
Understanding Urgent Projects: Unraveling Meanings and Management Challenges

Compreendendo Projetos Urgentes: Desvendando Significados e Desafios de Gerenciamento

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ABSTRACT

This research addresses the gap concerning the definition and understanding of "urgent projects." The aim is to clarify the conceptual underpinnings and implications of the term "urgent" in project management. Utilizing Lexical Semantic Analysis, the paper investigates various meanings attributed to "urgent." Subsequently, a Systematic Literature Search is conducted, scrutinizing 378 studies and focusing on 65 that are most relevant. Through this methodological framework, the research spans the semantic nuances and practical considerations associated with urgent projects. Results indicate a range of interpretations of urgency, as well as a set of challenges and qualitative aspects critical to managing urgent projects. The paper identifies both inconsistencies and consistencies in the existing academic discourse. Finally, by offering a refined definition and conceptual framework, the study serves as a point of reference for both academic researchers and practitioners.

Keywords: Urgent Projects; Urgency; Project Management; Time Management; Speed

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa aborda a lacuna acadêmica a respeito da definição e compreensão de "projetos urgentes." O objetivo é esclarecer as bases conceituais e implicações do termo "urgente" em gestão de projetos. Utilizando Análise Semântica Lexical, investiga-se vários significados atribuídos a "urgente." Subsequentemente, uma Busca Sistemática da Literatura é realizada, examinando 378 estudos e focando nos 65 mais relevantes para a pesquisa. Por meio desse arcabouço metodológico, a pesquisa abrange as nuances semânticas e considerações práticas associadas a projetos urgentes. Os resultados indicam uma gama de interpretações de urgência, bem como um conjunto de desafios e aspectos qualitativos críticos para gerir projetos urgentes. O artigo identifica tanto inconsistências quanto consistências no discurso acadêmico existente. Finalmente, ao oferecer uma definição refinada e uma estrutura conceitual, o estudo serve como um ponto de referência para pesquisadores acadêmicos e profissionais.

Palavras-chave: Projetos Urgentes; Urgência; Gerenciamento de Projetos; Gerenciamento de Tempo; Velocidade

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of projects under unforeseen circumstances, precipitated by catastrophic events, has been observed in various moments of recent history. Notable examples include: (i) The devastating rupture of a dam in Brumadinho, Brazil, in January 2019, resulting in a tragic loss of over 250 lives; (ii) The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, which inflicted more than 35,231 documented deaths in Italy, as of August 13, 2020, as reported by Mirri et al. (2020), and millions more worldwide; and (iii) The fateful 9/11 terrorist attack that compelled the initiation of the projects to sift, secure, and remove 1.6 million tons of rubble, dangerous structural elements, and other debris to search for survivors of the New York World Trade Center tragedy, as studied by Wearne (2006) and presented by Wearne & White-Hunt (2014).

Such extreme contextual events often serve as catalysts for urgent projects. Nonetheless, there is no consensus on the urgent project definition in the management domain (Zidane et al., 2018). Furthermore, Wearne and White-Hunt (2014) and Nachbagauer (2022) discuss the subjective nature and social construction of urgency. Thus, the term “urgent” can be subject to varying interpretations depending on the individual authors’ perspective and the nuances of everyday language. The need for swift action is frequently highlighted as a defining characteristic of urgent projects (Wearne, 2006; Wearne & White-Hunt, 2014; Nachbagauer, 2022), but the standards used to evaluate ‘immediacy’ across diverse project categories have not been sufficiently researched. Hence, a thorough exploration of the concept of urgent project necessitates careful consideration.

Considering the contextual relevance of the topic (such as rupture of dam, pandemics, and terrorist attack), and the absence of a technical consensus on the definition of an urgent project, our hypothesis posits that the term “urgent project” in the scientific literature would be interpreted from different points of view so that the authors understand the meaning of what is urgent, leading to varying understandings of its underlying implications. To fill this gap of unprecise comprehension and seeking to discern how urgent projects differ from conventional designs, the following research question (RQ) is reached in the conceptual field: What is an urgent project? In response, this conceptual article aims to meticulously examine the term “urgent project” as a focal concept not adequately addressed in the existing literature (Jaakkola, 2020) promoting a more cohesive and coherent understanding of such projects.

To achieve this aim, we employ two complementary approaches: (i) Lexical Semantic Analysis (LSA); and (ii) Systematic Literature Search (SLS). By following these methods we aim to provide reliable insights into the concepts of “urgency” and “urgent projects,” by examining the conceptual nuances of urgency and refining its definition to align with scientific perspective in the project management domain. As “urgent” is a common knowledge word and not a specific scientific concept, we specifically opted for LSA due to its inherent connection among language

usage, individuals' worldviews, and attitudes (Almarwaey and Ahmad, 2021). Moreover, LSA offers fundamental principles (or conceptual truths) of what is urgent, a notion equally pertinent in the management domain. The SLS gives context in which the word "urgent" is used in the management domain. It focused on the top-tier management scientific literature. The fusion of the LSA and SLS facilitates the development of a cogent argument for comprehending the focal concept, and crafting a precise (unambiguous) definition of the term suitable for the project management context and the broader management domain. Our approach analyzes the existing concept of the term "urgent" (and "urgency") in dictionaries, as well as previous definitions and concepts of "urgent project" from the top scientific literature. This integrative process gives complementary value (Jaakkola, 2020) enriching the conceptualization of urgent projects. We combine these levels of understanding to craft a solid conceptual foundation in the field of urgent project management. Our focus lies in the purposeful conceptualization of urgency itself within the context of projects and in building a conceptual framework for urgent projects, not in the conceptualization of projects, which has already been extensively explored in an extensive body of knowledge.

