

Assessing the Influence of Project Success Factors (PSFs) on Project Performance among Organizations

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Abstract

The demand for project effectiveness in its early phase to enhance the success rate is increasing among project management professionals. Several success factors had been studied in the last decades to determine the issue of project success. However, the practice of determining the success of a project based exclusively on the criteria of time, cost, and quality is no longer relevant and deemed out-dated.

Index terms— project success factors (PSFs), project success, project management

1 Introduction

Project management is widely acknowledged as the most critical tool and technique used to achieve the strategic goals of organizations. Since last decades, a great discussions have been carried out on the issue of project success, and it is currently one of the most researched topics in the project management field (Cooke-Davies, 2000; Turner & Serrador, 2015; Anantamula & Rad, 2018; Serrador & Reich, 2018; Müller, 2019). As time goes by, the conventional measurement of project success has always focused on tangibles, and traditionally based on whether it achieved time, cost, and quality specifications (Turner & Zolin, 2012; Anantamula & Rad, 2018).

However, current thinking measure the overall success of the project about how well the project achieves its strategic goals, and the degree of satisfaction of its stakeholders (Turner & Serrador, 2015; Sperry & Jetter, 2019). The high prevalence of using projects in various fields determines the increasing importance of project management, and consequently, the concept of successful project management refers to the effective integration, planning, organizing, reporting, monitoring, and controlling all aspects of the project which are vested to an individual or group within the organization (Cleland, 1999; Gauthier & Ika, 2012; Esterfeld, 2003).

As the term "success" differs considerably among scholars (Ika et al., 2001; Gauthier & Ika, 2012; Oslin & Muller, 2015). The overall project success is a much wider concept than the conventional "Triple Constraint," "Golden Triangle," "Triangle of Virtue," or the "Holy Trinity" criteria of time, cost, and quality/scope. For instance, there are several projects that have been completed within the expected time, cost, and quality, but still considered as unsuccessful; while there are also many other projects that have exceeded their initial time, budget, scope, and quality specifications, but ultimately viewed as successful. This paradox and interpretations of what constitutes success led to various dimensions of project success. It revealed that there is no single conventional measurement of project success (Pinto & Slevin, 1988; Ika et al., 2001; Jugdev & Muller, 2005; Davis, 2017).

Moreover, the assessment of project success can vary based on the types, size, and scope of the projects. Over the triple constraint, the most well-known Project Success Factors (PSFs) that often affect project success include: project mission, top management support, project schedule and plan, stakeholders' satisfaction, effective communication and procurement, monitoring and feedback, qualification of project managers, troubleshooting, etc. (Pinto & Slevin, 1988; Cleland, 1999; Bryde, 2005; Müller & Turner, 2007; Erzner, 2009; Oslin & Muller, 2015; Badewi, 2016).

Furthermore, project success factors are considered as all the elements that are needed to form a context where project managers can deliver their projects successfully (Ika et al., 2011; Khang & Moe, 2008; Struyk, 2007). However, it is becoming more challenging to identify a set of PSFs that are common to every type of project. In that respect, different models of critical success factors were developed through project management literature (Pinto & Slevin, 1988; Esterfeld, 2003; Ryde, 2003; Lewis, 2006). And it was found that the connection

47 between the research on project success criteria and Project Success Factors (PSFs) was the most effective way
48 to establish a successful project management framework (longer-term outcome). Researches on project success
49 factors identified different levers that project managers can employ to enhance the likelihood of project success
50 ??Pinto & Slevin 1988; ??ooke-Davies, 2002; ??e Lone et al., 2003). Those approaches have emerged by grouping
51 PSFs as a set; instead of focusing on a few factors alone. Thus, the current theoretical framework provides
52 interaction between different groups of factors associated with the project success. The method involves the
53 relationship between project planning, top management support, and project success ??Nguyen & Wong (2009).

54 Accordingly, this study investigates the influence of project success factors, namely project planning and
55 top management support on project performance. Hopefully, the findings would provide for project managers,
56 members, suppliers, sponsors, committees, or task forces an advanced technique and tool for successful project
57 initiating, planning, tracking, monitoring, and controlling within organizations.

