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SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNICATION AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT PROCESSES IN PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECTS

Abstract:

Literature reveals that clarity in communication and employing consistent process are critical for project managers to improve project performance. A limited number of studies focused on such critical factors affecting project performance. This study aims to investigate the significance of communication and project management processes in Public Sector projects. For this empirical study, cross sectional design was used to collect data collected from project managers working on projects in Pakistan. Data analysis indicates significant and positive influence of clarity in communication and employing consistent process on project performance. Findings imply that project managers with clarity in communication and establishing consistent processes have an important role in improving project performance and increasing organizational growth.

Keywords:

Clarity in communication, employ consistent processes, project manager, project performance.

JEL Classification: H83

1.   INTRODUCTION

According to the Standish Group International, there is a significant decline in project success rate from 34% in 2004 to 32% in 2009 [1]. Today, project failure is common [2] and many research efforts are aimed to develop theories for improving project performance. According to Hersey and Blanchard [3] no "best" leadership role exists, but effective project leaders establish connections between task and people relationship depending on circumstances to adopt particular role. A number of studies have shown the role of project manager as a critical factor to project success [4]. However, only a limited empirical studies examined the impact of clarity in communication and employing consistent process on project performance [5].

Project managers play an important role to motivate people for successful accomplishment of projects. A number of studies examined the influence of leadership competencies [6-9] and leadership styles [4, 10, 11] on project success or project performance, but limited research has been conducted to find the relationship between project manager's people-oriented leadership roles and project performance [5, 12, 13]. Project manager and their leadership role as project success factors require more research in future [4].

▪   This study aims to examine the impact of clarity in communication and employing consistent process on performance of projects.

The organization of this study is in the following manner. First, we discussed literature on clarity in communication and employing consistent processes. This is followed by research method and procedures for collection of data. Then, we present results of this study. We include the discussion presenting the main summary of findings. Finally, we present implications of the research results, limitations, and future research agenda.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Today, critical success factors are considered as common means for assessing project performance [14]. The features of the projects identified as essential for creating and achieving excellent results are referred to as critical success factors that act as barriers to overall successful outcomes; and their absence, may lead to larger problems [15]. The project managers must efficiently manage proper planning, implementation, and completion of the project [16] and all aspects of project leadership for progressing as a real leader including strategic, operational and human factors (Shenhar, 2004). Literature reveals that project leaders should influence the performance by inspiring the team members and changeling the status quo (Lunenburg, 2011). To benefit both the performing organization and the customer organization, communication channels should

be established among all key stakeholder by the project managers to integrate the project into a wider scheme of things[17].

A number of project success factors have been identified by the earlier studies focusing on effective communication among team members and all other key stakeholders as well as the ability to handle unexpected problems. Communication is considered an important enabling factor [18] and a critical factor for project success [19, 20]. Weiss [21] identified different drivers and barriers to project success where drivers include efficient project leaders and project teams with ability to manage problems and articulate solutions, and barriers include poorly defined processes and communication. The clear and timely communication has significant impact while establishing the project mission and achieving its objectives, but ineffective communication may lead to scope creep that leads to unnecessary cost and schedule overrun and customer dissatisfaction.

The project leader must possess excellent communication capabilities, which create harmony among team members and facilitate efficient stakeholder involvement. Stakeholder management is possible through effective and efficient communication from the project leadership. The communication directly influences the performance of projects [22] and close communication is important to success for fast track project [19]. Much of the high level success is based on rich project communications which encourage effective and sustainable working relationship towards project success [23].

A process is a collection of interrelated tasks or actions taken to achieve specific results. Project managers follow project management processes of initiation, planning, execution, monitor and control, and close out where project management facilitate in project activities through "the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to meet the project activities" [24]. Project Management Institute (PMI), recognizing the role of well defined processes and practices in repeated success of project management, developed the Project Management Book of Knowledge (PMBOK), an ANSI standard for managing projects. Rad and Anantatmula [25] identified three factors – competent people, project teams, and project-friendly organizations that promote consistent and promising practices and process – as necessary to achieve sophistication in managing projects.

