

ROLE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT SOFT SKILLS ON SUSTAINABILITY OF ENWEALTH FINANCIAL SERVICES PROJECTS

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Abstract: Project management plays the most critical role in the success and sustainability of any project. Project Management Soft skills are now being regarded as essential to all professional endeavors. The study sought to examine the role of project management soft skills on the sustainability of Enwealth Financial Services projects. Therefore, Specific objectives of the study were to determine the role of communication skills on the sustainability of Enwealth financial services projects; to examine the role of negotiation skills in the sustainability of Enwealth Financial Services projects; to find out the role of time management skills in the sustainability of Enwealth Financial Services projects, and to assess the role of leadership skills in the sustainability of Enwealth Financial Services projects. These results are significant to the project managers as it assists them in exercising appropriate skills needed for successfully influencing the project sustainability. The study focused on Enwealth Financial Services projects. The study was guided by the resource-based view theory and development communication theory. This study adopted an explanatory research design, and the population of this study included all the 40 staff at Enwealth Financial Services. The entire population was examined since they are not many. Semi-structured questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. The data were analyzed and tabulated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The researcher concludes that soft skills such as communication skills and leadership skills are essential in ensuring project success and sustainability through providing stakeholder participation and reduce resistance. Additionally, negotiation skills and time management skills play the role of resource mobilization and securing proper resource utilization that ensure project success. The researcher recommends that all project stakeholders should be involved from the initiation stage to completion of the project as well as proper allocation of resources to avoid underutilization. The Organization should introduce collaboration tools that allow fast and seamless communication like the use of social media platforms and build leadership capacity through learning and development to ensure effective implementation and sustainability of projects.

Keywords: Project Management, Sustainability, Sustainability, Stakeholder Engagement, Time management skills.

1. INTRODUCTION

Project management plays the most critical role in the success and sustainability of any project [10]. Since the start of project management as a profession, planning and execution have been considered the key pillars. However, it is becoming clearer that project management encompasses more than just implementing activities within a set time frame. This evolution has affected the science of management as well. Therefore, project management is becoming an essential and powerful tool for companies that understand, appreciate and apply the competencies.

Soft skills are largely intangible hence, hard to measure. Organizations typically emphasize abilities or training of specific skills. Unlike these hard skills which are easily defined and follow a definite approach, soft skills generic and can only be measured on a different domain, which is more social, than technical. Soft skills define a manager's ability to work with different types of people, his inherent personality traits and his capacity to come to terms with stress in work while remaining qualitative and productive [7]. In this era of constant change and a move from the mechanical era to a knowledge-based and social era of doing business, soft skills are becoming more relevant. They may not be measurable, but they can certainly be felt. Unlike managing organizational structure, it deals with managing organizational behavior and outlook of key persons associated with a task. Soft skills, thus, define a manager's skills in fostering inter and intra-organizational relationships amongst all types of people associated with the project [5]

The concept of sustainable development within the project management context has continuously evolved over the past decade highlighting various views over the fundamentals that processes and procedures should build on eight sustainability principles. These include balancing or harmonizing social, environmental and economic interests short-term and long-term orientation, local regional and global orientation, values and ethics, transparency & accountability; stakeholder participation, risk reduction and consuming income and not capital [3].

2. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

A project is sustainable when it continues to deliver benefits to the targeted beneficiaries and other constituencies for an extended period after the financial assistance has been terminated [2]. Sustainance can be described by the maintenance, further development, and dissemination of outputs and outcomes, rather than the simple continuation of activities, which might no longer be necessary for projects [2].

[6] noted that by facilitating mutual understanding and by building trust among stakeholders, communication becomes of critical value in fostering participation and strengthening a project's sustenance. In other words, communication skills play a great role in ensuring that the project beneficiaries participate in the process of project development which strengthens project sustainability. Achieving project sustainability largely depends on the way a proposed change and the involvement in assessing and deciding about how that change should be achieved is perceived by stakeholders [6].

Negotiations occur around many issues, during the life of a project, many of which involve the project manager. Various situations are often encountered during the course of a project, and for which the negotiation skills of the project manager are called for; namely Scope, cost, and schedule objectives; Changes to scope, cost, or schedule; contract terms and conditions; and resource availability and utilization [1] studied Developing project management competency, but with a focus on construction projects. They identified negotiation skills as one of the essential project management skills that enhance project success and sustainability.

[8] researched the use of project time management processes and the schedule performance of construction projects in Mexico. Through the study, he sought to assess the use of PTM processes and its relation to project schedule performance (i.e., timely completion). The results demonstrated there is statistical dependence between of project time management and successful project completion.

[9] studied Leadership behavior of project managers in sustainable construction projects. In their analysis, they sampled 70 project managers in eco-friendly building projects. The results exhibit that the leadership competencies of the project have a direct influence on the success criteria for sustainable buildings. Furthermore, the outcomes suggest that the intellectual competence of project managers represents play a significant role in lasting projects accomplishments.

