



PROJECT MANAGEMENT SOFT SKILLS AND PROJECT SUCCESS AT HAKAN QUANTUM PEAT POWER PROJECT RWANDA – KIGALI, RWANDA.

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ABSTRACT:

In order for a project to be considered successful, it must be completed within the parameters of its performance goals, within its slated budget and on schedule. Thus, this study investigated what influence of soft skills play in the performance of project managers and how this soft skills influence success of a project. The study adopted descriptive research design, which allowed the researcher to study the elements in their natural form and to come up with descriptive statistics that can assist in explaining the relationship that exists among variables. Due to the limited time all population were not reached, the sample size was 164 respondents those selected from staff of Hakan Quantum Peat Power Project Rwanda. Data collected from the primary survey was compiled, sorted, edited, cleaned, tabulated, weighted and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS). Using descriptive statistics (regression and spearman's correlation coefficient). The results reveal the following: Using $Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1$ and $Beta = .689$, indicating that interpersonal skills cause 68.9 % rise or influence on the project success. The ratio of beta modal findings for the t value stated that $t = 5.679$, indicating that the probability value and effects on project success is significant, with p value of 0.00. the researcher has answered the first question of the study confirming that interpersonal skills have significance influence on the project success. With $Y = \alpha + \beta_2 X_2$ and $Beta = .577$, implying that the change on coordination skills generate a 0.577 (57.7%) rise in project success. The ratio of beta modal findings for the t value stated $t = 8.42$, indicating that the probability value on project success is significant, with sig.=0.000. To close, the researcher observed the second hypothesis of this study, and answered the research question confirming that coordination skills have an influence on project success and the p value was less than 0.05 as well. Using $Y = \alpha + \beta_3 X_3$ and $Beta = .804$, implying that the change in team building skills generate a 0.804 (80.4%) rise in project success. The ratio of beta modal findings for the t value stated $t = 8.332$, indicating that the probability value on project success is significant, with $p = 0.000$ and less than 0.05. Safely, the researcher has verified the

third hypothesis of this study and answered the third question of the study by confirming that team building skills has a significance influence on project success. Concluding, the researcher recommends that: There is need to train employees about the importance of self-awareness and adapting to differences at the workplace. There is need to figure out the major responsibilities and relate to experience of an employee before assigning responsibilities of coordinating others. Lastly, there is a need for managers and leaders to recognize the need to form groups of people with different abilities and talents where each employee brings uniqueness relevant to the project and be able to communicate it clearly.

Keywords: *Projects Managers Soft Skills; Interpersonal Skill; Coordination Skills and Team Building Skill.*

INTRODUCTION:

Andersen et. al. (2016) approved that for a project to be considered successful, it must be completed within the parameters of its performance goals, within its slated budget and on schedule. The more traditional “hard” technical skills of project managers have drawn much attention; little light has been shed on the “soft” skills, especially social competencies in the construction context (Zhang, et. al., 2013).

According to (Abedi et al., 2017), eight hundred and forty-five of kick starter top projects in the United States of America (USA) missed their target delivery dates. Jonathan and Arditi (2018), studied 50 most funded projects around the USA and found that out of the studied projects; only 8 out of the 50 met their set deadlines. Successful execution of projects and keeping them on time and within budget depends on effective planning and scheduling right from the beginning. High levels of experience and accurate time and cost estimating are necessary to plan a project effectively (Keane & Caletka, 2018).

Construction industry is one of the fundamental industries in Egypt with a remarkable impact on economic development and creation of employment opportunities. Egyptian government emphasizes the influential role of infrastructure and construction as the main drivers of financial stability and urban growth. Despite Covid-19 negative impact on construction industry, the demand for infrastructure, housing and infrastructure remains stable as the country’s population continues to increase. According to a report by Oxford Business Group (2020), the Egyptian development industry is anticipated to realize longer-term development driven by the developing drift of urbanization and government bolster to twofold Egypt’s urban region from 7% to 14% by 2052. Based on a later Fitch Evaluations report, the Egyptian development segment will proceed with its solid position all through the following decade with a 9% yearly development rate between the a long time 2020-2024 (Refaat, 2020). Further, Refaat (2020) reported that the value of the current Egyptian construction industry is about 25 billion USD and estimated to reach more than \$89 billion by 2029 that represent about 30% of the value of the construction industry in the Middle East and North Africa region.

