Department of Construction Technology & Engineering
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Exploring **Project Teams' Collaborative Behaviour** in Hong Kong Relational Contracting Projects

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PGCS Project and Program Management Symposium 2019
Canberra, Australia.

1. Relational Contracting

Relational Contracting (RC) aims to nurture 'trusting relationships' among contractual partners to oversee beyond their traditional roles (Jeffries & Rowlinson, 2016).

It provides a basis for the multiparty collaborative relationship to govern complex projects. RC has been widely accepted in Hong Kong (HK) construction industry.

The motivation for adopting RC in the HK construction industry was to overcome delays, cost overruns, & self-centred behaviour.

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1. Relational Contracting

However,

Issues remain predominant in HK construction industry, which is assumed to be the best performing.

Many research articles and industry review report point to socio-psychological issues (McKinsey & Company, 2016; Ng et al., 2002; Chan, 2003).

Bresnen & Marshal, (2000), pointed promises are made at the corporate level but are not reflected on the ground.

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1. Relational Contracting

Thus, it is suggested to focus on key issues in RC using social-psychological and theoretical perspective (Bresnen & Marshal, 2000).

Studies in HK and the United Kingdom (UK) argued for cultural change, teamwork and collaboration among project teams (McKinsey & Company, 2016; Tang, 2001; Latham, 1994).

This led the current study to focus on "exploring collaborative behaviour in Hong Kong's RC projects drawing on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) / Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB).

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2. Theory of Reasoned Action/ Theory of Planned Behaviour

TRA suggests that attitude and subjective norms help explain behaviour through the mediation of intention (Ajzen, 1991).

The relationship of constructs, in theory, was proposed in TRA by Ajzen & Fishbein (2000). However, various changes in the framework are considered in the TPB framework (Ajzen, 1991).

TPB explains behaviour through its three antecedents; attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, and mediation of intention (Ajzen, 1991).

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2.1. Theory in Current Study

The use of theory in the current study is to provide skeletal constructs and the relationships among constructs to guide exploration.

This study adapts attitude and subjective norms, which explains behaviour through the mediation of intention.

Because authors anticipated the role of delivery modalities to act in motivating and constraining behaviour, thus, it captures the essence of "behaviour control" of the theory.

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3. Research Approach

The study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the concepts (Creswell, 2009). The semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior project staff working on RC projects in Hong Kong.

Interview questions were designed to allow participants share knowledge, experience, and opinions about the RC and the concepts under investigation.

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3.1. Interview Participants

Organisation	Code	Position	Experience in the industry (in years)	Experience in RC (in years)
Contractor	PSI01	**QA/QC manager**	**33**	10
	PSI02	**Project director**	**39**	25+
	PSI06	**Operations manager**	**25**	7
	PSI07	**Project manager**	16	4
	PSI08	**Project manager**	17	8
	PSI09	**Project manager**	15	5
	PSI10	**QA/QC manager**	16	3
Sub-contractor	PSI04	**Project control manager**	17	6
Consultant	PSI03	**Consultant advisor for RC projects**	**40**	20
	PSI05	**Director-Team alignment and collaborative culture among teams**	**25**	15

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3.2. Data Analysis

This study adopts a **thematic analysis approach** for analysing data. It provides a rigorous approach for qualitative data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis provides five stages and a fifteen step checklist to ensure reliable and trustworthy results of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