This conceptual paper contribution enriches the management literature in several key aspects. Firstly, it synthesizes diverse conceptual perspectives, shedding insights into the essence of a projects' urgency. Secondly, the Lexical-Semantic Analysis offers insights into the meanings and nuances of "urgent," enabling a consistent approach in dealing with varying degrees of urgency within urgent projects. Third, the Systematic Literature Review identifies challenges, diverse perspectives, and effective management approaches in addressing the critical nature and high uncertainty inherent in urgent projects. Fourth, this research rigorously formulates a concept elucidating urgent projects' nature, finely positioning the conceptual definition within the management domain. This work pushes the frontiers of project management theory by offering valuable insights to practitioners and researchers in managing and studying urgent projects.

RESEARCH METHOD

The foundation of our research design is grounded in the Theory Synthesis presented by Jaakkola (2020), which presents a comprehensive approach to concept exploration. The planning stage has delineated the conceptual research strategy, elucidating how and why the methods and concepts were selected to answer the research questions (RQ). Our study aims to have a deeper conceptual understanding surrounding urgency within a project context, an aspect that has received inadequate attention in the existing literature. To achieve this, we employ a rigorous conceptual approach, from the initial stages of concept selection to the ultimate theoretical inferences.

The conceptual approach, as per Jaakkola (2020), starts from a focal phenomenon that is observable but not adequately addressed in the literature. Through a judicious selection and examination of pertinent literature that engages the concept, we discern and explicate aspects that contribute to our conceptualization (Jaakkola, 2020). With a clear logical sequence for the conceptualization of an urgent project, we search for meaning and previous definitions on the subject to the data analysis.

Table 1 – Research Design: research steps, general and specific research questions, and specific research aims.

Research Steps	General and Specific Research Questions	Specific Aims
Step 1: Lexical Semantic Analysis in Dictionaries.	SRQ1: What is the meaning of urgent?	It searches and discusses the behavior of the string “urgent.”
Step 2: Systematic Literature Search in Top management scientific articles.	SRQ2: What keywords are used in the management research field in the context of urgency?	It performs keyword analysis based on the incidence of the terms “urgent” and “urgency” in titles and abstracts to understand the use of the words.
	SRQ3: What is the definition of an urgent project in the management literature?	It searches for the behavior of the strings “urgent” or “urgency” and “urgent project.”
Step 3: Urgent Project Definition combining SLS and LSA.	RQ: What is an urgent project?	It develops the general definition of an “urgent project” based on steps 1 and 2.

The conceptual approach is structured into three distinct steps, as enumerated in 0. The first step involves elucidating the fundamental principles of what is “urgent”. Based on the linguistic resources, we explore and analyze the characteristics and connotations of the term “urgent”. By analyzing the various perspectives, we build a groundwork for the subsequent analyses. The second step investigates the top-tier scientific literature perspective of what is urgent within the projects’ contextual domain, exploring the utilized keywords, and investigating the definition of urgent projects. This exploration aids in situating our concept amidst existing project management theoretical frameworks. Finally, the last step culminates in a conceptual synthesis, postulating the core tenets of urgent projects, therefore, inferring the fundamental idea of what is an urgent project.

Step 1: Lexical Semantic Analysis

The analysis begins by collecting data from various renowned dictionaries that provide meanings of the word “urgent,” although the concept of meaning itself is abstract (Aslam and Chaman, 2020). In this case, the dictionaries used are Collins British and American English, Oxford, Cambridge, and Collins Cobuild. To answer the specific research question 1 (SRQ1), the

data collection is grounded on the lexical semantics of the English language, with the central tenet that the meaning of a word can only be captured in its relation to the meaning of other words (Engelberg, 2011).

In the pursuit of comprehending the concept of “urgent”, this part draws upon the Lexical Semantic Analysis (LSA) - (Almarwaey and Ahmad, 2021; Aslam and Chaman, 2020; Vanhove, 2008). It was chosen because no lexical semantic study explicitly addresses the word urgent, and the lack of a precise urgent project definition in the top scientific management literature, as observed by Zidane et al. (2018). To address this void, the data analysis to the SRQ1 followed the method presented by Almarwaey and Ahmad (2021). We focused on the key aspect of the definition within Lexical-Semantic Analysis and its ability to explore the nuances of the term “urgent.”