In Rwanda, Vision 2020 expressed how Rwandans conceived their future. It showed the kind of society they needed to end up with and how to develop a joint and comprehensive Rwandan character. It at long last talked about the changes required to develop from a profoundly

inadmissible social and financial circumstance to subsequently actualize these changes in order to shape organizations. To achieve this, Rwandans ought to make and improve their administrations and generally through acting through projects.

PMBOK, 5th Edition, defines project management as the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements. In organizations whose primary business is made up of projects, project management has been embraced to control spending and improve project results. Thus, to achieve this, in their research Petter & Randolph (2019) argue that as project managers encourage all the possibilities to increase chances of success in their projects, they need to focus on improving technical skills.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In Rwanda, major state financed projects are complex and significant problems arise later as a result of weaknesses in project management up front. A review of the Auditor General's annual reports for the period 2002 – 2016 showed a trail of underestimation, variations, delayed and abandonment of many state financed projects. The same situation applies to private projects as well. Rwanda Housing Authority as the government institution with a mandate to oversee all public construction projects, noticed several project issues resulting from inadequate designs. Mac-Barango (2017) asserts that poorly developed clients brief and working drawings can result in project abandonment, unrealistic cost planning and control at the design stage can lead to project abandonment too. All these are due to lack of front-end construction project management framework, despite of much investment in this sector and its contribution to the country's economy. As of now, the Office of Auditor general of State finances indicates a trail of failed/abandoned construction projects (OAG, 2002-2017) whereas the Rwanda Public Procurement Authority publish a list of blacklisted companies including construction companies.

Peat has been identified as one of the strategic energy resources in the country. HQ Peat Power project manage a concession of 4,200 ha located in Southern Rwanda alongside the Akanyaru river and the border with Burundi. Unlike other foreign peatlands, the peat production does not request any forest clearcutting in Rwanda. Minister Musoni said: "We have an energy deficit...our target is to get over two times the capacity we have today. The 80MW are a significant contribution to our energy sector from appreciated efforts by HAKAN. Such private initiatives and investments in the construction, development and maintenance of sustainable electricity generating plants provide great economic value (Babalwa, 2016)."

The key issue investigated by this study was the low level of mindfulness and application of soft skills required by project managers for the success of their projects. For the most part, construction industries contract gracious engineers as project supervisors who may have sound specialized or technical knowledge but probably lacking soft skills. Lack of such soft skills can lead to low project manager's ability to handle the project efficiently and effectively and therefore failure of the project. Thus, this study investigated that what role soft skills plays in the performance of project managers and how these soft skills influence success of a project.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE:

- i. To assess the Influence of Interpersonal Skill on Project Success
- ii. To analyze the use of Coordination Skill and Project Success
- iii. To find out how Team Building Skill will influence Project Success.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Concept of Projects Managers Soft Skills

Soft Skills are important skills required by project managers to be able to persuade others to accomplish pre-defined goals with zeal, enthusiasm, and willingness (Shi & Chen, 2016; Mascia, 2012). It is a job of a project manager to act as a leader of the project and catalyze employee's skills such as planning, organizing, and decision making. Previously, there was more focus on projects managers' hard skills (Byrd and Turner, 2011); realizing the gap, now there is greater focus on project managers' soft skills (Klaus, 2010). There is so much emphasis on soft skills of a project manager that some studies attributed it as one of the most important factor in contributing in projects success (Watts & Watts, 2008; Mayo, 2013). El-Sabaa (2011) stated that key project management skills include the staff mobilization, coping with difficult situation, authority delegation, exhibiting sensitivity, showing enthusiasm, and maintenance of high self-esteem. Similarly, Low and Christopher (2010) stated that, project managers' success requires the soft skills sets consisting of identification of practices that lead to increased competitive advantage, this has been a pressing matter amongst companies who wish to rapidly respond to market needs (Yang et al., 2011).

Concept of Interpersonal Skill

Interpersonal Skill is one of the core skills required by project managers for making projects successful (Shi and Chen, 2016). It contains different elements including collaboration, identifying conflicts and their resolution mechanisms. (Mascia, 2012). This skill also deals with how project managers deal with different background of people and manage relationships. Cornelius (2012) states that persuasion is also part of leader's interpersonal skill and is about how individual persuade and influence others so that they can support the project manager in achieving projects objectives. Employee motivation is about motivating team members so that they can work hard and put energies in achieving project goal. A project manager also requires being good in motivating staff as it is also part of the interpersonal skills (Brenton and Levin, 2012).