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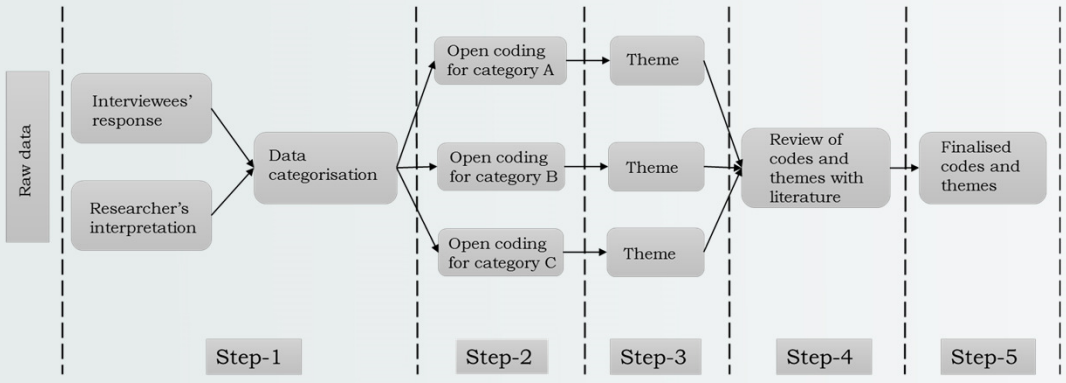
3.2. Data Analysis



Thematic Analysis Process adapted from (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

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3.2. Data Analysis

Stage one

Data transcription included highlighting important information based on initial thoughts about RC, keywords, literature related terms, and essential aspects mentioned by interviewees such as.

- Collaboration,
- Win-win attitudes,
- Trust,
- Treat me the way you want to be treated.

Later, data was sorted in categories.

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3.2. Data Analysis

Stage two

Open coding involved nomination of a word/a statement to highlight information. For ensuring correct coding (avoiding repetition or duplication across categories), a review was conducted. Open coding reflected a total of **138 codes** representative of the recorded transcripts.

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3.2. Data Analysis

Stage two

Example of open coding…

PSI04a-02	"Partners need to **trust each other** and **avoid blames**. However, in my experience, things did not work that way, as parties took advantage of each other".	• **Trusting each other** • **No-blame**
PSI02a-09a	"..**Early problem identification and reporting**…"	• **Early problem identification and reporting**

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3.2. Data Analysis

Stage two

PSI05b-04	"Relational behaviour is about being prepared to **trust** the partner at the outset. When two parties encounter each other, they have two options. The first is to **trust** others until they prove to be untrustworthy or distrust until they prove to be **trustworthy**. The second one is common in the construction industry. For developing collaborative behaviour, it is important to **trust another partner** until that partner proves to be untrustworthy".	• **Trust**

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3.2. Data Analysis

Stage three

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested focusing on three aspects while deciding themes.

1. "Internal consistency",
2. "Coherence", and
3. "Literature-suggested grouping".

A total of 24 themes representing 138 codes were extracted.

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3.2. Data Analysis

Stage three

Example of Theme together with open codes..

Open Codes	Themes
Relational attitudes	
• Top management commitment for resources	Theme One
• Delegation of authority by top management	
• Value relationship more than commercial gain	
• Open to engage in project related discussions	
• Mentoring team members	

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3.2. Data Analysis

Stage four

Themes and codes were further reviewed to have a manageable number for explaining a purposeful story.

1. Five Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students
2. Three professionals were invited, as independent reviewers.

The aim of involving independent reviewers was to ensure the reliability of results (Alhojailan, 2012; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

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3.2. Data Analysis

Stage five

In the final step of the analysis, all finalised themes and codes were considered for presenting the analysis results.

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4. Results (i)

Relational Attitudes

As indicated earlier, the results in this study suggest **senior management commitment (SMC)** and support as a critical attitudinal trait for shaping project direction. Besides SMC, a collective effort is argued for formations of normative practices. This collective effort is considered as **relational norms** of the team developed and shared within project teams (Suprapto, 2016).

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4. Results (ii)

Relational Attitudes – List of factors considered

RA1- Senior Management Commitment	RA2- Relational Norms
• Top management commitment for resources	• No-blame
• Delegation of authority by top management	• Fair treatment
• Value relationship more than commercial gain	• Belief that partner is trustworthy
• Open to engage in project related discussions	• Not taking others for granted
• Mentoring team members	• Early problem identification & reporting
	• Best for the project approach

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4. Results (iii)

Collaborative Intentions

Collaborative Intentions are considered as an active involvement in team integration activities, which informs positive intentions. If the project team seeks to collaborate, it involves team integration activities (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Ronken & Lawrence, 1952). Team integration provides practices and methods that promote a flexible environment for collaboration, where information and knowledge are exchanged freely among the members of teams (Baiden & Price, 2011; Baiden et al., 2006).

