

An Empirical Study of Projects Critical Success Factors on Non-Governmental Organizations in Kisumu County, Kenya

¹Odhiambo Daniel Dida, ²Muchelule Yusuf Wanjala, ³Prof. Mike Amuhaya Iravo

School of Human Resource Development, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kenya

Abstract: Projects remain to be universal in all entities of life, but then ironically, the poor performance of projects and the disappointment of projects appear to be a commonest scenario. Most projects failed to be delivered within the expected time frame, quality and budget. The study was aimed at investigating the projects' critical success factors in Kisumu County. The study sought to address the following research objectives: determine the relationship between project leadership and project success in non-governmental organizations in Kisumu County; examine the extent to which project planning influences project success in nongovernmental organizations in Kisumu County and determine the association between monitoring and evaluation and project success in non-governmental organizations in Kisumu County. A conceptual framework showing interactions of study variables guided the study. A descriptive survey design was adopted. The target population consisted of the seven project managers and 29 Field Coordinators from the seven NGOs. All the 36 respondents were used in the study. A purposive sampling technique was used to select project managers and field coordinators. The questionnaires and interview schedule were the instruments used for data collection. The research adopted the content validity to measure the validity of the instruments. The consistency of questionnaire was established through test re-test method where research tools were administered twice to the respondents. An alpha value of 0.797 was obtained. The data collected was analyzed through both descriptive and inferential statistics (Critical Index and regression analysis). Results indicate that project leadership affects positively and significantly ($p < 0.05$) project success among NGOs; project planning had a positively and significant effect on projects success and monitoring and evaluation on project success had a statistical significant ($p < 0.05$) positive correlation on successful completion of projects. The following were the recommendations of this study: there is need to develop quality leadership among project managers and employees. This is because; good leaders can make fair judgments toward themselves, and acknowledge both their strengths and weaknesses. They have goals and a vision, and effectively communicate their vision through words, mannerism, or actions. Since project planning is integral in organizations and pervades at all the levels of the organization, it should be accurately written and implemented to letter. Monitoring and evaluation have been noted to effectively and positively influence success of projects; therefore, it should be reinforced in the organizations during projects management. The research findings will assist policy makers and stakeholders in the counties in enhancing successful completion of projects, taking in considerations of the critical factors that affect project success and qualitative data were collected, analyzed and presented in tables and graphs format for easier interpretation.

Keywords: Critical Success Factors (CSFs), Project Management, The Project Life Cycle, success Criteria.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Wallace [8] no one individual or industry is responsible for the concept of project management. The concept project management is often ascribed to the early works of Often it is attributed to the early spatial programs way back in 1960s, but its origin dates back much further. Vital entities of project management arose from past great works that were aligned with the major projects undertaken in the past years such as the Egyptian pyramids, construction of Great Wall of China as well as road construction in Rome. Projects are often initiated in the context of a turbulent, unpredictable, and

dynamic environment aligned with pronounced risks and uncertainties. Consequently, it is paramount for the project manager and the team to be well conversant with relevant information about specific factors, critical to project success for the project objectives and goals to be realized optimally. The project managers essentially require the necessary tools to aid him or her focus attention on vital key areas and set different priorities across different project elements and the project life cycle.

This articulates with [7] who noted that lots of the projects are characterized by poor performance in relation with time, scope and the budget yet they are perceived as being successful as heard in the media. [11] Quantified the fact that, to scale high the probability of project excellence, it is critical for the project team to familiarize themselves with the appropriate set of project fundamentals which govern project implementation throughout the cycle this denotes the critical success factors (CSFs). To increase the probability of project success, it is essential for the organization undertaking the project to substantially understand the mentioned set of factors or rather the critical success factors failure to which poor project performance will be forthcoming.

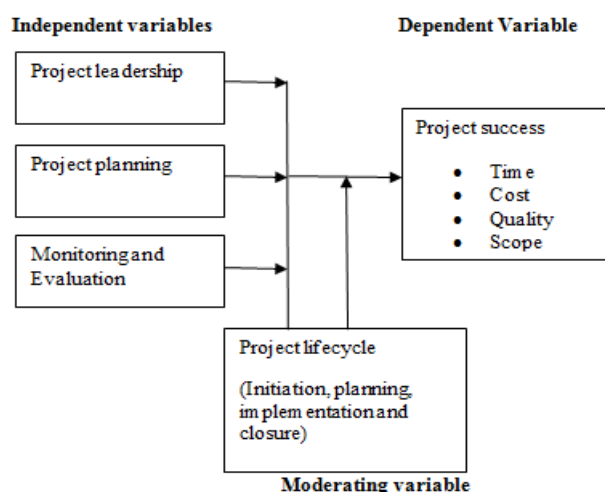
2. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