Concept of Coordination Skills

This skill is required by a project manager to successfully manage projects (Brenton and Levin, 2012). It is about building harmonious relationships with project team members in order to complete the project successfully. Coordination is also about managing different dispersed tasks, teams, parties, and internal and external stakeholders.

Concept of Team building.

Deepa and Seth (2013) state that team building and authority delegation is also required by project manager to make a project successful. As part of team building and delegation, a project manager is required to foster team work, develop his/her team, develop team members, put confidence on them, give them authority, and delegate tasks. Without proper team building and delegation, a project manager may end up without proper team building and delegation; a project manager may end up with too much overburden.

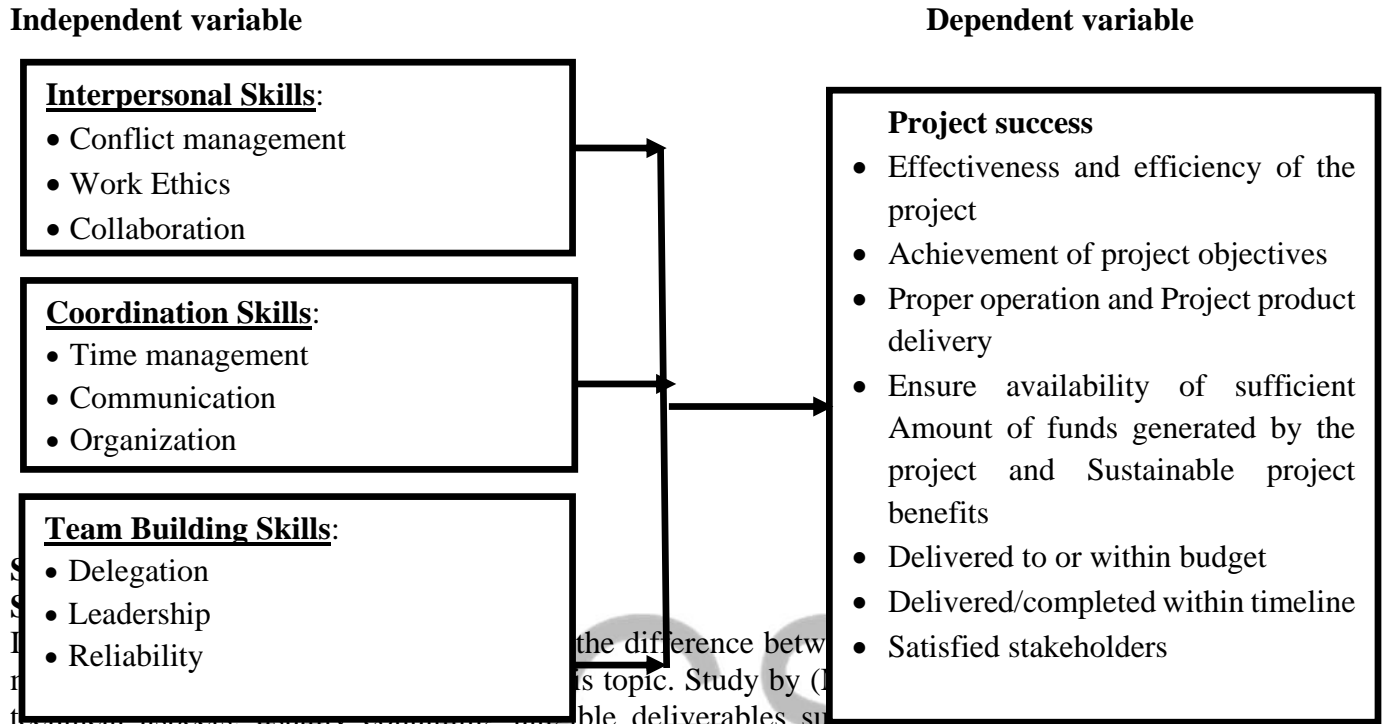
Project Success

There is a lot of discussion about project success, but there is no agreed criteria and definition of project success among scholars, (Siguroarsan, 2019). Narayanaswamy, Grover, and Henry (2013) describe project success as situation when a project meets its expectations and completed within given time frame and cost.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework is a clear illustration of key relationships among independent and dependent variables. It has considered three critical issues for Project soft skills and Project success rates. That is Interpersonal skills, Coordination skills and Team building skills.

