INFLUENCE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON PERFORMANCE OF PROJECTS IN UNILEVER KENYA LTD

Keziah C. Magagan.
Department of Management Science, School of Business, Kenyatta University, Kenya
Dr Lucy Ngugi.
Department of Management Science, School of Business, Kenyatta University, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Project performance is crucial to all stakeholders. Project failure is rated to be very high with about 50% of projects proven to have failed in Africa. Most projects start well, with perfectly good intentions. Project management is accomplished through the application and integration of the project management processes of initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing. Project management has evolved over time, becoming the principal mean of dealing with change in modern organizations. Best practices have occurred as a result of business evolution and of practicing project management at a global level. The main objective of the study was to examine influence of the project management practices on project's performance of Unilever Company in Nairobi County, Kenya. Four specific objectives were used, namely: to determine the effect of risk management practices on project's performance, to establish the effect of communication practices on project's performance, to examine the effect of stakeholder management practices on project's performance and to assess the effect of leadership practices on project's performance. The research utilized modern portfolio theory, system theory, path-goal theory and stakeholders' theory. Descriptive research design was adopted in this research Census was used in the study and data was collected using semi-structured questionnaire. The study findings show that project risk management have a positive influence on project performance. Further, Project communication positively influences project performance. Project leadership have a positive influence on project performance. Moreover, Project stakeholder management influence project performance positively. The study recommends that the organization conducts comprehensive risk management using a complete risk management framework. It should also create a 'we' feeling in the projects for all stakeholders. Contingent reward may also be applied by the Unilever in the projects. Aspects such as courtesy, competence and responsiveness should be well facilitated.

Key words: **Communication Practices, Leadership Practices, Project management, Project management practices, Project performance, Project, Risk Management Practices, Stakeholder Management Practices**

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

A project is a short-term endeavor to accomplish some specific objectives in a defined time. Projects may vary considerably in duration and size, including a large group of people or small numbers in various parts of an organization who can be working in different countries. The anticipated results are exceptional and will never recur even though many of the activities are common to different projects (Young, 2013). Projects represent a substantial proportion of the productive effort of enterprises in every industrial sector. A recent study of

fifteen enterprises estimated that their combined annual expenditure on projects exceeds USD 15 billion. Projects lie at the heart of human economic activity and it follows that any improvements that can be made to the practice of managing of projects will have a significant effect of the output of all wealth creation in advanced industrial or post-industrial societies, (Cooke-Davies, 2016).

Most projects are made for the organization branding purpose and hence implementing corporate strategy. Project's main beneficiaries are the stakeholders that are directly linked with the project. Immediate stakeholders have the capabilities that can be utilized in the entire project through participatory project management to ensure success (Hillson, 2014). The today's highly competitive global economy demands that businesses complete new projects, services and business developments on time and within budget. This requires project managers to fuel much of the successful development by delivering projects that have consistent value. Successful implementation of projects should remain at the forefront of project manager's objectives (Cappels, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

Time taken to fully complete a project is key in defining its success which is dependent on the decisions made by managers concerning project risk management and desired results (Seddon, 2014). The success of any project is also impacted by the control and management exercised in the planning and orientation phases. Chovichien and Nguyen, 2013). However, success in project management is an abstract concept subject to complex metrics. Han et al. (2012) observed that lack of a predefined guidelines to approve a project as successful primary inhibits evaluation of the success in a project.

In most cases, the outcomes of projects do not meet the felt needs or if they do, such needs are not sustainable; even in cases where expenditure of billions of shillings is allocated for development projects, (Wysocki, 2011). According to the World Bank, the rate of project's failure in African countries was over 50% by the year 2016, (Kwak, 2015). In most cases World Bank projects fail to achieve the set goals because of problems that are associated with managerial and organizational factors. Managerial and organizational factors can further be broken down into poor stakeholder management, poor coordination and cost overruns, imperfect project design, delays during project implementation and delays between project identification and start-up (Gunawan & Ahsan, 2010).

In the research done there exist gaps in the results where most of researchers focus on project management in general without clearly identifying the practices themselves and how they influence project performance. In some cases, researchers only concentrate on one aspect of the practices limiting the contribution of other practices on project performance. Risk management as one of management practices has been researched on, showing the decision processes and project performance without focusing on other practices (Caiza, 2010; NRC, 2014; Khan & Zsidisin, 2011). Research has been done on communication, leadership and stakeholder practices however most researchers show how poor communication, poor

leadership and poor stakeholder management leads to project's failure without showing impact of specific practices, (Campbell & Cohost, 2014). Laufer et al, (2017) and Yang (2010) did a study independently providing a weak argument on the relationship between project management practices on the performance of the project hence the driving force for this study. It related four project management practices and project performance in order to promote good project management practices that help in the achievement of expected project's outcomes. The practices that this study focused on are risk management practices, communication practices, leadership practices and stakeholders' management practices.

Objective of the Study

The objective was to ascertain the effect of project management practices on projects performance at Unilever Company Kenya Ltd.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The theories used in this study were modern portfolio theory, system theory, path-goal theory and stakeholders' theory.

Modern Portfolio Theory

Portfolio theory was postulated by Harry M. Markowitz in 1952 which was concern with optimization of investment when selecting investment based on risk potentiality of each portfolio. According to the theory, risk-averse investors can create portfolios to enhance the anticipated yield founded on a given level of market risk. It emphasizes that risk is an inherent part of higher reward. The theory is relevant in that it helps project managers in decision of which projects to venture into through evaluation of risks by formulation of sound risk strategies.

Tsuma and Gichinga (2016) suggested that it is model of decision determination within a number of factors such as rate of return, risk associated and the size of the portfolio. The portfolio model is a decision -making tool that would evaluate choices between different projects in order to reduce risk. Ng'ang'a (2015) argued that it enables diversification of risk in financial management of the firm. It then spreads the risk factor in different project tasks to enable the project manager reduce the risk. It is one of the risk management technique used in managing financial related risk. It enables the investors to design an optimal portfolio to maximize return on projects by taking on a quantifiable amount of risk.