This investigation delves into their definitions of the words and explores their associated meanings in dictionaries and linguistic nuances (Almarwaey and Ahmad, 2021), despite theories of lexical decomposition assume that lexical meanings are complex (Engelberg, 2011). This analysis intends to fully understand the concept and pursuit go beyond boundaries of conventional dictionary interpretation attempting to bridge the gaps by aligning practical, conceptual, and theoretical perspectives. This guides how to think about urgency in the next stages of the research.

Step 2: Systematic Literature Search

The Systematic Literature Search (SLS) is based on Xiao and Watson (2019) and divided into two parts. The first one aims to explore the keywords employed in the management research field, elucidating the context of urgency, linked to the Specific Research Question 2 (SRQ2). Performing a comprehensive keyword analysis, with a particular emphasis on the frequency of the terms “urgent” and “urgency,” thereby gaining valuable insights into their contextual application, and to the urgent project management discussion. It analyses data from titles and abstracts. The second part aims to extract the urgent project definition in the management literature from a practical and/or theoretical perspective (SRQ3) based on the full-text analysis, thus being more specific on the conceptualization of urgency within project management. In addition, it aims to dissect the different authors points of view of what constitutes an urgent project. Such an approach improves our understanding, unraveling its core tenets and significance in the management domain.

In this pursuit of knowledge, we searched the scientific papers repository from Scopus database until July 2023. Utilizing the literature identification presented by Xiao & Watson (2019), we conducted the search within the article titles, abstracts, and keywords, employing the strings “urgent” OR (boolean operator) “urgency,” in conjunction with the logical operator AND with the term “project*.” The asterisk “ * “ replaces multiple characters in a word, endowing our

search with the ability to find not only the term “project” itself but also its variations such as “projects,” and “projected”, among others. It results in 10,931 documents.

In conducting the first quality and eligibility assessment, we focused on the top scientific journals. As a result, it excludes conference papers, reviews, books and book chapters, editorials, notes, short surveys, letters, conference reviews, abstract reports, data papers, erratum, and reports from consideration. The preliminary list of the search query had 6,719 publications. This commitment to maintaining the top scientific journals ensures the credibility of the findings.

Upon the application of the inclusion criterion, we exclusively retain the corpus of the management literature, encompassing business, management, and accounting. The duplicate and retracted articles were excluded, resulting in a refined set of 378 potential studies for the initial database. We have successfully obtained the complete references, including authorship, year of publication, title, abstract, and the respective publication name for further evaluation.

In screening for inclusion, we conducted screening procedures to identify articles pertinent to our research. Firstly, from the title-abstract analysis of these articles, the papers that failed to cite one of the strings were excluded (exclusion 1 – E1). Following this step, it left 311 relevant articles. Moving forward, we searched and investigated the strings “urgent,” “urgency,” “project,” and “urgent projects” (exclusion 2 – E2). This involved identifying and exploring the usage and context of the words. Our approach led us to not include the studies when: (i) the word “urgent” appeared without an explicit connection to the word “project” within the title or abstract (e.g., contextualizing and closing the research); or (ii) the word project was used in an unrelated context. As a result of this criterion, several articles were deemed irrelevant and were excluded from our analysis. After applying these procedures, it left 91 deemed relevant studies for full-text quality assessment. To ensure accuracy and quality in our analysis, we employed additional relevance and availability criteria (exclusion 3 – E3). As a result of this evaluation, the final list had 65 articles for title-abstract keyword analysis to further evaluate the studies’ quality and eligibility.

Data extraction and analysis for the first part of the SLS (SRQ2) was conducted with a focus on the keyword analysis. The selected papers were carefully reviewed, and a data matrix was developed, considering the incidence and context of the strings “urgent” and “urgency” in the management literature, specifically focused on titles and abstracts. This approach has enable us to explore the prevalence and various contexts surrounding “urgent” and “urgency” in the management literature, and their implications.

In the second part of the examination (SRQ3), a meticulous assessment of quality and eligibility was undertaken. Articles exclusively focused on urgent projects were retained. Through a full-text analysis (exclusion 4 – E4), 4 (four) articles specifically addressing urgent projects within the management research field were selected. The process of data extraction and analysis identified the most comprehensive literature with the rigorous examination of the full articles,

aiming to accurately define an urgent project. This research did not search for words that do not precisely qualify the project. The findings of the investigation are discussed in the specific section.

Step 3: Integrating Current Understanding

The third step of this research dedicates to defining and conceptualizing an urgent project following the framework presented in 0. The combined methods avoid having an accepted concept in a particular domain but being rejected in another (Almarwaey and Ahmad, 2021), thereby it can provide a double-level insight. To address our research question, the conceptual definition strategy draws upon the precision of the words’ semantics presented in dictionaries (so-called denotative meaning, i.e., the literal meaning of words), combined with the denotative meaning of the data analysis of the literature from scientific databases. Thus, it crafts a precise conceptualization that aligns both practical and theoretical perspectives.

