

EFFECT OF PROJECT TEAM SKILLS ON PERFORMANCE OF IFAD FUNDED PROJECTS IN RWANDA: A CASE OF RURAL SECTOR SUPPORT PROJECT

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Abstract: The objective of this study was to assess the effect of project team skills on performance of Rural Sector Support Project in Rwanda. This study used descriptive research design involving explaining the relationship between variables. The population of the study was 57 project team members since the target population of the study was a small number, the researcher preferred to use a census by considering the total population as sample. The researcher collected primary data using questionnaires and data were analysed using percentages and frequencies. Based on the information drawn from findings the researcher concluded that the effect of Project team planning skills on performance of Rural Sector Support Project is significant. It was found out that, the project could not succeed without planning skills of their managing teams that the increase of one unit in terms of team planning skills increases the project performance by .934 units if other variables remain constant. The study found out that Project team monitoring and evaluation skills has a great effect on Performance of Rural Sector Support Project. This study demonstrated that there is a strong and positive relationship between Project team communication skills and Performance of Rural Sector Support Project. The researcher recommended the Project owners and managers to recruit the project planners based on their technical skills in project and program planning and enhance the technical capacity of the project team by providing adequate trainings to them. Project managers must pay attention to monitoring and evaluation skills and working experience in the similar positions when recruiting the monitoring and evaluation specialists and officers. Given the fact that communication is a very important factor for any project performance and as the study findings revealed that there is a strong and positive relationship between Project team communication skills and Performance of Rural Sector Support Project.

1. INTRODUCTION

Effective implementation of a project is very closely tied to the skills of its team. Projects fail due to lack of planning skills of the project team because many times they do not define the problems well or take important factors into consideration such as the needs and views of everyone involved in and affected by the project. A competent and skilled project planning team provides details and structure to project work plan and establishes a way to continue the project after the grant funding ends. Project performance is therefore, dependent upon the skills of project team and the ability and leadership of the project manager to bring the best out in their team (Godfrey, 2015). Pffer (2008) state, "the performance of developmental projects depend on several factors, one of which is skills of team members, their personalities, characteristics and workplace practices also impact on project outcomes with the latter being essential for developmental projects.

Statement of the problem:

Project team skills are the backbone of performance of project in every organization. Team's skills have developed into project management practices by researchers seeking to emphasize the importance of the concept to the effective

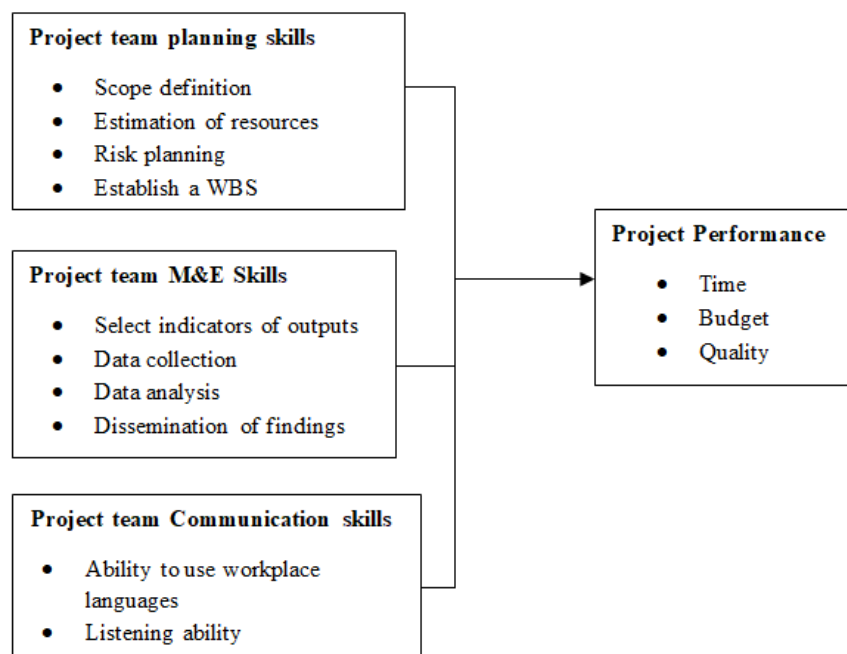
functioning of projects. To this end, many authors have maintained that project team skills are straightforwardly linked to project performance. However, regardless of the rising popularity of project team skills, there have been very few systematic evaluations of the claims that it is linked to performance of project and doubts remain as to its theoretical foundations (Brennan, 2011). Nowadays, many projects spend a huge amount of money in recruiting competent and skilled team members in their projects believing that this will automatically lead to project performance. Despite the huge amount of money invested in recruitment of competent project team members; several surveys shown that, projects are still failing to deliver the expected results. Rural Sector Support Project used around forty millions of United States Dollars to implement its projects in Eastern province. Although the tremendous achievements have been made by Rural Sector Support Project, its overall performance has not been achieved as intended in the set time. One of the reasons given by external independent consultants and evaluators is lack of competent and skilled project team whereby the project team lacks the required skills like planning skills, monitoring skills, communication skills among others. Hence, this study aimed at assessing the effect of project team skills on performance of Rural Sector Support Project in Rwanda.