Systems Theory

Hegel in 1968 built up the theory in nineteenth century to clarify advancement of dynamic procedures. Marx and Darwin used the same hypothetic argument in their bio work. The theory borrows most of the knowledge from Bertalanffy in 1928 in the field of general

framework hypothesis. Gerald and Phil (2014) characterize the theory to contain input, processing and output mimicking the structure of organism systems. This can then be applied to any organizational based system having input, processing subsystem and output mechanism.

Systems theory suggests the importance of the social, communicative context. With this theory, communication does not happen in isolation, but rather necessitates a communication system; the smallest of which must contain at least two members. It creates a coherent and workable approach but not exhaustive approach. The basic principles of the theory are; wholeness, openness and hierarchical order. It suggests that anything done by individual impacts others. The theory assumes that it is the interaction of the participants that makes organization what they are.

This theory is applicable in this study since Systems Theory can be applied to Project Management and how it helps to deal with project complexity. In particular, it starts with a general description of the Systems Theory, from the definition of a system to the development of the system thinking in project performance. It is not clear if engineering systems constitute a new discipline with theorems and frameworks that could be applied to every type of project performance.

Path-Goal Theory

The theory was postulated in 1971 and revised in 1996 by Robert House in Ohio State University. The theory states that the behavior of a leader is contingent to the performance, motivation and satisfaction of the subordinates. The revised version argues that leaders involve in behaviors that complement subordinates' abilities and compensate for their deficiencies. The theory is also known as path-goal theory of leader effectiveness and is associated to transaction leadership theory (Evans, 1974).

The theory points the importance of leaders to concentrate on the goal rather than their own interests. For a project to be a success, a leader who is visionary is chosen since they can concentrate on the big vision of the entire project and hence goal-orient view. Success of a project is also attributed to the leadership role of the project manager and with a strong project leader there is high chance of success as compared to having a good team but weak leader.

Stakeholders Theory

Freeman postulated the theory in 1984. According to the theory, stakeholder is a group or individual who affect or is affected by the achievements of the organizations objectives. Friedman (2014) argued that the interests, needs and viewpoints of the stakeholders should be involved in the decision process and execution of projects. Stakeholders' management is to be carried out by the managers of the firms from top management to the responsible project

manager. Hence the project manager should shoulder the view of each stakeholder and should consider their interest for the success of the project.

This enables the project managers appreciate involvement of stakeholders in projects and consider them as valuable in their own rights. Through the theory, relationships between stakeholders are considered which leads to more appropriate project organization hence boosting project's success (Silvius & Tharp, 2013). The stakeholder management practices are considered important practices for the success of the organization objective.

Project Management Competency Theory

The competence philosophy advanced through McBer and Mclelland from the 80s described competence as the characteristic that enable an individual to perform exceptionally in a situation. It is a "cluster of interrelated skills, attitudes, personal traits and knowledge that propels and enables individuals to perform uniquely". Competency is a relative skill subject to training and development yet very significant in determining performance (PMI, 2011).

TOC related to this study by charting technical and contextual skills and competences project managers should possess to deliver road projects within budgeted costs, on time, of desired quality and within scope (Clist & Morrisey, 2011). Supervision and enhanced competence among project management teams in the wake of the new technological era is also insisted.

Project Risk Management Practices and Project Performance

According to Kinyua, Ogollah and Mburu (2015) in the research on effect of risk management strategies on project management made on ICT enterprises in Nairobi Kenya, a positive relationship was found to exist between risk management strategies and performance of small scale ICT enterprises. The enterprises identified risk sources, quantified and developed risk reduction policies to mitigate the effect of the risk. This was based on descriptive design with population of 48 ICT SMEs in Nairobi. Census was considered appropriate since the target population was small. The study concluded that project risk management was influenced by risk evaluations, information and mitigation strategies used to ensure that risks are minimized in software development. The assessment on the risk found that most ICT enterprises prefer avoiding risk, communicate on risk facing the enterprises and assessing time available to reduce the risk enabling success in web designing.

Robert (2016) did a study by consulting the top management in the Port of Melbourne which is one of the largest container ports in Australia in 2014 to examine how to manage risks successfully. The port carried out a channel deepening project, the project based in Lake Victoria was one of critical and largest maritime. It involved deepening Philip bay to allow larger vessels to dock in the port. The project started in February 2014 and was accomplished at 2014 just one month more than expected period. The project budget was $969 million where the amount used was less by $200 million. The project's risk was given as $137 million which the cost savings allow the project to risk to be covered by the managed cost

saving. POM Corporation which was involved in the project ensured a good planning phase with all factors considered. It was also audited for any risk as result of changes in cost and scope along the project. This allowed adjustment of risk contingency plan for the project. Victoria Auditor General Office was involved in audits and in their findings most businesses were compliant with guidelines provided through stakeholder consultants. The executive general manager of the project noted that understanding the project's scope and its risks was critical to the POM Corporation in developing robust project controls and effective risk management strategies which ultimately led to well-managed successful outcome.

According to Zwikael and Ahn (2016), the effectiveness of risk management is pegged on the importance of understanding the project context, considering the industry's and country's levels of project risk. The authors highlight that even moderate levels of risk management planning will play a significant role in reducing the negative effects of risk on project success. The inefficiencies in the risk identification process in complex projects contribute greatly in the failure of projects. According to their findings, the manner in which this process is carried out often fails to identify events and circumstances that challenge project performance.

Communication practices and Preject performance

Campbell and Cohost, (2014) did a survey in MCA an international company by conducting a series of workshops for project managers for an oilfield services company with locations literally all over the globe in 2014. 500 project managers who represented over thirty countries were asked to assess what made projects successful and what caused others to fail. From the findings, number one success factor was communication. More details showed that when communications are strong among the project team members and between the project team and the customers within energy companies, the projects were always successful and poor communications contributed to project's failure.