58 2 II.

59 3 Literature Review a) Theoretical Framework

60 The issue of delivering a successful project in a dynamic environment had been recognized in the project
61 management literature (Collyer & Warren, 2009; Killen & Petit, 2012). As project management is relatively
62 a growing discipline, the concept of project success is ever open to interpretation and debate among project
63 management scholars. As a result, this study developed a simple theoretical framework to investigate the influence
64 of project planning and top management support on project success the review showed how each approach would
65 be integrated and unified with the objectives of the present study, and how they would improve the likelihood of
66 project success. The theoretical framework of this study involved two popular management theories, especially
67 the Theory of Constraints (TOC) and the multidimensional theory of top management as follow:

68 ? Theory of Constraint (TOC)

69 The primary role of project managers in a successful project is managing properly the constraints attached to
70 the project (Kishira, 2018). Traditionally, project success was measured using the "triple constraints" of time,
71 cost, and scope/quality (Müller & Jugdev, 2012). These critical factors are mutually dependent, and therefore,
72 a change in one will have a resultant effect on at least one other part.

73 The Theory of Constraint (TOC) is used to track the project plan, to manage the limited resources, and to
74 keep the scope within the specifications (Steyn, 2002; ??ammad & Ryan, 2018). TOC helps to identify project
75 risks, to enhance its social development and improve its technical requirements. ??leland et al. (2009) reported
76 that organizations should focus more on performing the project plan and to identify the major constraints that
77 prevent the project from success. Also, Johansen et al. (2006) argued that detailed project planning would
78 not predict the constraint-based problems accurately (delays, overbilling, or changes in scope); instead, it would
79 bring the process up by improving the efficiency of each phase of the project. Moreover, the application of TOC,
80 as mentioned by Rand (2000), needs a supportive organizational policy, sufficient resource availability, and a
81 realistic project timeline as it includes a sequence of progressive enhancement of project situations. The objective
82 is to explore the weakest links in the project management plan and apply the proper strategy to deal with those
83 constraints.

84 The method of TOC is employed throughout the project life cycle on project planning to reduce potential
85 delays, cost overrun, and change in scope as reported in PMBOK Guide (PMI, 2013). In the initiation, planning,
86 and execution phase, project managers can minimize uncertainties and risks by using prior techniques and
87 strategies which have been successful in the past. Then, the challenges for project managers during each stage
88 would be to keep project cost, schedule, or specifications on the track and to implement any corrective actions
89 to address issues. The technique will be a continual process improvement until the closing stage where the final
90 review of the project and documentation of "experience learned" is conducted (Cleland, 1999; ??and, 2000; ??ari
91 & Siboro, 2019).

92 Furthermore, the approach of TOC provides a comprehensive solution to address the issue of delays during the
93 project execution. The solution involves a realistic and solid project planning, effective tasks execution process,
94 adequate methodology for operations, and good control procedures for the overall performance of the project
95 (Momanyi & Sang, 2019). As the main objectives of this study is to investigate the impact of project success
96 factors on project success, the application of TOC will be the way of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of
97 the project. ?? Additionally, through the literature of project management, we found a number of TOC research
98 as applied theory (Izmailov & Kozhemiakin, 2016; Thürer & Stevenson, 2018). And likewise, this current review
99 demonstrates that the essence of using the TOC approach in improving the performance of project is relevant,
100 and its contribution in the optimization of project planning processes is vital to achieve the strategic goals of the
101 project, to estimate the entire completion time of the project, to control, and keep the ongoing project plan on
102 track (Steyn, 2002). The support of senior management is determinant to ensure success; in contrast, the lack
103 of support from the top management may also constitute one of the primary causes of project failure ??Zwikael,
104 2008).