[4] studied Project management knowledge and skills for green construction: Overcoming challenges. Among the skills studied in this study was leadership. The findings indicated that due to the complexity of IGB projects, leadership skills are critical to the success of these projects. The use of leadership skills and qualities by project managers are expected to sustain Intelligent Green Building projects to their successful delivery.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

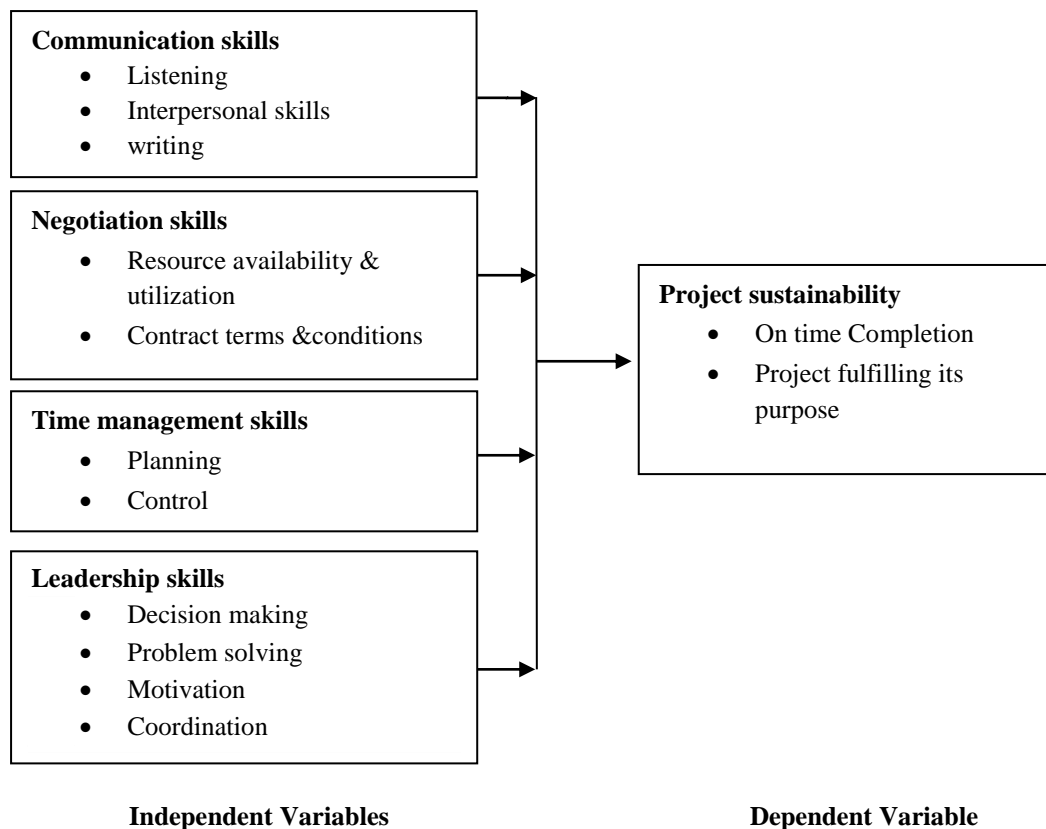


Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework

4. SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE OF EXISTING LITERATURE

The theoretical review included the resource-based view theory and development communication theory. The development communication theory points out the importance of communication skills for the success of any project. It holds that there can be no development without communication. On the other hand, the resource-based view theory points out the way human resources can be utilized to enhance the success and sustainability of projects.

Previous studies such as [6] all point out the important role played by communication skills, negotiations skills, time management skills, and leadership skills on the success and sustainability of projects. However, all these studies were done outside Kenya, and their focus was construction projects. Therefore, there is a need to fill the gap by conducting the study in Kenya and focus on other projects that are not necessarily construction in nature. Thus, this study will examine the role of project management soft skills on the sustainability of Enwealth financial services projects.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study will adopt an explanatory research design. The study aimed to examine the role of project management soft skills on the sustainability of Enwealth Financial Services projects. Therefore, the explanatory research design would be appropriate for the study. During this study, the population, comprised of all the 40 staff at Enwealth Financial Services. As the number of the population is small, every member of the population was studied. This included the high-level management, middle-level management, and supported staff. The researcher used a semi-structured questionnaire with both close-ended and open-ended questions to collect primary data from the respondents. The pilot study was conducted to ensure clarity and validity of the research instruments before being used in the actual study. The instruments were pilot tested on five employees working for Enwealth Financial Services. The data were analyzed and tabulated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences. Data presentation was done using frequency tables, pie charts, and bar graphs. Moreover, a multi-regression analysis to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables was conducted. A multi-regression analysis is a statistical method for determining the relationship between one dependent variable and one or more independent variables.