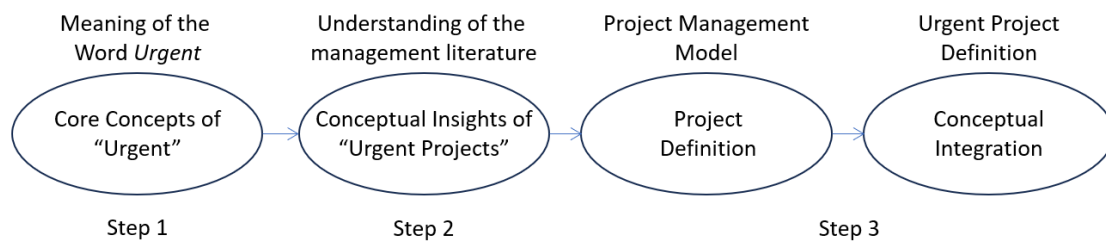


Figure 1 – The framework to define urgent project.

Based on the findings of the Lexical Semantic Analysis, we compare the meanings of “urgent” as presented by the dictionaries and their nuances for the term. It looks for patterns and recurring concepts related to the word “urgent.” This semantic part is essential to examine the meanings and nuances of the word “urgent,” based on commonalities and core concepts to understand and contextualize the term “urgent project” from the level of the words to the level of a technical management definition answering the research question (RQ). It implies establishing a new conceptual frame of reference for what is urgent (0) then contextualizing the findings associated with urgent projects within the project management domain.

To integrate the current understanding within the management domain, we turn our attention to the repository of knowledge on this subject. Next, we use the more relevant project management framework emerged from the literature review to give the project context necessary for this conceptual research. In this manner, it uses conceptual integration across multiple views to answer the research question, while offering a new concept based on previously unconnected pieces (Jaakkola, 2020).

For a comprehension of the concepts at hand, the context and the discourse are essential for the meaning of words (Aslam and Chaman, 2020; Vanhove, 2008). Hence, we combined the

two data collections, from the Systematic Literature Search and the Lexical Semantic Analysis, along with the project management definition to craft a contextualized definition of an “urgent project”. By initially anchoring the concept in the meaning of the term “urgent,” we progress to the conceptual framework of the broader notion of “urgent projects.” Finally, the urgent project definition and conceptual framework serve as fundamental ideas, or pivotal constructs, within the project management domain.

RESULTS

The results explore the terms “urgent” and “urgent projects,” considering their various interpretations as complementary approaches. Ultimately, these analyses are combined with a project management perspective, facilitating the definition and concepts of urgent projects. Our research explores various conceptualizations of the phenomenon to answer the research question and subsequently present our arguments, as presented by (Jaakkola, 2020). 0 presents the meanings of “urgent” in English dictionaries, keywords related to the meanings, core concepts, and implications.

Results of the Lexical Semantic Analysis

The Lexical-Semantic Analysis (LSA) of the word “urgent” involves an exploration of its various meanings and nuances as presented in renowned dictionaries (SRQ1). From the definitions of the Collins British and American English, Oxford, and Cambridge dictionaries, it is evident that “urgent” (adjective) means “very important and needing attention immediately” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020), which “needs to be dealt with or happen immediately” (Oxford University Press, 2021). Going further, important means necessary (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021a), which means needed to achieve a particular result (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021b). Also, “requiring or compelling speedy action or attention” (Collins Dictionary, 2022). Therefore, from these dictionaries, urgent means (strict definition) very important (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020) that needs to happen immediately (Oxford University Press, 2021), requiring speedy action (Collins Dictionary, 2022) in order to achieve a particular result (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021b).

Nonetheless, there is a subtle variation in understanding when contrasting the “earnest and persistent” nature of urgency captured in British to the “haste” and “insistent” aspects in American English. Furthermore, there is a variation in understanding across dictionaries related to the importance in contrast to the necessity. The concept of importance is explicitly recurrent in definitions provided by Cambridge (“very important,” and “especially before anything else, because important”), but implicitly recurrent in definitions provided by Collins and Oxfords dictionaries, both signifying “immediate attention or action.” The term “urgent” implies an essential or necessary quality, wherein there is no optional or discretionary considerations,

therefore it means that it is crucial and cannot be dismissed. Furthermore, as presented in Cambridge Dictionary (2021a), important means necessary, therefore, the concepts of importance and necessity are intertwined, culminating in the idea of “cruciality.”

The divergences in understanding become apparent when comparing the strict interpretation with other meanings of what is urgent in the Collins Cobuild and the Cambridge Dictionaries (0). They present the meaning of the word “urgent” in the everyday language shifting from “immediately” to “as soon as possible” or “very soon,” respectively. This discrepancy holds practical implications for communication and comprehension. However, “immediate” denotes something that needs to be done or addressed without any delay, right away, or instantly. On the other hand, “as soon as possible” and “very soon” indicate that the action or task should be completed as quickly as it can be reasonably managed. Therefore, it acknowledges that some time may be needed to organize or complete the task.