105 As this study adopted Boostra (2013) multidimensional theory of top management, with the dimensions of
106 resources provided, structural arrangements, communication, power, and expertise, top management support
107 reveals to be a fundamental project success factor (Zwikael, 2008; Shao & Hu, 2016). The basic principles

108 of this integrated approach are system adaptation, improving organizational effectiveness, effective controlling
109 procedures, implementing organizational change, and strengthening the stakeholder's support and involvement
110 (Boonstra, 2013).

111 The support from the top management is fundamental for the project team in achieving project goals
112 (Crawford, 2009; Liu & Chua, 2015; Ali & Israr, 2018). Through the functional structure of organizations,
113 top management facilitates an adequate team formulation, resource allocating, and successful project delivering
114 (Belassi & Tukel, 1996). Senior managers should establish and perform an appropriate project implementation
115 process, procedures, and structures in that respect.

116 Similarly, top management support is essential in a successful project. The theory had been consistently
117 deployed to deal with the project team to achieve project goals. (Chen & Popovich 2003;Boonstra, 2013). From
118 this point of view, top management should keep regular communication lines with various groups of stakeholders,
119 promote the company-wide acceptance, practice incentive support toward the project team, and manage potential
120 organizational changes (Boonstra, 2013).

121 Practical top management support is the foundation of successful project execution. Project managers in
122 providing structural arrangement, power, and authority, financial and human resources are then contributing
123 unquestionably to project success (Morgan, 2012). Top managers use their power to influence the project, protect
124 the team members, facilitate the potential system changes, and identify the needs, roles, and responsibilities of
125 project stakeholders

126 4 b) Hypotheses Development

127 The development of hypotheses aims to highlight the relationship between constructs involved in the study, as
128 well as to establish their influence on project performance in order to improve the likelihood of project success.
129 Therefore, the following hypothese are formulated:

130 5 i. Project Planning and Porject Performance

131 Project planning had gained great attention in previous studies as critical success factors associated with project
132 success among organizations (Cleland, 1999;Dvir et al., 2003 Iyer and Jha, (2006) conducted another study
133 on planning performance in Indian construction projects; they found that factors such as the commitment of
134 different project stakeholders, support of project owners, and competence of project teams in planning were
135 regarded as factors contributing significantly to project success. They also revealed that adopting proactive
136 scheduling with realistic programs and a practical open communication approach is critical in planning and help
137 to achieve the project's goals. Moreover, Snoo et al. (2011) assessed the factors impacting project success
138 from a planning perspective and the number of stakeholders. They found that project schedules did not seem
139 to be adequately considered by both project managers and their planners, as many criteria were dismissed while
140 developing and implementing a project plan. The authors developed a measurement framework on scheduling
141 performance, and they categorized the factors affecting planning performance into four main groups: factors
142 focused on the schedule outcomes, factors focused on the scheduling process, indirect scheduling performance
143 factors, and influencing factors.

144 Consequently, Wang (2008) and King et al. (1986) examined different factors influencing project planning
145 processes within organizations, especially factors causing delay during the planning and implementation phase.
146 They revealed that changes in the requirements of project stakeholders, ineffective scope definition, and an
147 ambiguous initial or outline plan were the top factors causing delay to a project. Dvir et al. (2003) developed the
148 relationship between project success and project planning from the view of project stakeholders. They reported
149 that stakeholders have a significant impact on project planning procedures and adequate identification of key
150 stakeholders since the first milestone of planning is fundamental to deliver a successful project.

151 The application of the project plan and practice was previously discussed in the project management context,
152 and the main objective of planning was then to ensure that the project work was implemented as originally
153 planned. It means to define goals adequately, to identify tasks, to monitor progress, and to provide the
154 basic foundation for measuring success throughout the project lifecycle as stated by (Ahuja & Thiruvengadam,
155 2004;Baldwin & Bordoli, 2014).

156 Moreover, according to Cleland (1986), the connection between project planning efforts and project success is
157 based on three aspects: project requirements, technical specifications, and management processes or procedures.
158 This idea was supported and developed by (Dvir et al., 2003). In their different studies, they found a
159 positive connection between the three requirements and project success. They explained that project managers,
160 contracting officers, or the end-users explore project planning requirements with the perspective of the final
161 results of the project. So although planning does not ensure the success of a project, a lack of planning could
162 lead to its direct failure Cleland, (1986).