Vital Smarts Magazine showed that 70% of 10,000 projects in Fortune 500 firms showed failures as result of not communicating problems with the project which affected the quality, schedules and cost of the project. Another survey by the same group focused on Information Technology projects, reporting problems in communication. Bull conducted a study in 2014 on project's success in one of the manufacturing companies in the UK and found out that 57% of project failures resulted from poor communications among stakeholders. Another study by Prewitt in Britain identified several contributors to the IT leadership failure, most of which directly relate to communication failure (Kliem, 2014).

Lofgren (2016) did an investigation on a construction site, North of Stockholm in an attempt to find out how ICT could improve communication management for construction projects. He carried out the study in 2016 for half a year on regular basis through direct observations, interviews and document analysis. In his research he observed that production managers and construction supervisors are needed on site to coordinate work, make inspections, conduct environment and safety rounds and to document and follow up ongoing and completed

construction work. His findings showed that ICT-based business systems, communication tools and shared storage servers are important for improved communication for construction projects since construction sites environment involves a tight time schedule

Project Leadership Practices and Project Performance

In 2014, the International Centre for complex project management conducted a global round table series titled The Conspiracy of Optimism in order to determine why mega projects fail. Through qualitative approach, the results indicated that complex project managers are faced with lack of appropriate tools and programs delivery leaders. It was noted that the problem lies in overcoming uncertainty in increasing social, organizational and innovation dynamics and time of delivery. Recommendation from the study was that the project leaders must recognize nowadays that transformational shift from non-informative to interlinked information age. There is need for skills from project teams' that is needed in order to improve the performance in an increasing complex and competitive environment (Remington, 2011).

Using a research based on responses of 500 project leaders from different manufacturing organizations in UK, Dennis and Jeffrey (2016) have provided useful insights to project leadership. The study was done in 2016 in order to investigate the most appropriate leadership style for successful project managers. The authors found out that situational or contingency approach has a positive impact on project performance as no style fits all situations. The results also showed that the successful manager should be flexible by matching ones leadership style to the circumstances facing them.

A study was carried out by Prakash (2016) between 1994 and 2016 in order to analyze the importance of project leadership and team related factors in achieving project success on 153 projects across 28 nations. It was a two-phase study in which 46 projects were studied in phase 1reprersenting 14 nations and 107 projects were examined in phase 2 originating from 14 nations. Representatives from all the nations were interviewed to help the researcher achieve his objectives. The researcher found out that leadership behaviors are flexible and leadership styles should be altered in different circumstances/situations. It was clear that successful project managers employ a great deal of flexibility in their use of leadership approaches. The results also showed that relationship-oriented project managers are abler to leverage the transformational leadership approach.

Stakeholder Mmanagement practices and project performance

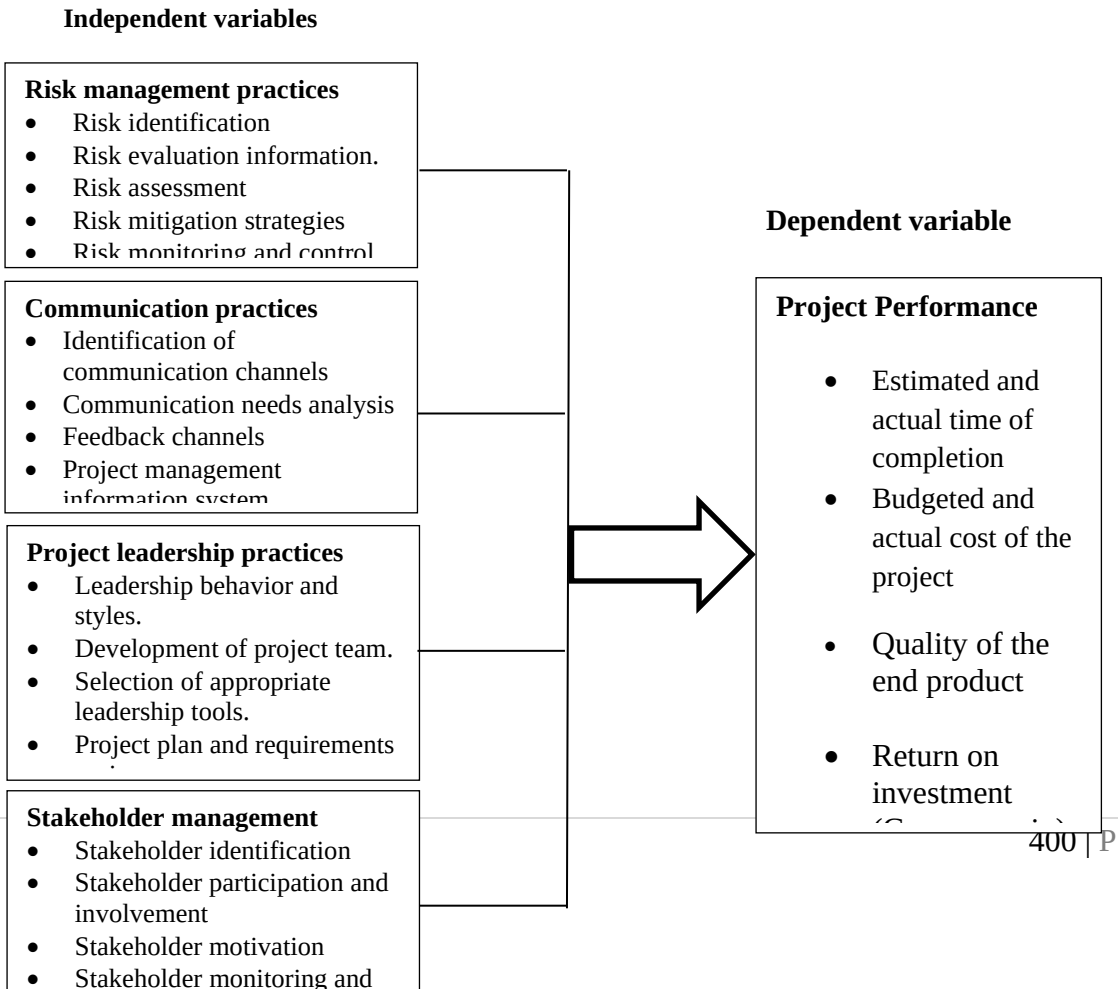
According to Eskerod and Huemann (2014) there is a need of two-way exchange of information between the stakeholders to ensure success of the project. Inclusivity cultivate communication and flow of information that is positive and enhance the performance of the project. Human behaviours allows concern for projects or activities if there is sufficient involvement and consultation process. Any project that entails low involvement or no participation has danger of low or no sustainability as well as poor implementation and

development of projects. Stakeholder theory supports this fact that success of performance is dependent on the project involvement of stakeholders.