From this time-sensitivity analysis, “immediate” suggests an extremely high level of urgency, emphasizing the need for instant action. It covers a sense of emergency or criticality. On the other hand, “as soon as possible” and “very soon” give a sense of urgency but allow a more flexible timeframe, recognizing that there may be practical considerations, and the task should be completed as quickly as realistically achievable. This analysis conceptually and more realistically indicates different degrees of urgency. Adverbs such as “extremely,” “very,” or “slightly” can be used to capture the time-sensitive need for action, depending on the urgency level.

Table 2 - Meanings of “urgent” in dictionaries, keywords, core concepts, and implications.

Dictionary	Meaning of “urgent”	Keywords	Core Concepts	Implications
Collins British English	“requiring or compelling speedy action or attention.”	Requiring or compelling; Speedy Action; Speedy Attention.	Cruciality Speed	If something is urgent, it requires prompt attention or action in its earnest and persistent nature.
	“earnest and persistent.”	Earnest; Persistent.	Cruciality	
Collins American English	“calling for haste, immediate action, etc.”	Haste; Immediate Action.	Speed Time-Sensitivity	If something is urgent, it requires haste, compelling action, and insistent attention.
	“compelling or requiring immediate action or attention.”	Requiring or compelling; Immediate Action; Immediate Attention.	Cruciality Time-Sensitivity	
	“Imperative; pressing.”	Imperative; Pressing.	Cruciality	
	“insistent or earnest in solicitation.”	Earnest.	Cruciality	

Dictionary	Meaning of “urgent”	Keywords	Core Concepts	Implications
Collins Cobuild	“it needs to be dealt with as soon as possible.”	Necessity; As soon as possible.	Cruciality Time-Sensitivity	It something is urgent, time-critical action is required.
Oxford Learner’s	“that needs to be dealt with or happen immediately.”	Necessity; Happen Immediately.	Cruciality Time-Sensitivity	If something is urgent, it requires immediate attention and resolution.
	“showing that you think that something needs to be dealt with immediately.”	Necessity; Immediately.	Cruciality Time-Sensitivity	
Cambridge	“very important and needing attention immediately;” “needing immediate attention.”	Very Important; Need attention Immediately.	Cruciality Time-Sensitivity	It something is urgent, it needs attention immediately or very soon, before all else, because it is important.
	“needing attention very soon, especially before anything else, because important.”	Need attention; Ver soon; before anything else; Important.	Cruciality Time-Sensitivity Priority	

Therefore, “urgent” refers to something that is of highest importance, requiring immediate or as soon as possible attention and action, with a sense of criticality and non-negotiability. The term encompasses the intertwined concepts of importance and necessity, signifying the core essence of “cruciality” in accomplishing the objectives. The strict interpretation denotes instant action without any delay, similar to a sense of emergency, while the everyday language meanings acknowledge varying degrees of urgency, allowing for practical considerations in completing the task within the most realistic timeframe possible. Finally, this analysis suggests a strict definition of what is “urgent” and that urgency indicates the core concepts of time-sensitivity, cruciality, priority, and speed, as well as the new concept of degree of urgency.

Results of the Systematic Literature Search

Through the examination of the 378 potential studies, a rigorous refinement process led to a final selection of 65 articles, chosen for their relevance and significance for title-abstract analysis. This investigation reveals varying terms emphasizing urgency and yields insights into individual and qualitative aspects of urgency within projects (SRQ2). Notably, the researchers employ different terms to emphasize urgency. The term “urgent project” is manifested 15 (fifteen) times, followed by “urgent need” and “sense of urgency” six times each. Additionally, the term “urgent unexpected” emerges three times, suggesting its relevance to the subject. All other terms,

such as “urgent action” and “perceived urgency,” appear only once each, making them comparatively rare in the literature.

Consequently, this exploration generates two insights: (i) The relevance of urgency at the individual level, precisely encapsulating the concept of “sense of urgency” and “perceived urgency;” and (ii) The qualitative aspect of urgency in the context of a project qualifies and characterizes necessity (“urgent need”), and expectancy (“urgent unexpected”). Interestingly, the occurrence of the term “urgent project” appears to be mutually exclusive with “urgent need”, signaling one more insight in conceptualizing urgent projects. This fact can (as presented in dictionaries) indicate different degrees of urgency related to projects from the scientific authors’ point of view.

Strikingly, analyzing the concept of expectancy, the papers reveals a prevalent usage of “urgency” in the context of expected projects (Leung et al., 2016; Økland et al., 2018), which do not necessarily imply immediate action. They commonly use the word “urgency” focusing only on the meaning “as something to be done,” which brings the aspect of an urgency to an expected work or action necessary to be done as soon as possible or even belatedly, e.g., as presented by El-Anwar & Aziz (2014). In their respective studies, Wearne and White-Hunt (2014) and Zidane et al. (2018) shed light on the feasibility of fast-tracking projects that are both urgent and expected, and emphasize that the crucial factor enabling the fast-tracking of such projects is the presence of “known knowns.” In summary, the literature affirms that an urgent project embodies a time-sensitive pursuit arising from specific circumstances or constraints. The many-sided interpretations of urgency showcase the interplay between time-sensitive considerations (ranging from immediate and prompt initiation to a more measured or belated approach), and expectations (expected or unexpected) inherent in urgent projects.