163 Accordingly, the positive relationship between project planning and project success had been established in the
164 project management field ??Wang and Haga, 2008); Dvir and Shenhar, 2003). The effort invested in the project
165 planning phase and the degree of performance achieved, determine whether or not the project was successful. The
166 project stakeholders will judge success by asking whether or not project goals were completed within the planned
167 specifications (Andreas, 2016). However, a project plan in advance cannot overcome all unforeseen events, risks,

168 or uncertainties, but having a plan with threats is still better than getting any plan. Thus, the main challenge
169 for project managers remains their ability and aptitude to keep the project plan on track, within the time and
170 budget, and quality (Baldwin & Bordoli, 2014). As a result, keeping in view these relationships and alongside
171 the literature review, the following hypothesis is proposed:

172 Hypothesis 1: Project planning has a significant and positive effect on project performance among organiza-
173 tions.

174 6 ii. Top Management Support and Project Performance

175 The present study adopted the function of top management established by Boonstra (2013) as an instrument
176 to examine the relationship between top management support and project performance. The top management
177 support theory developed by Boonstra (2013) through exploratory research identified top management support
178 as a multidimensional construct. Relatively, many studies found that top management support is among critical
179 success factors ??ester, 1998; ??hittaker, 1999; ??wikael & Globerson, 2004;Johnson et al., 2001;Boonstra, 2013).

180 The previous literature on project management revealed that top management support contributes highly to
181 project success ??wikael & Globerson, 2004;Johnson et al., 2001). Belassi and Tukul (1996) have mentioned
182 that most of the critical success factors are quite different across industries, but top management support is still
183 the most relevant, and common success factors within organizations. It means that the more top management
184 support is practiced in the organization, the higher the level of success will be.

185 Moreover, the demographic profile such as position, experiences, personality, leadership, or attitude of project
186 executive would ensure project success, but unfortunately, few studies had been written about these questions.
187 Baccarini and Collins (2003); Bryde and Robinson, (2005) reported that success criteria vary across industries.
188 And with limited time and resources, it is essential to identify effective top management support procedures that
189 are specific to each project or industry.

190 Top management commitment is a crucial enabler for successful project implementation. Senior management
191 support is essential for setting up the vision, mission, goals, strategies, and integration of the project within the
192 organizations . Top managers are critical to the project success when they are highly supportive in providing
193 sufficient human, material, and financial resources to the project team (Young & Poon 2013).

194 Additionally, top management support is the degree to which senior managers understand the importance of
195 the project's purpose and the extent to which they are willing to achieve it.

196 7 Conclusion

197 The primary concern of project management is to improve its conceptual and theoretical foundations. Therefore,
198 this paper provided the review of the literature to show the relationship between Project Success Factors (PSFs)
199 and project performance. Through the literature, we found a positive impact of PSFs namely, project planning
200 and top management support on project success. The empirical review concludes that project planning and top
201 management support have a significant influence on successful projects. The finding are significant in providing
202 more detailed information regarding the concept of successful project management. Consequently, the finding
203 would assist project managers, team and employees as well as the general public in gaining a better perspective
204 of project management. Also, The study would be useful in identifying critical success factors in a way that can
205 be reflected positively on the project performance. Finally, findings of this study would help in developing new
206 techniques and tools to fill the gap in the relevant literatures in improving the project delivery performance.

207 8 Global

Figure 1:

Figure 2:

208 1 2 3

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? Multidimensional Theory of Top Management

The

management refers to the development of project managers' skills to ensure project success properly.

Project success is broadly discussed in project management literature (Pinto and Slevin, 1988; Cooke-Davis, 2002; Serrador & Reich, 2018; Zuo & Nguyen, 2018). Researchers identified various success factors influencing projects, among which top management support is considered as one of the most critical (Pinto and Slevin, 1988; Ziemba & Ob?ak, 2013

multidimensional

Figure 3:

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