The equation for regression will be as shown below;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Whereby;

Y = Project Sustainability

B0 = Constant

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$, = Coefficients of determination

X1 = Communication skills

X2 = Negotiations skills

X3 = Time management skills

X4 = Leadership skills

ε = Error term

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate:

Forty (40) questionnaires were administered to the respondents, out of which 38 were filled properly and returned, representing a response rate of 95%.

Communication Skills

The study sought to establish the role of communication skills on project sustainability at Enwealth Financial Services. The findings revealed that 47.4 % agreed that clear communication among stakeholder before the commencement of any project and during its implementation enhance participation to a considerable extent. Another 47.4% of the respondents agreed that it enhance participation to a large extent while only 5.3 % who indicated that cooperation is increased to a moderate extent by clear communication. This implies that based on the majority, clear communication during a project leads to more participation.

The study results indicated that effective communication leads to mutual understanding among the stakeholders which strengthen project sustainability to a very large extent by 47.4 %, to a large extent by 47.4 % and to a moderate extent of the respondents. This is in support to the findings of the study by [6] who found that by facilitating mutual understanding and by building trust among stakeholders, communication becomes of critical value in fostering participation and strengthening a project's sustenance.

The study further revealed that the majority (57.9 %) were in agreement that Clear communications from the project manager encourage them to participate and ensure project success to a very large extent, while 36.8% noted that clear communication enhance project success to a large extent, and only 5.3 % who not that clear communication enhance project success to a moderate extents. Similarly, the majority were in agreement that listening skills, writing, and interpersonal skills are key to project sustainability. The findings were in line with previous studies in South Africa by [11] who found that the most important communication skills are decision making and problem-solving, listening, motivation, meetings, writing, team development and team building, and conflict management.

Negotiation skills

From the analysis, 55.3 % of the respondents agreed that negotiation skills help the project manager to secure resources that ensure project success to a very large extent. Additionally, a majority of them noted that negotiation skills influence project success to a large extent. This is a clear indication that the majority were for the position that negotiation skills are a crucial soft skill for managers to ensure project sustainability. Similarly, the majority of the respondents agreed that the project manager uses his negotiation skills to ensure that the contract terms and conditions are favorable for the success of the project, with half of them pointing to a very great extends and the great rest extents. The majority were also in agreement that Negotiations skills helped the project manager get the support of all stakeholders which enhance project

sustainability, with 57.9% citing to a great extent and the rest 42.1 to a very large extent. These findings were in support of previous studies by [1] who found that negotiation skills are one of the essential project management skills that enhance project success and sustainability.

Time Management Skills

The majority of the respondents (55.3%) were in agreement that time management skills enables the project manager to reduce waste and improves productivity hence enhances project sustainability to a very large extent. Furthermore, (44.7 %) noted that time management skills enhance project sustainability to a large extent. The majority of the respondents (52.6%) were in agreement that their project manager's planning skill has enabled their company to successfully implement many projects to a very large extent with the rest 47.4 citing to a large extent. Besides, a majority of 55.3% were in agreement that their projects manager's control skills had enabled them to totooversee each project to its successful implementation. The results emphasize the importance of time management skills in any project which is in support of findings of a previous study by [8] who found that there is statistical dependence between of project time management and successful project completion.

Leadership Skills

The findings of the study revealed that out of all the respondents, 44.7 % were in agreement that Decision-making skills influence project sustainability to a considerable extent. Additionally, 39.5% of the respondents thought that decision-making skills influence the viability of projects to a large extent, and 15.8% to a moderate extent. Majority of the respondents, (57.9%) were in agreement that problem-solving skills are crucial for project sustainability to a very large extent, 36.8% asserted relevance to a large area and 5.3 % to a moderate extent. The majority of the respondents (55.3%) were in agreement that project manager's motivation skills are crucial for project sustainability to a very large extent and 44.7% cited that motivation skills influence project sustainability to a large extent. Moreover, the majority of the respondents were in agreement to a considerable extent that coordination skills are essential in any projects and it enhances project sustainability while the rest 44.7% were in agreement to large extents coordination skills are crucial in any projects, and it enhances project sustainability. The results point out to the importance of leadership skills in projects success and durability and are I support to a previous study by [4] who found that leadership skills are critical to the success of the projects.

Project Sustainability

The findings revealed that communication skills, negotiation skills, time management skills, and leadership skills influence project sustainability to a considerable extent. The low variations in responses are evident from the low standard deviation of 0.3426.