The term “urgent project” was manifested 15 (fifteen) times in titles and abstracts, the full-text analysis resulted in the identification of four main articles which deal in more depth with the topic of urgent projects. 0 presents these papers, including data on the journal, title, source, urgent project contexts, knowledge areas/dimensions presented in the papers, and urgent project implications. The findings reveal two articles published in the Project Management Journal (PMJ), with the remaining two originating from the International Journal of Managing Projects in Business (IJMPB) and The Journal of High Technology Management Research (JHTMR). Despite the limited number, it emphasizes the relevance of the PMJ in addressing this subject.

Table 3 - Relevant studies after the full-text analysis: journal, title, source, urgent project implications, and relevant dimensions of the papers.

Sources	Urgent Project Implications
(Nachbagauer, 2022)	Urgent projects demand immediate attention and action due to their criticality and high uncertainty, often occurring in complex and risky situations.
(Zidane et al., 2018)	Due to unexpected circumstances or business opportunities, urgent projects must be completed in significantly shorter durations.
(Wearne, 2006)	Managing urgent projects requires rapid acceptance of cost risks, top management involvement, and attention to stakeholders' interests.
(McDonough and Pearson, 1993)	The perceived level of urgency attributed to an urgent project can significantly impact the actions taken and influence project performance.
(Popa et al., 2011)	Urgent projects involve swift action, risk identification, and effective emergency management.
(El-Anwar and Aziz, 2014)	The integrated planning framework prioritizes and accelerates delivery of urgent slum upgrading projects based on each zone's current condition.
(Sun and Xu, 2011)	An Urgent Reconstruction project imply in substantial investment and the need for an efficient post-disaster reconstruction system.
(Aram and Javian, 1973)	Urgent projects are high-priority endeavors that demand immediate attention and are characterized by their time-sensitive nature.
(Bingham et al., 2018)	Project urgency strongly influences the choice of the selection of project delivery methods.
(Hensmans, 2015)	Reciprocal sensegiving facilitates quick employee acceptance of urgent strategic change.
(Pan et al., 2010)	Urgent projects address prioritized service problems to enhance customer perceptions and expectations.
(Ren et al., 2018)	Urgent projects negatively impact inter-project communication and knowledge transfer in project-based organizations (PBOs).
(Sun et al., 2019)	Urgent projects in CPCNs drive knowledge transfer but require careful planning to avoid negative impacts.
(Tang et al., 2015)	Urgent projects have high importance and short completion times, with increasing costs as completion time extends.
(Xia & Chan, 2012)	Urgent projects with unrealistic schedules significantly increase project complexity, necessitating more resources and causing frequent design and construction changes, posing challenges for effective project management.
(Yim et al., 2015)	Urgent projects are prevalent in rework scenarios with significant time pressure or tight deadlines.

In urgent projects, Nachbagauer (2022) points out the immediate attention and action they demand due to their critical nature. These projects are characterized by a high level of uncertainty and require rapid decision-making and coordination. They often arise in complex and risky scenarios like disaster management, fast-response organizations, and innovation projects. In contrast, Zidane et al. (2018) argue that urgent projects must be completed in a significantly shorter duration than a similar project owing to unexpected circumstances or business opportunities. These projects require an entirely different project management approach, can be

challenging to manage, require quick decision-making, and may involve high levels of risk. However, success for an urgent project is often measured by its timely delivery rather than its post-project evaluation. Wearne (2006) further elaborates that urgent projects emerge unexpectedly, necessitating immediate action to address new business opportunities, sudden threats, or severely damaged assets. Managing these projects involves quickly accepting cost risks, top management involvement, attention to stakeholders' interests, and trust in oral commitments. The urgency factor outweighs the cost of working at maximum speed when initiating them. McDonough & Pearson (1993) suggest that the perceived level of urgency for an urgent project, as seen by the corporation or project team, can impact the actions taken and influence project performance.

Similarities among the studies also suggest that urgent projects are characterized by high-priority status, but not all high-priority projects are urgent (Aram and Javian, 1973). Popa et al. (2011) emphasize the need for comprehensive risk assessment and effective management of emergency situations. Aram & Javian (1973) stress that urgency is directly related to time sensitivity and the requirement for timely success. Bingham et al. (2018) highlight how urgency significantly influences the selection of project delivery methods. The implications of urgent projects on stakeholders and employees are also explored. Tang et al. (2015) demonstrate the importance of short completion times and their impact on project costs. Hensmans (2015) discuss the need for rapid strategic change in response to high stakes and time pressures on employees, proposing the use of reciprocal sense giving to gain acceptance effectively.