Pernille, Martin and Claudia (2015) did a study on stakeholder inclusiveness in order to enrich project management. This research was based on longitudinal case study research undertaken between 2012 and 2014. Critical incident approach was used through observation of behaviors of human being on the event. The information collected on the stakeholder inclusivity indicated that involved stakeholders showed positive improvement on the engagement in the organization process. Also the organization branding strategy enable the involved stakeholders increased livelihood of the project. Inclusivity of stakeholders reduces chance of shock and disappointment.

A study done on stakeholder involvement in 2015 in Cameroon by Lekunze analyzed the involvement of the youth to water resource management by comparing the results of the different approaches used. The study established that institutions which engaged the youth had higher chances of success than those which didn't consider such an approach. Examination on stakeholder management challenges and their impact on project performance in Upper East region of Ghana by the same researcher found that stakeholder management plays a key role in achieving project's objectives. The study showed that interests and roles of the key stakeholders are critical to project's success. Challenges like unhealthy competition, conflicting interests, lack of support, anti-stakeholder leadership problems, beliefs and practices were found to have severe effect on performance of projects (Atiibo, 2012).

Conceptual framework



RESEARCH MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study used descriptive research design which helped clarify the relationship between the variables. Kombo and Tromp (2014) upheld that descriptive research is a procedure of clarifying the situation as it exists.

Target population and Sampling

The target population in this study comprised 8 projects in Unilever LTD which were carried out between 2010 to 2019; Nairobi, Kenya and 60 staff in departments involved in projects' implementation; heads in finance, supply chain, ICT and all staff in research and development department.

The study employed a census where all projects carried out since 2010, all the staff in the Research Development department and the heads in the departments were involved in implementation of projects. This involved collection of complete information on all projects since 2010 from all 60 participants. This enabled the researcher to reduce selection bias that normally arises during sampling.

Data collection instruments and procedures

Questionnaire was utilized to collect data. The questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher.

Validity and Reliability

Opinion of the supervisor was sought for expert validation in addition to opinions of peers. The experts were requested to give their opinions and correction on level of language, ambiguity and clarity of the questionnaire. The researcher ensured validity of the study by carrying out a pre-test of questionnaires.

Internal consistency was tested using Cronbach alpha coefficient. Jackson (2014) argues that an alpha between 0.7 and 1.00 means a strong internal consistency, 0.3 - 0.69 moderate while less than 0.29 indicates a weak reliability. The research used the threshold of alpha coefficient of 0.7 as a measure of internal consistency. The internal consistency was found to be 0.788 indicating adequate internal consistency of the instruments.

The instrument was revised and had a composite α of 0.8048 when going for field.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Values

VARIABLE	CRONBACH'S ALPHA
Risk management practices	0.769
Communication practices	0.848
Project Leadership practices	0.797

Stakeholder management practices	0.824
Project performance	0.786
Average	**0.8048**

Data Analysis and Presentation

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, mean and standard deviation were computed to provide a summary of the findings. Inferential statistics such as correlation and regression analysis were used to analyse data and indicate the level and direction of the association of the study variables.

Multiple regression Model was used to establish the relationship between the independent variables: project risk management, project communication, project leadership and project stakeholder management and the dependent variable which is project's performance. Multiple regression analysis done using the following model;

$$\mathbf{Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon}$$

Y- Dependent variable
$\boldsymbol{\beta_0}$ – Constant
$\boldsymbol{\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4}$–Regression Coefficients
XI x2 x3 x4 - Independent variables
$\mathbf{X_1}$ – Risk management practices,
$\mathbf{X_2}$ – Communication practices,
$\mathbf{X_3}$ – Project Leadership practices
$\mathbf{X_4}$– Stakeholder management practices,
Y – Project performance
$\boldsymbol{\varepsilon}$ - Error

Diagnostic Tests

Multi-collinearity test

Multi-collinearity was tested using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance. VIF is the reciprocal of the tolerance calculated (1-R2) and measures the degree of linear association between a particular independent variable and the other variables in the analysis. Larger VIF values indicate a greater variance of the regression weight of that predictor. It is recommended that a VIF ≥10 is indicative of multi-collinearity (Meyers, Guarino & Gamst, 2014).

Homoscedasticity Test

This is the process of testing similar variation it is assumed that the different dependent variable should have equal variance (Hair, 2014). Levene's test was used to test equality or homogeneity of variance. If Levene's test is significant, at $P< 0.05$ hence equal variance or homoscedastic otherwise heteroscedastic (Hair, 2014)

Normality Test

The Shapiro- Wilk test has become a standard for small sample sizes for instance ≤ 50. It's designed to test for deviation from normality. When the p-value is less or equal to 0.05, the test rejects the hypothesis of normality. When the p-value is greater than 0.05 is shows the distribution of sample is not significantly different from that of a normal distribution (Sen & Srivastava, 2010). Normality was tested using the Shapiro-Wilk test since the sample size is small.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

In this study 60 questionnaires were distributed and 58 were duly filled and returned. This comprises a return rate of 96.7%. As per Babbie (2010), a reaction pace of 60% is great, 70% generally excellent and half sufficient for examination and detailing from manual studies. Bailey (2011) sets the sufficiency bar at 75% and Chen (2009) contends that the bigger the reaction rate, the littler the non-reaction mistake.