A project is an association of people dedicated to a specific reason or objective [12]. Usually, projects involve enormous risk, unique, expensive, undertakings which have to be accomplished in a given period of time for some specific amount of money within some expected level of performance. All projects need to have sufficient resources and well defined objectives in order to be accomplished accordingly. Project management is dated back to the early 1950s with the development of such technique as Program Evaluation and Review

Technique (PERT) and Critical Path Method (CPM). The reason for this was the need of Western industrial and military establishments to plan, schedule and control complex projects. The origin of modern project management stems from the chemical industry prior to World War II. From that point of the focus on planning and scheduling, managing budget and evaluating quality has been the main focus of project management practice, research and development is the notion aligned with project success.

During the time between the 1950s-1980s, projects were mainly considered in the context of industry and production of goods. Customer contact was minimal during the project execution and long term follow up and trouble shooting was not common. At this time the concept of client satisfaction remained unclear. In the 60s and 70s the outlook regarding the components of success began to expand beyond the time, cost and quality attributes. Then in 1980s to 1990s, numerous studies begun aimed at researching in-depth definitions of project success, where it was concluded that apart from the Iron Triangle of time, cost, quality and project management techniques, other dimensions affect the success or failure of a project. [12] advocate project success not only evolves from the technically correct project, but also effectively interfacing with clients and stakeholders of the project. The success of the project management started to begin to be assessed with input from the stakeholders and that it should be assessed beyond the project phase. The initial practice as well as literature was dominated by the evaluation of the three basic criteria. This includes quality, cost and time. These criteria are easy to utilize and within the domination of the project organization.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



4. SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE OF EXISTING LITERATURE

In conclusion, the archival review demonstrates that, the project is temporary, unique, and the product of a multifaceted and progressively elaborated process that produces a solution for a specific objective. In the endeavor to be successful, the project must be accomplished on time, within budget, and to the appropriate degree required to satisfy the objective. For success to be achieved, the project manager must be skilled and operate in an environment which enables a project team to function. Excellence in project management should be viewed as the positive trend in the performance of successful projects. Based on a pronounced literature reviews, lots of studies have been undertaken in Western countries [11] From the extensive literature review, very few studies have been undertaken locally, and therefore is little or no documentation that has been made in line with critical factors affecting project success. Furthermore, very few research authors have attempted to provide conceptual sets on critical success factors and even less empirical studies have attempted to explore the relationship between CSFs and project success. Therefore, this is the gap which this study sought to fill in.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design was used to allow researcher to gather, summarize, present and interpret information for the purpose of clarification. It is mainstreamed to fact finding and may result in the formulation of important principles of knowledge and solution to significant problems. The target population The target population consisted of 23 project managers and 130 field coordinators from the eight NGOs: USAID/Kaves, Heifer International, World Food Programme (WFP), Red Cross, Mercy Corps, Impact Research, Academic Model Providing Access to Healthcare (AMPATH) and Reformed Church of East Africa Organization. The simple random sampling was used to select 29 field coordinators so that each and every one in the target population has an equal chance of inclusion. . The pre-test retest was carried out from the 10 employees from the Human Resource Department and three employees from the Finance Department of the eight NGOs. These respondents were not included in the actual research undertaking. The study used self-administered questionnaires and observation schedules. This study utilized both primary and secondary data. Questionnaires were used to collect primary data which was distributed to the staff.

The maximum criticality index of any of the skills factor should not be more than 1, when the average criticality index by proxy is greater ≥ 0.5 this denote the essence of the critical success factor with the highest being 1, which is considered as most important as it bears the highest score. The criticality index adopted is expressed as follows;

$$C = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^5 W_i X_i}{\sum_{i=1} X_i}$$

Where:

C = Criticality Index.

i = responses category index = 1,2,3,4 and 5 (position on the Likert scale).