Popa et al. (2011) and Pan et al. (2010) both emphasize the importance of communication with stakeholders in urgent projects. Popa et al. (2011) mention the need to communicate with stakeholders during comprehensive risk assessment, while Pan et al. (2010) highlight the significant implications of urgent projects for service improvement, which directly impacts customers' perceptions and expectations. Aram & Javian (1973) and Tang et al. (2015) both focus on the importance and priority of urgent projects. Aram & Javian (1973) state that urgent projects require immediate attention and are considered high-priority. Tang et al. (2015) discuss the implications of urgency, emphasizing that urgent projects are characterized by high importance and a need for short completion times.

However, there are some contradictions dealing with urgent projects. Such projects are characterized by high uncertainty (Nachbagauer, 2022) and demand quick decision-making (Zidane et al., 2018) at the same time. Managing uncertainties while making rapid decisions becomes a critical challenge. Furthermore, Nachbagauer (2022) and Zidane et al. (2018) contradict in the differing reasons for the urgency of these projects and in the perception of the time-sensitivity concept; Nachbagauer (2022) highlights the immediate attention required, while Zidane et al. (2018) emphasize the need for shorter durations. Wearne (2006) points out that the cost of working quickly is not a factor in deciding to initiate them, while Zidane et al. (2018)

emphasize the challenges and high-risk nature of urgent projects. Therefore, Wearne (2006) and Zidane et al. (2018) present different perceived drawbacks of urgency, applying different perspectives on the decision-making process. However, in the telecommunications industry, as presented by Zidane et al. (2018), this was aimed because the telecommunication project expected four times the return on the investment. The sooner the service was introduced to the market, the sooner it would generate income. Zidane et al. (2018) also present that success for an urgent project is defined by its timely delivery. However, this success might not be reflected in its post-project evaluation. According to Bingham et al. (2018), the urgency of a project can significantly impact the selection of project delivery methods. Notice that the characteristics of urgent projects may vary across different research studies and authors, leading to potential inconsistencies in understanding.

Contradictions in the research emerge concerning the effects of urgency on knowledge transfer. Ren et al. (2018) find that high time pressure negatively affects inter-project communication and knowledge transfer in project-based organizations (PBOs). However, Sun et al. (2019) suggest that urgency in Construction Project Cooperation Networks (CPCNs) positively influences knowledge transfer, promoting a greater willingness to share learning experiences and skills among network members. They propose that comprehensive plans must be developed to mitigate the negative effects of rushed schedules and allow sufficient construction time for optimal knowledge transfer. Moreover, some studies focus on specific urgent projects, such as slum upgrading El-Anwar & Aziz (2014) and earthquake reconstruction Sun & Xu (2011), highlighting their unique challenges and requirements.

Therefore, as described by multiple researchers, share common characteristics, such as:

- (i) **Critical Nature:** Urgent projects tend to arise unexpectedly and the criticality of these projects demands immediate attention and action, necessitating a sense of urgency in their management. Despite their critical nature, urgent projects may lead to rework projects and entail high time pressure or tight deadlines (Yim et al., 2015).
- (ii) **Management Challenges:** Managing urgent projects requires a unique approach focused on rapid decision-making, coordinated actions, top management involvement, consideration of stakeholders' interests, and reliance on oral commitments. These factors contribute to the project's accelerated momentum and timely delivery, a critical measure of success in urgent projects. A defining characteristic of urgent projects is the need for completion within significantly shorter durations compared to similar non-urgent projects. The urgency factor outweighs concerns about the cost of working at the maximum possible speed, emphasizing the importance of swift execution.
- (iii) **Rapid Response Risk Management:** Urgent projects often emerge in complex and risky scenarios characterized by high levels of uncertainty and potential risks. They often involve a comprehensive risk assessment to effectively manage emergency situations, such as natural disasters (Sun & Xu, 2011).

Defining Urgent Projects

This research aims to establish a unified conceptualization of “urgent projects” within the context of project management. Despite the deep literature analysis on the subject, it becomes evident that the specific papers lack a precise definition of an urgent project. It suggests that all previously studied urgent projects are necessary but insufficient to define and conceptualize an urgent project. By analyzing the meanings and nuances of the term “urgent” and exploring its application to urgent projects, we aim to establish a comprehensive understanding of these projects.

Both the lexical-semantic analysis (LSA) of the word “urgent” and the Systematic Literature Search (SLS) on urgent projects explore the many-sided meanings and nuances of “urgent,” ranging from the immediate need for action to the consideration of degrees of urgency. The strict definition of “urgent” signifies very important that needs to happen immediately, requiring speedy action in order to achieve a particular result, as presented in dictionaries. Urgent projects, as suggested in the Literature Search, demand immediate attention due to their critical nature and high uncertainty, and management challenges that often require accelerated momentum and rapid decision-making, coordination, and risk management. Challenges in urgent project management include short project durations, resource allocation, communication, and decision-making under time constraints. While there are some contradictions in defining urgent projects across different studies, the prevailing understanding is that they involve time-sensitive pursuits that may require immediate action and completion as quickly as reasonably possible.