Table 2: Response Rate

Number of distributed questionnaires	Percent	Number of returned questionnaires	Response Rate (%)
60	100	58	96.7

Source: Research Data, 2019

Risk Management Practices

Risk Management Practices Ratings

The respondents were asked to rate the risk management practices characteristics on a scale of 1-5, where 5 represents Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neutral, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree.

Table 3: Project Risk Management

Statement	Mean	Std Dev
Risk assessment reports are produced periodically	3.33	1.205
Project monitoring & control is an integral part of risk management	4.83	.534
Most org's practice proper risk identification before project execution	3.40	1.138
Adoption of risk reduction policies helps mitigate risk in projects	4.33	.825
Aggregate mean and Standard Deviation	**3.97**	**0.93**

Source: Research Data, 2019

The overall mean of all the attributes tested was 3.97 implying that that project risk management to a great extent is a common project management practice done by project

groups. In tandem with the research findings, Kinyua, Ogollah and Mburu (2015) research findings in Nairobi ICT enterprises show that project risk management was influenced by risk evaluations, information and mitigation strategies used to ensure that risks are minimized in software development.

Strategy Most Commonly Used by Organizations in Risk Mitigation

Table 3: The strategy Most Commonly Used

	Variable	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Avoidance	3	5.2
	Acceptance	5	8.6
	Reduction	41	70.7
	Transference	9	15.5
	Total	**58**	**100.0**

Source: Research Data, 2019

These results show most of the project implementation organizations employ risk reduction as the most effective risk mitigation strategy that results to expected project performance. This does not wholly agree with Kinyua, Ogollah and Mburu (2015) research findings in Nairobi ICT enterprises which found that most ICT enterprises prefer avoiding risk, communicate on risk facing the enterprises and assessing time available to reduce the risk enabling success.

Project Communication Practices

The respondents were asked to rate the project communication practices characteristics on a scale of 1-5, where 5 represents Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neutral, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree.

Table 4: Communication Practices Ratings

Statement	Mean	Std Dev
There are proper comm' channels which enhance open communication	4.64	.485
Organizations consider strong comm among & between team members & stakeholders	4.05	.963
ICT-based business systems are important for improved comm' flow	4.60	.815
Comm needs are investigated during project design stage	3.47	1.260
Systems for obtaining feedback from stakeholders exist in organizations	3.55	1.029
Aggregate mean and Standard Deviation	**4.06**	**0.91**

Source: Research Data, 2019

The aggregate mean score for project implementation was 4.06. The mean score round off to a score of 4 on the five point Likert implies that to a great extent the respondents agreed that

the management employed all the required project communication practices before and during the initiation of the projects. This implies that project communication practices were applied among project managers in Unilever company Kenya ltd. These findings corroborate those of Campbell and Cohost (2014) in a study which emphasized the need for project communication as the key part of project performance. The study adds that When communications are strong among the project team members and between the project team and the customers, the projects are always successful and poor communications contributes to project's failure.

Project Leadership Practices

The respondents were asked to rate the project communication practices characteristics on a scale of 1-5, where 5 represents Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neutral, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree.

Table 5: Project Leadership Practices and Project Performance

Statement	Mean	Std Dev
Project team skill set is enhanced and continually nurtured	4.03	.973
Project leader competence plays a role in project delivery	4.83	.381
Leadership styles are flexible & altered in different situations	4.22	.839
Organizations have sufficient appropriate tools for project delivery	3.63	1.046
Aggregate mean and Standard Deviation	**4.18**	**0.81**

Source: Research Data, 2019

The aggregate mean score for monitoring and evaluation was 4.18 and standard deviation is 0.81. The aggregate mean score round off to a score of 4 on the five point Likert scale adopted by the study implies that on a great extent respondents agreed that there was effective project leadership practices associated with performance Unilever Company Kenya Ltd projects. The findings confirm recommendation from the study by International Centre for complex project management specifying that the project leaders must recognize nowadays that transformational shift from non-informative to interlinked information age. There is need for skills from project teams' that is needed in order to improve the performance in an increasing complex and competitive environment (Remington, 2011). Another study by Prakash between (1994; 2016) specified that leadership behaviors are flexible and leadership styles should be altered in different circumstances/situations. It was clear that successful project managers employ a great deal of flexibility in their use of leadership approaches. The results also showed that relationship-oriented project managers are abler to leverage the transformational leadership approach.

Most Common Leadership Styles

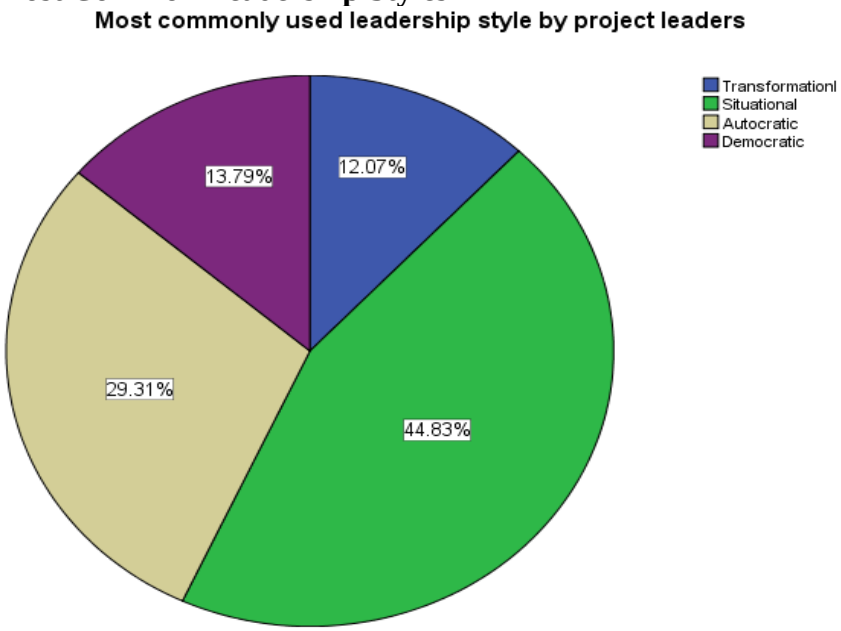


Figure 2: Most Commonly Used Leadership Styles in Unilever projects

Source: Research Data, 2019

These results show that it is the situational leadership style that is widely applied by the project leaders within the Unilever projects. These results are in agreement with the findings of a study conducted in United Kingdom by Dennis and Jeffrey (2016). The findings show that situational or contingency approach has a positive impact on project performance as no style fits all situations. The results also showed that the successful manager should be flexible by matching ones leadership style to the circumstances facing them. This confirms the results of Wideman and Shenhar (2016) study who observed that flexibility in adapting styles to the situation is important since no particular leadership style can accommodate all circumstances. They concluded that inflexibility by project managers demoralizes the team and lead to project failure (Kliem, 2016).