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4. Results (ii)

Collaborative Intentions – List of factors considered

CI- Collaborative Intentions

- Alignment of objectives
- Facilitated workshops
- Team building exercises
- On-going dialogue
- Developing an integrated project team

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4. Results (iii)

Collaborative Behaviour

There are alternative explanations of collaborative behaviour in RC literature. This study defines collaborative behaviour as a higher order construct with three dimensions: (1) Teamwork (Hoegl and Gemuenden, 2001), (2) Trust (Rousseau et al., 998), and (3) Extra-role behaviour (Tyler and Blader, 2000).

A team is said to be espousing collaborative behaviour, when team exercises teamwork behaviour, have emotional attachments to one another, and members of each team voluntarily strive for excellence.

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4. Results (ii)

Collaborative Behaviour – List of factors considered

Teamwork	Trust	Extra-role Behaviour
• Team cohesion	• Comfortable being relied on others	• Helping each other
• Open & honest communication	• Keeping promises	• Action learning
• Mutual support	• High level of integrity	• Keen on innovation
• Coordination	• Being fair with others	• Best practice for project
• Members contribution	• Looking after others interests	

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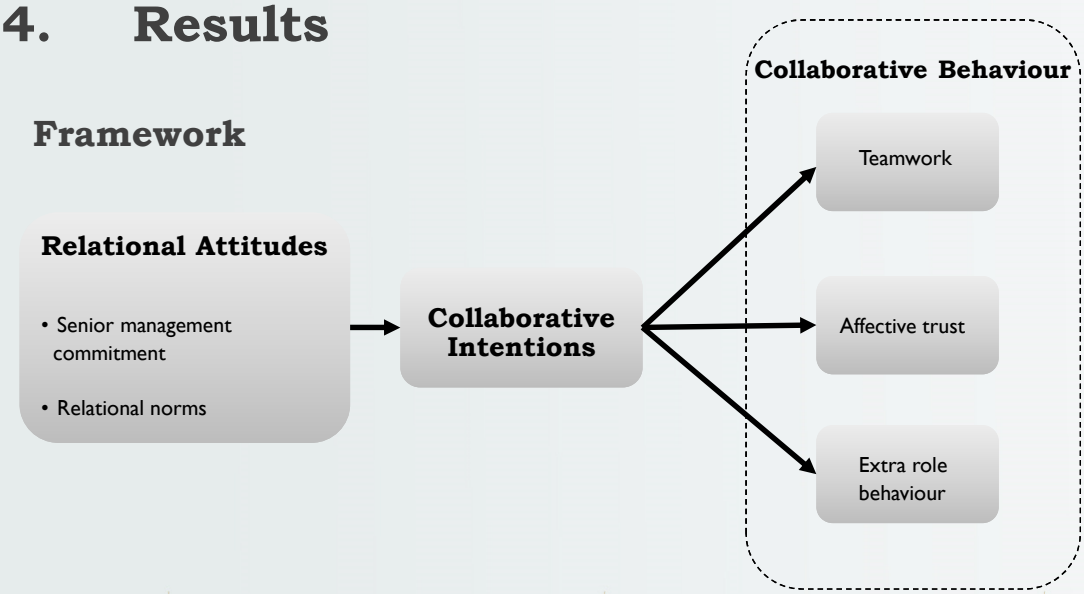
4. Results

Framework



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5. Outcome

- The proposed framework helps to explain project teams' collaborative behaviour in relational contracting.
- Project teams could cultivate relational behaviour to develop and sustain relationships across the project lifecycle.
- Collaborative behaviour of project team developed through the proposed framework would enable them to espouse project-centric behaviour.

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6. Contribution & Next Step

- Social-psychological and theoretical explanation,
- Explication of collaborative behaviour in the Hong Kong context.

Next Step

- Testing proposed framework,
- Study effect of delivery modalities on collaborative behaviour.

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Thank you.

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