Table 4.1:

Statement	Very small extent	Small extent	Moderate extent	Large extent	Very large extent	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication skills influence project sustainability	0	0	0	13.2	86.8	4.868	0.3426
Negotiation skills influence project sustainability	0	0	0	13.2	86.8	4.868	0.3426
Time management skills influence project sustainability	0	0	0	13.2	86.8	4.868	0.3426
Leadership skills influence project sustainability	0	0	0	13.2	86.8	4.868	0.3426

4.5 Correlation Analysis

The data presented before on project sustainability, communication skills, negotiation skills, time management skills, and leadership skills were computed into single variables per factor. Pearson's correlations analysis was then conducted at 95% confidence interval and 5% confidence level 2-tailed. Table 4.1 shows the correlation matrix between the factors

Table 4.2: Summary of Pearson's Correlations

		PS	CS	NS	TMS	LS
PS	Pearson Correlation	1	.015	-.056	.208	.206
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.927	.739	.211	.215
	N	38	38	38	38	38
CS	Pearson Correlation	.015	1	.046	.274	.017
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.927		.784	.096	.921
	N	38	38	38	38	38
NS	Pearson Correlation	-.056	.046	1	-.235	-.297
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.739	.784		.155	.070
	N	38	38	38	38	38
TMS	Pearson Correlation	.208	.274	-.235	1	.427**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.211	.096	.155		.008
	N	38	38	38	38	38
LS	Pearson Correlation	.206	.017	-.297	.427**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.215	.921	.070	.008	
	N	38	38	38	38	38

Key:

PS= Project sustainability; CS= Communication skills; NS=Negotiation skills; TMS =time management skills; and LS = leadership skills.

From table 4.2, there is a positive relationship between communication skills, time management skills, leadership skills and project sustainability of magnitude 0.015, 0.208, and 0.206 respectively. The fact that there is a positive relationship implies a positive correlation between the three independent variables (communication skills, time management skills, and leadership skills and the dependent variable project sustainability). However, there is a negative correlation between negotiation skills and project sustainability of magnitude 0.056.

Regression Analysis

In addition to correlation analysis, a multiple regression analysis was also conducted to test the relationship among independent variables, that is, communication skills negotiations skills, time management skills, and leadership skills. The coefficient of determination explains the extent to which changes in the dependent variable can be explained by the change in the independent variables or the proportion of variation in the dependent variable (project sustainability) that is explained by all the four independent variables communication skills, negotiation skills, time management skills, and leadership skills.)

Table 4.3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate
1	.248 ^a	.61	.52	1.40574

The four independent variables that were studied explain only 61% of project sustainability as represented by the R². This, therefore, implies that other factors not studied in this research contribute 39% of the project sustainability. Thus, further research should be conducted to investigate other factors (39%) that affect project sustainability.

Table 4.4: Coefficient of Estimate

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	13.031	6.498		2.005	.053
	CS	-.016	.090	-.032	-.182	.856
	NS	.041	.275	.027	.150	.882
	TMS	.269	.330	.161	.815	.421
	LS	.144	.190	.146	.757	.454

The Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between project sustainability and the four variables (communication skills, negotiations skills, time management skills, and leadership skills). Based on the SPSS generated table 4.4 above, the equation; $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon$ becomes;

$$Y = 13.031 - 0.016 X_1 + 0.041X_2 + 0.269X_3 + 0.144X_4 + \varepsilon$$

As per the regression equation established, when all factors, that is, communication skills, negotiations skills, time management skills, and leadership skills are held constant at zero, project sustainability would be 13.031. Besides, when all other independent variables are held at zero, a unit increase in communication skills will lead to a 0.016 decrease in project sustainability; a unit increase in negotiations skills would lead to a 0.041 increase in project sustainability, a unit increase in time management skills would lead to a 0.269 increase in project sustainability, and a unit increase in leadership skills would lead to a 0.144 increase in project sustainability.

7. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, soft skills such as communication skills, negotiation skills, time management skills, and leadership skills are important in ensuring project success and sustainability. The study established that effective communication skill influence project sustainability through enhancing stakeholder's participation, reducing resistance as it fosters mutual understanding. Therefore, it is concluded that communication skills play a great role in ensuring stakeholder participation and reduce resistance.

The study established that despite the fact negotiation skills have a negative correlation to project sustainability, it was found that negotiation skills enable the project manager to secure the required resources for a project as well as negotiating for the terms and condition of the contracts. It is, thus, concluded that negotiation skills play the role of resource mobilization and securing proper contracts that ensure project success.

The study further established that time management skills are crucial for project sustainability as it enables the project manager to minimize waste and improve project sustainability. Thus, it is concluded that time management skills play an essential role in reducing waste which enhances project sustainability.

The study also established that leadership skills including decision making, problem-solving, motivation, and coordination skills are crucial for project sustainability. Therefore, it is concluded that leadership skills play an important role in making a decision, solving problems, as well as coordination which helps in achieving project sustainability.

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