Project Stakeholder Management Practices

Project Stakeholder Management Practices Ratings

The respondents were asked to rate the project stakeholder management practices characteristics on a scale of 1-5, where 5 represents Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Neutral, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree.

Table 6: Stakeholder Management Practices Ratings

Statement	Mean	Std Dev
Stakeholders participation & involvement is important practice	4.86	.348
An efficient system for managing external stakeholders exists	3.72	.914
Organizations motivate their stakeholders	3.55	.902
Identification of most important stakeholders done before project execution	3.67	1.431

Open communication channels with stakeholders exist	3.57	1.094
Aggregate mean and Standard Deviation	**3.87**	**0.94**

Source: Research Data, 2019

The aggregate mean score for project stakeholder management practices is 3.87 and standard deviation is 0.94. The aggregate mean score round off to a score of 4 on the five point Likert scale adopted by the study, implies that to a great extent project communication methods are sufficient for better project performance in Unilever. The results show that to a great extent, management has not done much to improve stakeholder management among the projects in Unilever. The findings agree with Pernille, Martin & Claudia (2015) did a study on stakeholder inclusiveness in order to enrich project management. They found out that stakeholder inclusivity showed positive improvement on the organization processes. Also the organization branding strategy enable the involved stakeholders increased livelihood of success of the project. Inclusivity of stakeholders reduces chance of shock and disappointment.

Challenges in Stakeholders Management

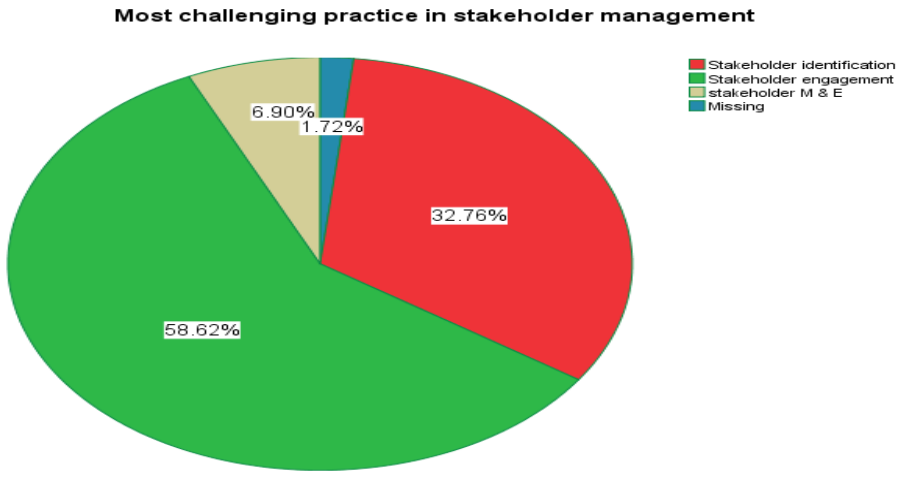


Figure 3: Most challenging Practice in Stakeholder Management
Source: Research Data, 2019

These results show that the project teams in the Unilever projects find it most challenging to deal with engagement of stakeholders in the project activities. This may indicate that dealing with diverse stakeholder preferences, opinions and knowledge base is quite tasking since there need be a balance between individual wants and the aspects that would result to anticipated project deliverables. It is not easy to balance all such and attain expected project performance as a consequence. In Upper East region of Ghana, a study was conducted by Lekunze (2015) which found that interests and roles of the key stakeholders are critical to project's success. Challenges like unhealthy competition, conflicting interests, lack of support, anti-stakeholder leadership problems, beliefs and practices were found to have severe effect on performance of projects.

Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis seeks to determine the degree of interdependence of the independent variables and also show the degree of their association with the dependent variable separately. These results are summarized in Table 7

Table 7: Correlation Matrix

	Project performance	Project risk management	Project communication	Project leadership	Project stakeholder management
Project performance	1				
(p) (2 tailed)	0				
Project risk management (r)	0.773	1			
(p) (2 tailed)	0.036				
Project communication (r)	0.463	0.316	1		
(p) Sig. (2 tailed)	0.018	0.047			
Project leadership (r)	0.618	0.163	0.216	1	
(p) Sig. (2 tailed)	0.025	0.019	0.047		
Project stakeholder management (r)	0.652	0.161	0.233	0.462	1
(p) Sig. (2 tailed)	0.031	0.029	0.0464	0.014	

The correlation summary shown in Table 7 indicates that the associations between the independent variables were significant at the 95% confidence level and had a strong relationship with the dependent variable. This means that the intervariable correlations between the independent variables were strong enough to influence the relationship with the dependent variable. Results of the Pearson's correlation coefficient depicts that there is a significant positive relationship between Project performance and Project risk management (rho=0.773, p-value <0.05). Therefore, it can be implied that an increase in project risk management is associated with increased Project performance. Secondary, the showed that there is a weak positive significant relationship between Project performance and Project communication (rho=0.463, p-value <0.05). Thirdly, the findings showed that there is a strong positive significant relationship between project leadership and Project performance (rho=0.618, p-value <0.05). Finally, there was a strong significant positive relationship between Project stakeholder management and Project performance (rho=0.652, p-value <0.05