The analysis of Lexical-Semantic Analysis and Literature Search reveals some contradictions in the understanding of urgent projects. While LSA suggests that urgent projects may imply different degrees of urgency depending on the context, SLS emphasizes the immediate attention and action demanded by urgent projects due to their critical nature. Moreover, LSA indicates that “as soon as possible” and “very soon” allow for a more flexible timeframe in completing tasks, while SLS mentions that urgent projects require an entirely different project management approach with swift execution. The contradictions highlight the complexities in defining urgent projects; and differing perspectives surrounding urgent projects, which may vary across different studies and authors.

To establish a precise definition and conceptualization of urgent projects, we integrate the outcomes of previous analyses (the meanings and nuances of the word “urgent” in dictionaries and the relevant studies related to urgent projects, their characteristics, challenges, and impact on project management) with a widely accepted definition of projects. According to the SLS, we chose the Project Management Institute (PMI) definition because it appears as the more prominent bibliography on the theme. For them (PMI, 2017), projects are temporary efforts undertaken to create a single product, service, or result.

In a simple combination of the terms “urgency” and “projects,” it is possible to develop a stricter definition of an urgent project as a temporary effort that needs to happen according to the degree of urgency, and be executed as fast as possible to create a product, service, or result. However, this simplistic definition lacks the contextual framework from the Systematic Literature Search that reveals common themes, such as the critical nature and high uncertainty associated with urgent projects. The Lexical Semantic Analysis also discusses the various nuances of urgency, including the need for immediate attention and action. These similarities, combined with the project definition, acknowledge the challenges and complexities of managing urgent projects, emphasizing the importance of quick decision-making, coordination, and attention to stakeholders’ interests. All these results combined give us a general understanding of what is an urgent project (RQ), as shown below.

An urgent project can be conceptualized as a time-bound effort to achieve a specific and critical objective that requires immediate attention and action according to the degree of urgency, rapid decision-making, and coordination due to its high level of cruciality. Urgent projects often arise in complex and risky scenarios, such as disaster management, fast-response organizations, and innovation projects, or unexpectedly, necessitating rapid action to address new business opportunities, sudden threats, or severely damaged assets. The urgency factor in urgent projects outweighs concerns about the cost of working at the maximum possible speed when deciding to initiate them, emphasizing the significance of achieving results promptly. These projects are considered by high level of uncertainty, complexity, and risks. The challenges specific to urgent project management include dealing with improvisation, and fragmentation while maintaining focus on the project’s scope and objectives. Stakeholder management is crucial in urgent projects, as their interests and involvement play a vital role in the project’s success. It involves relying on oral commitments to achieve accelerated momentum and timely delivery. Success for an urgent project is primarily measured by its timely delivery rather than its post-project evaluation, acknowledging the need for quick action to meet pressing deadlines or capitalize on time-sensitive opportunities. From this general understanding of what is an urgent project, in a short summary an urgent project is a time-bound initiative that demands immediate attention, rapid decision-making and coordination to address critical and time-sensitive requirements and achieve specific outcomes promptly.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper aimed to study the term “urgent project” as a focal concept. As hypothesized, our research presents that the term “urgent project” manifests diverse interpretations from different points of view so that the authors understand the meaning of what is urgent. The concept of degrees of urgency has been recognized, highlighting varying levels of intensity associated

with urgent projects. While there is no formal definition or conceptualization for the degree of urgency in the management domain, the analysis has illuminated the inherent nuances and contextual flexibility within the concept. The literature on urgency emphasizes the crucial role of time-sensitive events, potential risks, and consequences in understanding urgency, while also acknowledging the contextual and field-specific nature of urgency. Additionally, the analysis of selected articles has shed light on the time-sensitivity of urgent projects, indicating that urgency can encompass different time frames, depending on the projects' complexity and specific requirements. Urgent projects demand a unique management approach characterized by swift decision-making, coordination, risk management, and stakeholder involvement, with a primary focus on timely delivery.

This paper presents a robust conceptual foundation for analyzing urgent projects effectively, thereby reducing the lack of consensus found in the definition presented by Zidane et al. (2018). The novel contribution of this study lies in advancing the knowledge of urgent projects, serving as a pivotal starting point for further conceptual development in this domain. By exploring the complexities involved in managing urgent projects, the research provides valuable insights for both practitioners and researchers in the project management field, fostering a deeper comprehension of this specialized area and opening new avenues for understanding its nuances.

In examining the scope of this research, it has some limitations deserving attention. First, the constraints posed by the limited scope of dictionaries, as well as the subjectivity in its interpretations, and cultural and linguistic variations. Additionally, the lack of considerations of large language databases. To augment the rigor of our conclusions, limitations are also related to the necessity to expand the finding based on more scientific databases. We must recognize the difficulties posed by the different interpretations of what is urgent or not, being a challenge in analyzing literature. Another concern pertains to the fact that the definition of the urgent project presented is not sufficient and generalizable to well conceptualize urgent projects in general. As such, it needs refinements to foster a more robust understanding of the subject.

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