payments, reduced site overheads, and earlier market availability, which collectively improved the project's financial viability. In contrast, manual construction had a lower upfront cost but suffered from longer timelines, labor fatigue, and a higher likelihood of rework and supervision inefficiencies.

5.4 Productivity and Labor Optimization

The productivity advantage of mechanized construction is clearly outlined in **Table 6.3**. Mechanized excavation yielded 150 m^3/day compared to 60 m^3/day with manual methods. Similarly, concrete work and material handling rates were approximately double under mechanized operations. These improvements not only accelerate progress but also enhance consistency and reduce dependency on large labor forces—a critical benefit in labor-scarce or time-sensitive projects.

Table 6 Work Wise Productivity Comparison

Activity	Mechanized Output	Manual Output
Excavation	150 m^3/day	60 m^3/day
Concrete Work	300 m^3/day	150 m^2/day
Material Handling	200 loads/day	90 loads/day

5.5 Integrated Discussion

By integrating survey findings with case study outcomes, several insights emerge. Projects that emphasized equipment planning and monitoring (as supported by RII values) experienced fewer delays and minimized idle time. Operator skill levels and proactive maintenance were directly linked to reduced equipment breakdowns and cost overheads. Notably, projects with real-time monitoring tools such as IoT and GPS demonstrated improved operational control but lacked uniform implementation across the industry. This suggests a need for standardized digital adoption in equipment management.

5.6 Summary of Key Findings

1. Mechanization enhances efficiency but necessitates higher planning precision and upfront capital investment.
2. High RII values confirm that breakdowns, fuel costs, and operator inefficiencies are the industry's most pressing issues.
3. Equipment management should be an integral part of project planning—not merely a logistic support function.
4. Greater adoption of digital tools and structured training programs can significantly mitigate delays and cost escalations.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study examined the impact of construction equipment on project cost and schedule performance through a combination of a questionnaire survey and a case study of a high-rise residential project. The findings showed that while mechanized construction involves higher initial equipment costs, it significantly improves productivity—by 2 to 2.5 times—and reduces project duration by approximately eight months. These benefits translate into better return on investment due to lower labor dependency, faster completion, and reduced overhead costs.

Survey results from 87 industry professionals confirmed that equipment breakdowns, fuel costs, late mobilization, and unskilled operation are the most significant challenges. Preventive maintenance and digital tools like GPS and IoT were acknowledged as effective but remain underutilized across most sites. The study highlights the need to integrate equipment planning and monitoring into early project stages to optimize outcomes.

Although the study was based on a single project and a region-specific survey, it offers strong evidence that proper equipment management enhances both time and cost performance. Future research should include diverse project types and explore advanced technologies such as AI and BIM for smarter equipment planning and control.

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