W_i = is the weight assigned to ith response = 0, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75 and 1 respectively

X_i = frequency of the ith response given as percentage of the total responses

Once the computation was finalized, the CSFs were ranked in ascending order of their criticality based on the rating in the response. The rankings replicate the order of the mean response of each success factor. Criticality indices together with the frequencies (percentages) of the responses as well as the mean indices for the critical success factors for the successful projects were reported. Regression analysis was used to establish the association between study variables at 95% confidence level, p-value ± 0.05 . Using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), the values of the coefficients were obtained. The inferential statistical tools were used to test null hypotheses at confidence interval level of 95% (p<5% or p>5%).

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate:

50% of respondents were in the age bracket of 35-47 years, 27.8% of respondents were in the age bracket of 25-34 years, 16.7% in the age bracket of above 48 years while 5.5% in the age bracket of 18-24 years. Results indicated that there was

a significant ($P < 0.05$) difference in the variation among age groups since the expected uniform distribution across age groups of 25% in each age bracket was not achieved. The results illustrated that there was a significant ($p < 0.05$) variation in the gender distribution. There were more males 29(80.6%) than females 7(19.4%) who participated in the study. Therefore, gender equity among the respondents was not realised in this study. There was a significant ($p < 0.05$) difference in the levels of education of respondents, an indication of respondents' varied understanding of the projects' critical success factors in Kisumu County. Results show that 61.1% of respondents had achieved that bachelor's education, 19.4% had master's education level, and 16.7% had diploma education levels while 2.8% had attained PhD degrees. This shows that most of the respondents had acquired the necessary educational levels which enable them to understand the various factors affecting project success among the NGOs in Kisumu County.

4.1 Project leadership:

The results indicate that project leadership had a positive and significant effect on project success among NGOs in Kisumu County ($r = 0.640$, $b = 0.3776$, $t = 2.277$, $p < 0.05$). A competent project team entails project manager leading its members who are specifically selected, undergoes training and possess the right experience, knowledge and skills to handle the requirements or the demands of the project [1]. [3] Indicated that, the availability of a team with relevant technical skills and the availability of the required technology are vital project's success. The role of different project management techniques to implement projects successfully has been widely established in areas such as the planning and control of time, cost and quality.

These study findings were in congruent with findings by [1] who noted that project leadership is positively related to project success. Project is likely to be successful if visible support and obligation present from the top and executive management. Top management is normally in form of providing sufficient resources for the success of the project, sharing responsibilities with project team, communicating with the project team authorities and responsibilities and supporting the project team in times of crisis or at unexpected situations.

Lack of executive support can put at risk the projects. Promote the success of the project as a customer and the highest authority of the organization. Through the transfer of official authority to the leader of the project and by influencing the project design team, the top management provides the organizational environment that allows successful completion of the project.

The successful project manager should have the following skills and competencies; flexibility and adaptability, preference for significant initiative and leadership, aggressiveness, confidence, persuasiveness, verbal fluency, ambition, activity, forcefulness, effectiveness as a communicator and integrator, broad scope of personal interests, poise, enthusiasm, imagination, spontaneity, able to balance technical solutions with time, cost, and human factors, well organized and disciplined, a generalist rather than a specialist, able and willing to devote most of his or her time to planning and controlling, able to identify problems, willing to make decisions, able to maintain a proper balance in use of time.

4.2 Project planning:

The overall results between project planning and successful completion of projects, illustrate a strong positive and significant ($p < 0.05$) association between these variables ($r = 0.672$, $b = 1.140$, $t = 2.010$, $p < 0.05$). Results also indicate that 91.9% ($R^2 = 0.919$) of successful completed projects was attributed to project planning. For example, [1] found the positive significant relationship between project planning and project success. Procaccino et al. (2002) also indicated the significant role of customer involvement and support from top management to the success of a project. The more customer involvement and top management support, the higher chance of project success. The results of [2] indicated that the methods employed to manage the project and the people involved in the cross-functional process of project development tend to be more important than the tools and technology.

There are two studies that examined planning in detail. First, the studies of [3] considered the role of input factors such as people, management and technical methods in the requirements capturing and analysis (RCA) stage – an important task in planning. Their approach provides a comprehensive view of factors in planning that can affect the efforts during the RCA stage and throughout the whole development process. Second, the empirical study of [4] considered planning as composed of three major tasks: development of functional requirements; development of technical specifications and the implementation of project management. They examined the relationship between the performance of these tasks and the project results.