Diagnostic Tests

Diagnostic tests were carried out including Multi-collinearity, Homoscedasticity and Normality tests. The results and the respective test interpretations are presented in the sub-sections here below:

Multi-Collinearity Test

Multi-collinearity was tested using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance. VIF is the reciprocal of the tolerance calculated (1-R2) and measures the degree of linear association between a particular independent variable and the other variables in the analysis. The test results are as shown in Table 8 below:

Table 8: Multi-Collinearity Test

	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance	VIF
performance of projects	.500	2.000
project risk management practices	.608	1.646
project communication practices	.633	1.580
project leadership practices	.493	2.027
project stakeholder management	.242	2.083

Source: Research Data, 2019

The multicollinearity test generated data that was presented in Table 8 above. In this results the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was less than 3 for all the tested predictor variables. This indicates that there is no collinearity that is beyond the acceptable levels. The acceptable multicollinearity levels should lie between 0.2 and 3.0. All of the VIF values are within this range. The Tolerance values must be between 0.1 and 5.0. All Tolerance values are less than 1.0 thus indicating that the multicollinearity between the predictor variables are low and within the acceptable levels. This agrees with Meyers, Guarino & Gamst (2014) who posit that larger VIF values indicate a greater variance of the regression weight of that predictor. It is recommended that a VIF ≥10 is indicative of multi-collinearity.

Homoscedasticity Test

Table 9: Leven Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.817	8	48	.587

Source: Research Data, 2019

The Levene's test of homogeneity of variance was computed and presented in Table 9. The results indicate a Leven Statistic of .817, p<.587. This specifies that we accept the null hypothesis that states there is no difference of variances across the independent variables in the distribution. As one of the assumptions in the computation of regression analysis, it agrees with Hair (2014), who specifies that the process of testing similar variation it is assumed that their different dependent variable should have equal variance across the independent variable. Levene's test is used to test equality or homogeneity of variance. If Levene's test is significant, at P< 0.05 hence equal variance or homoscedastic otherwise heteroscedastic (Hair, 2014)

Normality Test

Table 10: Test for normality of the Distribution

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Performance of projects	.216	58	.001	.921	58	.001
Communication practices	.219	58	.000	.912	58	.000
Risk management	.163	58	.001	.919	58	.001
Project leadership	.274	58	.000	.860	58	.000
Stakeholders management	.201	58	.000	.919	58	.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Test for normality of the distribution is presented in Table 10. The Shapiro- Wilk test which is a standard normality test for small sample sizes was used. Results indicate that the p-value is less than 0.05. Therefore, the test rejects the hypothesis of normality. This agrees with Sen and Srivastava (2010) who posit, when the p-value is greater than 0.05 is shows the distribution of sample is not significantly different from that of a normal distribution.
Since the data is not normally distributed it means the results will be affected.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The study sought to determine the fit of the regression equation using the coefficient of determination between the overall independent variables and project performance. Coefficient of determination explains the degree to which changes in the dependent variable will influence change in the independent variables. In this case how project performance will be affected by the project management functions.

Model summary' table, provides information about the regression line's ability to account for the total variation in the dependent variable

Table 11: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.921[a]	.849	.845	.04131

Dependent Variable: Project performance

Predictors: (Constant), Project leadership, project risk management, Project communication, and project stakeholder management
Table 11 indicate that the adjusted R- squared was 0.845 meaning that the independent variables jointly explain 84.5 percent of the variations in the dependent variable while the rest are explained by variables not fitted into the model. This is in agreement with the studies presented by Child & McGrath (2001) which points out that project management practices

are becoming increasingly important as more and more work is organized through projects and programmes

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a collection of statistical models used to analyze the differences among group means and their associated procedures (such as "variation" among and between groups)

Table 12: ANOVA of the Regression

	Sum of Squares	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Regression	195.568	4	48.892	9.44956	0.00081
Residual	274.222	53	5.174		
Total	**469.79**	**57**			

Dependent Variable: Project performance

Predictors: (Constant), project leadership, project risk management, project communication, and project stakeholder management

The F statistic is 9.44956 with a corresponding P value of 0.00081 which implies that the regression model is significant ($P < 0.05$). This is quite good indication that project risk management, project leadership, project communication, and project stakeholder management increases project's performance in Unilever Company Kenya Ltd

Table 13: Regression Coefficients Resuslts

	Un-standardized Coefficients		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
(Constant)	3.77	0.451		8.3592	0.004
Project risk management	0.782	0.121	0.146	6.462	0.003
Project communication	0.463	0.079	0.126	5.860759	0.001
Project leadership	0.473	0.073	0.045	6.479452	0.005
Project stakeholder management	0.532	0.073	0.142	7.287671	0.004

a. Dependent Variable: Project performance

$$\mathbf{Y= 3.77 + 0.782\ X_1 + 0.463\ X_2 + 0.473\ X_3 + 0.532\ X_4}$$

All the four project of project management practices project risk management, project leadership, project communication, and project stakeholder management were positively related to project performance and the regression analysis indicated that an increase in each of them would result in an increase in project performance. It is, therefore, important to impress serious project risk management methods, project leadership strategies, strong project communication systems as well project project stakeholder management in management of projects to enhance performance. These findings agrees with Biafore & Stover, (2012) findings who indicated that good project management practices must embrace good leadership, effective communication, utilization of resources and working with team members in identifying and analyzing risks. Project performance and status must be

communicated to the relevant audiences such as stakeholders and team members. Leadership competencies are significantly stronger in the managers of successful projects than in the managers of less successful projects. Leadership dimensions of consciousness, sensitivity and effective communication correlate positively with project's success (Müller & Turner, 2010).

Test of Hypothesis One

The first objective sought to determine the effect of project risk management practices on projects performance in Unilever Company Kenya Ltd. Null hypothesis one was tested. The hypothesis was derived as:

H01: Project risk management practices does not significantly influence performance of projects Unilever Company Kenya Ltd.