Objectives of the study:

The general objective of this study was to assess the effect of project team skills on performance of IFAD funded projects in Rwanda While the study anchored the 3 specific objectives:

1. To analyze the effect of project team planning skills on performance of Rural Sector Support Project
2. To explore the effect of project team monitoring and evaluation skills on performance of Rural Sector Support Project
3. To examine the effect of project team communication skills on performance of Rural Sector Support Project

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY



3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The researcher adopted descriptive research design involving explaining the relationship between variables.

Target Population: The population of study was 57 project team members under Rural Sector Support Project.

Sample Size: Since the target population of the study is a small number, the researcher preferred to use a census by considering the total population as sample. This means that all 57 project team was taken as the sample size of the study.

Data Collection Instruments: During this study; open-ended and closed questions included in the questionnaire to determine the context of the research by asking general questions like age, gender, and occupation. Multiple choice questions were employed with Likert scales so respondents could indicate the intensity of their attitude towards each aspect of the study.

4. SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

Table1: Descriptive statistics on project team planning skills

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Comments
Planning skills enabling the project team to define the project	4.1404	.76622	Strong Heterogeneity
Planning skills enabling the project team to effectively estimate the project resources needed	3.9825	.83434	Strong Heterogeneity
Planning skills that enable the project team to plan for risk	4.1754	.75882	Strong Heterogeneity
Planning skills that enable the project team to establish the work breakdown structures	3.8772	.80335	Strong Heterogeneity
Valid N (listwise)	57		

Source: primary data (2018)

The findings as displayed in Table 4.9 above revealed a general consensus by the respondents that in Rural Sector Support Project the project team has the skills to define the project scope as it is supported by a mean value of 4.1404 and a standard deviation of .76622. It implies that a majority of the respondents' views were positive on having planning skills enabling the project team to define the project in spite of few divergent views. In regard to having planning skills enabling the project team to effectively estimate the project resources needed, there is a positive consensus in support of this view as can be revealed by a mean value of 3.9825, while a standard deviation of .83434 is an indication of a strong heterogeneity in the respondents views. The study also prove that the project team has planning skills that enable them to plan for risk as indicated by a positive mean value of 4.1754 and a standard deviation of .75882. The high value of the standard deviation is an indicator of a strong heterogeneity of the respondent's views implying that the project team in Rural Sector Support Project, the project team has planning skills enabling them to effectively estimate the project resources needed. Finally, this study in regard to having planning skills that enable the project team to establish the work breakdown structures has revealed that in Rural Sector Support project; the project team has planning skills that enable them to establish the work breakdown structures as the proven by a mean of 3.8772 with a standard deviation of .80335.

Table 2: Correlation between project team planning skills and Performance of Rural Sector Support Project

		Project team planning skills	Project Performance
Project team planning skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.934**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	57	57
Project Performance	Pearson Correlation	.934**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	57	57

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: primary data (2018)

The study findings as shown in Table2 revealed a positive significant correlation between the project team planning skills and performance of Rural Sector Support Project. From a sample size of 57 respondents as represented by N and a significant level of 0.01, the results indicate that the independent variable has a positive strong correlation to the dependent variable equal to .934** and with the p-value .000 which is less than significant level of 0.01. Hence the researcher concluded a strong and positive correlation project team planning skills and Performance of Rural Sector Support Project.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on project team Monitoring and Evaluation skills

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Comments
Having skills to select indicators of outputs	4.2982	.59656	Strong Heterogeneity
Having skills to collect and analyze data	4.3860	.70088	Strong Heterogeneity
Having skills to disseminate the findings to the project stakeholders	4.4386	.73235	Strong Heterogeneity
Valid N (listwise)	57		

Source: primary data (2018)

The findings in Table3 revealed that in Rural Sector Support Project; the projects team has the skills to select indicators of outputs as indicated by mean score of 4.2982 confirming the statement. The results also indicate that the views of the respondents were heterogeneous as the standard deviation of .59656 can ascertain. The study also revealed in Rural Sector Support Project the project team has the skills to collect and analyze data as shown by a mean of 4.3860, but with the standard deviation of .70088 which is a strong heterogeneity it's an implication that there was a strong divergence of the views on both sides from the mean. Lastly; it has been noted that in Rural Sector Support Project the project team has the skills to disseminate the findings to the project stakeholders as the mean of 4.4386 can attest. However, with the standard deviation of .73235, it shows a wide dispersion of the views from the mean an indication that the responses were quite divergent.