4.3 Monitoring and Evaluation:

The results indicate that monitoring and evaluation had a statistical significant ($p < 0.05$) and positive correlation on successful completion of projects ($r = 0.633$, $p < 0.01$). These results imply that 63.3 % of the successful completion of projects can be attributed to project monitoring and evaluation. This also meant that 34.3% of the projects in Kisumu County were not successful completed (stalled projects). [6] they is a significant correlates founded on criticality index and relative rankings which proofed the fact, monitoring and evaluation is critical in realizing project success. A well-functioning monitoring and evaluation system is a critical part of good project/program management and accountability. It has been concluded that, timely and reliable monitoring and evaluation provide information which integrate to project.

[11] The triple constraint model as a criterion has been commonly used is since 1960s. It measures specifications (quality), cost and time as the standard success criteria. It is understood that if a particular project exceeds its completion date, expenses exceeding its budgets or outcome of the project do not satisfy the organizational pre-determined expectations, then the project is a failure. [5] in their article where they noted that, thee very famous and well-known "Golden Triangle" or

"Iron Triangle", have been traditionally used as criteria to measure project success. This "Golden Triangle" refers to the basic criteria of cost, time and quality. Project success will be accorded if it is completed within the budgeted cost, implemented on time and to quality parameters requested.

7. CONCLUSION

The following were the conclusions of the study derived from the study findings:

Project leadership affects positively and significantly ($p < 0.05$) project success among NGOs in Kisumu County. This means that increasing the efficiency of leadership could directly lead to improved project success. Quality leadership is important not only for individual's career pursuits, but is also significant because it influences the whole project process. Project planning had a positively and significant effect on projects success. This signifies that effective planning ensures proper utilization of human and nonhuman resources, thus, also helping in avoiding confusion, uncertainties, risks and wastages. Monitoring and evaluation on project success had a statistical significant ($p < 0.05$) positive correlation on successful completion of projects. This indicates that monitoring and evaluation helps to predict deviations in projects before they actually occur, implying that efficient project monitoring and evaluation can result in successful completion of projects.

REFERENCES

- [1] Aladwani, M.A. (2002). " IT project uncertainty, planning and success: An empirical investigation from Kuwait," *Information Technology & People. Journal of Management Information Systems* (15:3), pp 210-226.
- [2] Blackburn, J. D., Scudder, G. D. and Van Wassenhove, L. N. (1996). *Improving speed and productivity of software development: A global survey of software developers*. IEEE Transactions on Software Engineering, 22(12).
- [3] Chatzoglou, P. D. and Macaulay, L. A. (1997). The importance of human factors in planning the requirements capture stage of a project. *International Journal of Project Management*, 15(1):39–53.
- [4] Dvir, D., Raz, T., and Shenhar, J.A. (2003). "An empirical analysis of the relationship between project planning and project success," *International Journal of Project Management* (21:2), pp 89-95.
- [5] Kuen, C.W., Zailani, S., & Fernando, Y. (2008) Critical factors influencing the project success amongst manufacturing companies in Malaysia. *School African Journal of Business Management*, .Vol.3 (1), pp. 016-027.
- [6] Mobey A., & Parker, D. (2002). Risk evaluation and its importance to project implementation. *Int. J. Productivity and Performance Management*, 51(4): 202– 208. OGC. (2007). *Managing Successful Programmes*. TSO.
- [7] Pinto, J.K., and Slevin, D. P. (1988). *Critical Success Factors in Effective Project Implementation*.
- [8] Prabhakar, G.P. (2008). What is Project Success: A Literature Review *International Journal of Business and Management*. Vol. 3, No. 9.

- [9] Procaccino, J.D., and June, M.V. (2006). "Software project managers and project success: An exploratory study," *The Journal of Systems and Software* (79:11), pp 1541-1551
- [10] Shenhar, A.J., Tishler, A., Dvir, D., Lipovetsky, S., & Lechler, T. (2002). 'Refining the search for project success factors: a multivariate typological approach', *R & D Management*, vol. 32, no. 2.
- [11] Wai Kuen, C., and Zailani, S. (2007). *Factors Influencing the Success of Project Management amongst Manufacturing Companies in Malaysia: A Conceptual Framework*. 7th Global Conference on Business & Economics. ISBN: 978-09742114-9-7.
- [12] Yang, J., Shen, G.Q., Manfong, H., Drew, D.S., & Chan, A.P.C., (2009). Exploring Critical Success Factors for Stakeholder Management in Construction Projects. *Journal of Civil Engineering and Management*, 15(4) 337-348.