Research findings in Table 13 show the value of the coefficient of project planning was 0.782 while the p value is 0.003. Therefore at 5% level of significance; the null hypothesis was rejected implying that project risk management practices has a significant relationship with project performance. This implies that holding everything else in the model constant, a unit change in project risk management practices leads to 0.782 units change in the performance of projects Unilever Company Kenya Ltd. In tandem with the study findings, Zwikael and Ahn (2016) opined that the effectiveness of risk management is pegged on the importance of understanding the project context, considering the industry's and country's levels of project risk. The authors highlight that even moderate levels of risk management planning will play a significant role in reducing the negative effects of risk on project success. The inefficiencies in the risk identification process in complex projects contribute greatly in the failure of projects. According to their findings, the manner in which this process is carried out often fails to identify events and circumstances that challenge project performance.

Test of Hypothesis Two

The second objective sought to determine the effect of project communication practices on projects performance in Unilever Company Kenya Ltd. Null hypothesis one was tested. The hypothesis was derived as:

H02: Project communication practices does not significantly influence performance of projects Unilever Company Kenya Ltd.

Research findings in Table 13 show the value of the coefficient of project communication was 0.463 and the corresponding P-value was 0.001 ($P < 0.05$) implying that at five per cent level of significance, the null hypothesis H02 was rejected. The study concluded that project communication practices has a significant relationship with project performance. This implies that holding everything else in the model constant, a unit change in project communication practices leads to 0.463 units change in the performance of projects Unilever Company Kenya Ltd. In line witht the findings of the study, Campbell and Cohost, (2014) opined that number one success factor was communication. More details showed that when

communications are strong among the project team members and between the project team and the customers within energy companies, the projects were always successful and poor communications contributed to project's failure.

Test of Hypothesis Three

The first objective sought to determine the effect of project leadership practices on projects performance in Unilever Company Kenya Ltd. Null hypothesis one was tested. The hypothesis was derived as:

H03: Project leadership practices does not significantly influence performance of projects Unilever Company Kenya Ltd.

Research findings in Table 13 show the value of the coefficient of project leadership was 0.473while the p value is 0.005. The P-value is less than 0.05 meaning that at five per cent level of significance the null hypothesis was rejected. The study concluded that project leadership practices has a significant relationship with project performance. This implies that holding everything else in the model constant, a unit change in project leadership practices leads to 0.473 units change in the performance of projects Unilever Company Kenya Ltd. In tandem with the study findings, Prakash (2016) found out that leadership behaviors are flexible and leadership styles should be altered in different circumstances/situations. It was clear that successful project managers employ a great deal of flexibility in their use of leadership approaches. The results also showed that relationship-oriented project managers are abler to leverage the transformational leadership approach.

Test of Hypothesis Four

The final objective sought to determine the effect of project stakeholder management on projects performance in Unilever Company Kenya Ltd. Null hypothesis one was tested. The hypothesis was derived as:

H04: Project stakeholder management does not significantly influence performance of projects Unilever Company Kenya Ltd.

Research findings in Table 13 show the value of the coefficient of project stakeholder management was 0.532 while the p value is 0.004. Therefore at 5% level of significance; the null hypothesis was rejected implying that project stakeholder management has a significant relationship with project performance. This implies that holding everything else in the model constant, a unit change in project stakeholder management leads to 0.532 units change in the performance of projects Unilever Company Kenya Ltd. Similar to the study findings, Pernille, Martin and Claudia (2015) indicated that involved stakeholders showed positive improvement on the engagement in the organization process. Also the organization branding strategy enable the involved stakeholders increased livelihood of the project. Inclusivity of stakeholders reduces chance of shock and disappointment.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study concludes that risk management reports are produced periodically but risk assessments are reports are not generated periodically as required. The project risk monitoring and control are integral part of risk management, at Unilever Company projects. There is the belief that monitoring and control of risk mitigation factors and their effectiveness is indispensable for quality project performance.

The study concludes that there are proper communication channels which enhance open communication. The organization consider strong communication among and between team members and stakeholders. Then Unilever Company has good communication channels that allow open communication within the projects and facilitates a participatory approach to project definition and execution among stakeholders.

The study has concluded that the project team skill set is enhanced and continually nurtured in the projects. The project leader competence plays a role in project delivery implying that competence of project managers is indispensable towards acquisition of project deliverables at Unilever. The organization is believed to nurture and improve the skills and knowledge of its project team members and leadership.

The study concludes that stakeholders are involved which could be facilitating the expected project performance. There is also an efficient system for managing external stakeholders. This indicates application of efficient systems to manage the stakeholders towards positive project performance.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the organization conducts comprehensive risk management. This risk management should follow all the steps in the risk management framework. There should be risk events identification, quantification assignment of risk mitigation measures, allocation of adequate resources, implementation, monitoring and control. It is also recommended that the organization creates a risk register that is regularly updated ii each of the projects.

The organization should set up functional communication systems which are open and confidential for use by all stakeholders. It should create a ‘we’ feeling through communication of relevant only information to specific audiences. The content, audience and timing of communication matters most.

It is also recommended that the project management should apply transactional leadership styles which enables contingent reward especially in the non charity ventures. This would inspire the staff and other stakeholders towards working for more rewarding and sustainable ventures under Unilever.

To manage the stakeholders well and comprehensively, it is recommended that the project management teams must always facilitate participatory approaches. Other than ensuring there is effective communication, courtesy, competence, responsiveness and accessibility must be assured by the project management and the teams.

Suggestions for Further Research

The study recommends that further studies may be conducted to establish how observance of the whole project cycle facilitates successful completion of the projects. Such a study may also endeavour to find out how this adherence to project cycle facilities project performance. More studies may also be done on how monitoring and evaluation are done within Unilever Company to enhance realization of set project objectives, spend resources as planned, to facilitate effectiveness, efficiency and also to establish relevance of each study. Since most of the staff are new in the Unilever projects, more studies are recommended to establish their level of professional competence that would facilitate project performance, expected project deliverables. In this case studies are required to establish on the staff formal training on project management aspects.

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