Table 4: Correlation between Project team M&E skills and performance of RSSP

		Project team M&E skills	Performance of RSSP
Project team M&E skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.965**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	57	57
Performance of RSSP	Pearson Correlation	.965**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	57	57

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of correlation from Table4 revealed presence of a positive and strong relationship between project team Monitoring and Evaluation skills and performance of Rural Sector Support Project. From a sample size of 57 respondents represented by N in Table4 above and a significant level of 0.01, the results demonstrated that the independent variable (project team skills) has a positive strong correlation to the dependent variable (performance of Rural Sector Support Project) which is equal to .965** . Therefore; the researcher concluded a strong and positive relation between project team Monitoring and Evaluation skills and performance of Rural Sector Support Project.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics on project team communication skills

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Comments
Ability to provide feedback	4.0877	.57572	Strong Heterogeneity
Listening ability	4.1404	.66651	Strong Heterogeneity
Ability to provide feedback	4.1228	.56915	Strong Heterogeneity
Valid N (list wise)			

Source: primary data (2018)

The findings as shown in Table5 above show that ability to provide feedback has a positive effect on performance of Rural Sector Support Project as represented by a mean of 4.0877, the findings further show that the respondents did not unanimously agree on this their standard deviation is .57572 which shows how divergent the views were from the mean. Listening ability has an effect on performance of Rural Sector Support Project as represented by a mean of 4.1404 which was recorded. However, the strong heterogeneity of the standard deviation of .66651 implies presence of divergent views.

In addition, according to the findings, ability to provide feedback has an effect on performance of mean score of 4.1228. There was a strong heterogeneity for this response an indication of the respondents expressing different opinions as shown by the standard deviation of .56915

Table 6: Correlation between project team communication skills and performance of RSSP

		project team communication skills	performance of RSSP
project team communication skills	Pearson Correlation	1	.958**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	57	57
performance of RSSP	Pearson Correlation	.958**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	57	57

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: primary data (2018)

Table 6 establishes that there exists a strong positive correlation between project team communication skills and performance of RSSP. From the study sample of 57 respondents represented by N and the significant level of 0.01 shown in table above, the results indicate that the independent variable has a positive strong correlation to the dependent variable equal to .958** and with the p-value of .000 which is less than significant value of 0.01, the researcher can safely conclude that the variables under study are correlated.

Table 7: Performance of Rural Sector Support Project

Statements	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Rural Sector Support Project is meeting the set time	57	1.2391	.43127
Rural Sector Support Project is meeting the set budget	57	4.4565	.50361
Rural Sector Support Project is meeting the set quality standards	57	4.4783	.50505

Source: Primary Data (2018)

From Table7, the mean values for the second and third statements are 4.45 and 4.47 respectively which are rounded off to 4 the code for strongly disagree. This means that in general respondents have strongly disagreed that Rural Sector Support Project is meeting the set budget and quality standards and the first mean value is 1.23 which is rounded off to 1 the code for strongly agree to mean that Rural Sector Support Project is meeting the set time and completely failed to meet the set budget and quality standards.

5. CONCLUSIONS

According to the interpretation of collected and analyzed data during the course of this study; the researcher came up with the following conclusions:

- i. Based on the information drawn from findings the researcher concluded that the effect of Project team planning skills on performance of Rural Sector Support Project is significant. It was found out that the project could not succeed without planning skills of their managing teams that the increase of one unit in terms of team planning skills increases the project performance by .934 units if other variables remain constant.
- ii. This study demonstrated that there is a strong relationship Project team monitoring and evaluation skills and Performance of Rural Sector Support Project. The study found out that Project team monitoring and evaluation skills has a great effect on Performance of Rural Sector Support Project. It showed that the increase of one unit in terms of monitoring and evaluation skills would increase the performance of Rural Sector Support Project by .965 units if other variables remain constant. Moreover it showed that this variable is a very important factor for the successful performance of a project.

iii. As per the third objective this study demonstrated that there is a strong and positive relationship between Project team communication skills and Performance of Rural Sector Support Project. Statistically the increase of one unit in team communication skills increases the performance of Rural Sector Support Project by .958 units if other variables stay constant. The indispensable role of this variable in project performance has been proved by its p value which showed that it can't be ignored in the model without affecting deeply the accuracy of the prediction by the model.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

After analysis and interpretation of data, the researcher came up with the following recommendations To Whom It May Concern:

- i. The Project owners and managers must recruit the project planners based on their technical skills in project and program planning and enhance the technical capacity of the project team by providing adequate trainings to them.
- ii. Since the study found out that Project team monitoring and evaluation skills has a great effect on Performance of Rural Sector Support Project. Project managers must pay attention to monitoring and evaluation skills and working experience in the similar positions when recruiting the monitoring and evaluation specialists and officers so as to ensure they are able to track the project progress and recommend the corrective measures the project owners.
- iii. Given the fact that communication is a very important factor for any project performance and as the study findings revealed that there is a strong and positive relationship between Project team communication skills and Performance of Rural Sector Support Project. Therefore issue of communication should be taken into considerations and project managers should also consider the communication skills when recruiting the project team members.

Suggestions for further research:

This research has been limited only on Rural Sector Support Project as one of the projects funded by International Fund for Agriculture Development in Rwanda; other similar researches may be done in other projects and locations to confirm or to contradict the findings of this study. The researcher suggest the following areas to future research

- Effect of Project team skills on performance of JICA funded projects in Rwanda
- The role of planning process on successful implementation of development projects and
- Effect of beneficiary participation in M&E on successful implementation of IFAD funded projects

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