The project leader must ensure appropriate selection and deployment of consistent project management process during project implementation that would improve performance efficiency, risk mitigation, ambiguity reduction, repeated success of projects. However, required inputs, outputs, and tool and techniques involved in project management processes must be followed in spirit. Like defining roles and responsibilities, developing consistent project processes is one of the most important steps for successfully leading and managing the projects which lay the foundation for project managers to establish clear communication and consistent processes [5].

Traditional dimensions of project performance include time, cost, and scope quality [26-30]; time and cost are not sufficient to measure project performance [14]. Project stakeholder's expectations is another dimension of project performance like quality performance [31, 32]. Andersen, et al. [33] determined methods used to plan, control, and organize the project as pitfalls. Wateridge [34] noted that the project is considered lucrative in the perspective of sponsor/owner/contractor on successful achievement of its business objectives in three ways, i.e. tactically, operationally, and strategically: achieve its defined objective; achieve quality threshold; meet specifications, complete within budget and on time. As a result, all stakeholders including users, sponsors, and project team are satisfied during the project and with the project outcomes.

H1:   A significant relationship exists between clarity in communication and project performance.

H2:   A significant relationship exists between employ consistent processes and project performance.

3.   METHODS AND FINDINGS

An online survey was circulated to collect data from the participants of the study. The questionnaire was designed to gather data for measurement of clarity in communication, employ consistent processes, and project performance. Project managers and project management professionals were chosen to participate in the study and the sample for the study encompasses the projects across Pakistan. The participants of the study were professionals working on projects who possesses academic qualifications such as degrees, certifications, and/or trainings in the field of project management.

A five-point Likert scale ("1=strongly disagree", "2=disagree", "3=neutral', "4=agree", and '5=strongly disagree") was used to measure the dimensions of project manager's leadership role. Six questions were adapted from PMI [35] and Dulewicz and Higgs [36] to measures clarity in communication; four questions were adapted from Kwak and Ibbs [37] to measure employ consistent processes. To measure project performance, questions were adapted from Pinto and Slevin [38], Larson and Gobeli [39], Müller and Turner [40], Keller [41], and Yang, et al. [4]. The reliability values measured through Cronbach's alpha was above the threshold of 0.70 for all variables.   Guidelines of Hair, et al. [42] were used to test the research hypothesis to investigate the relationship between clarity in communication, employ consistent processes and project performance.

The regression analysis shows that employ consistent processes explained significant variance in project performance, as evident from ΔF-value of 68.454 (p <.001). Employ consistent processes indicated positive and highly significant value of standardized Beta (β=.439, p <.001). Clarity in communication has significant strong positive relationship

with schedule performance (r=.453, p <0.01), cost performance (r=.401, p <0.01), quality performance (r=.533, p<0.01), and stakeholder satisfaction (r=.555, p <0.01). Clarity in communication indicated positive and highly significant of standardized Beta (β=.474, p<.001). Clarity in communication also explained 33.5 percent variance in project performance as evident from ΔF-value of 146.084 (p <.001).

This study significantly contributes to the theory on clarity in communication, employ consistent processes, and project performance. Project managers should focus to improve project performance and senior management should lead the role to develop and train competent project managers for successful delivery of project outcomes. In particular, these leadership roles of project managers will contribute to enhance project efficiency. The study will help the practitioners to learn about various leadership roles and skills for improving project performance. The employer will also get benefit in the selection of the project managers possessing desired leadership skills who can ensure project success. Further research should be conducted in other countries and industries for greater generalizability of this study, which may also consider to test the influence of potential moderator and mediator variables. Future studies may use PLS methods by using formative and reflective parameters. More research is required to identify related roles of project manager's leadership.

4.   CONCLUSION

This study was limited to data collection from Pakistan. Therefore, replication of this study in developed and emerging countries at specific industry, sector, or country level might produce sophisticated results to validate this model. Second, the findings are confined to a single point in time which is another typical limitation. Thus, a longitudinal study may be fruitful to gain an in-depth understanding of different project manager's leadership roles. This study shows significant and positive influence of clarity in communication and employs consistent processes to achieve desired project performance. Project managers can use these findings to improve project performance and their presence in the respective organizations. Findings provide critical insights for academicians and practitioners to improve project performance, organizational performance and organizational growth at industry, sector or country levels.

5.   REFERENCES

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