Figure 1: Figure identifying the variables of the research.



breakdown structure. These skills are easily taught and replicated through spreadsheets, templates, or hard data both hard skills and soft skills are needed in the profession of project management. Soft Skills vs. Hard Skills. The International Journal of Project Management, Gillard states, “as the field of research surrounding project management continues to grow, it is becoming more evident that success in the role of the project manager cannot be attained with a technical skill set only” (Gillard 2009). Adding soft skill elements can turn an average project manager, into a leader, or possibly even a transformational leader.

Interpersonal Skills and Project Success

Interpersonal Skill is one of the core skills required by project managers for making projects successful (Shi and Chen, 2016). It contains different elements including collaboration, identifying conflicts and their resolution mechanisms. (Mascia, 2012). This skill also deals with how project managers deal with different background of people, manage relationships, and motivate staff (Brenton and Levin, 2012). Cornelius (2012) states that persuasion is also part of leader’s interpersonal skill and is about how individual persuade and influence others so that they can support the project manager in achieving projects objectives. Employee motivation is about motivating team members so that they can work hard and put energies in achieving project goal. A project manager also requires being good in motivating staff as it is also part of the interpersonal skills (Brenton and Levin, 2012).

Coordination Skills and Project Success

This skill is also required of project managers to successfully manage projects (Brenton and Levin, 2012). This skill is about building harmonious relationships with project team members to complete project successfully. Coordination is also about managing different dispersed tasks, teams, parties,

and internal and external stakeholders. Developing your project coordinating skills can be valuable to any career or position that you may be interested in. Employers seek solid project management and coordination qualifications in applicants because this experience proves several key capabilities in communication, organization, and troubleshooting. Effective project coordination can maximize a team's performance in the workplace through communicating areas of importance and priority to help complete tasks successfully. A project manager can underline the company's strategy and discuss how the project ties in with the company's goals. Team members can, in turn, speak with one another to answer any questions they may have about the project and gain clarity for the project scope and details. A project coordinator can establish methods for communicating information to teams in an efficient way. Ability to communicate information efficiently can help set priorities for a project. A properly coordinated project strategy promotes a better-quality output and a more productive workflow. By organizing and assigning specific tasks to team members, the project manager can ensure that each task is being done critically at a micro-level. Each team member has their own responsibility which, in turn, steadies their focus and performance and contributes to an overall better quality project completion (Peter, 2019).

Team building Skills and Project Success

Deepa and Seth (2013) states that team building, and authority delegation is also required by project managers to make projects successful. Team building is the process of taking a collection of individuals with different needs, backgrounds and expertise and transforming them by various methods into an integrated, effective work unit. In this transformation process, the goals and energies of individual contributors' merge and support the objectives of the team. As part of team building and delegation, a project manager is required to foster teamwork, develop his/her team, develop team members, put confidence on them, give them authority, and delegate tasks. Without proper team building and delegation, a project manager may end up with too much overburden.

The concept of team building becomes critically important as bureaucratic hierarchies decline and horizontally oriented teams and work units become increasingly important. In most cases, team building involves relationships among peers with a wide diversity of expertise. Effective team building can be a critical determinant of project success. While the process of team building can entail frustrations and energy on the part of all concerned, the rewards can be great (Wilemon and Thamhain, 2013). One person can't do as much as a whole team aligned in pursuit of a common goal. And while we talk a lot about improving performance in project management, we often forget about the importance of team building activities. When your team comes together, completing projects suddenly gets a lot easier. Your organization starts experiencing immense benefits, regardless of a project's complexity. Not only does your culture thrive, but your project completion rate skyrockets (Brian McHale, 2019).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study adopted descriptive research design (qualitative and quantitative approaches) because it requires an in depth, intensive approach that seeks a subjective understanding of social-economic reality based on statistical descriptions or generalizable predictions. Descriptive research design allowed the researcher to study the elements in their natural form without making any alterations to them.

Sampling design

Ngechu (2014) emphasizes the importance of selecting a representative sample by use of sampling frame. From the sampling frame, the required number of subjects, respondents, elements, or firms is selected in order to make a sample. In this section of the research presents the population of research, sample size determination and sampling technique.

Target population

The entire population of the study who are supposed to provide the information data related to the objectives of the research study was based on 277 staff of Hakan Quantum Peat Power Project Rwanda.

Sample size determination

Before identifying the respondents to this research, it is necessary to indicate how the sample size was determined. In order to determine the sample size, the following formula designed by Yamane (1967) was used; where, **n** is the sample size; **N** is size of the population and **e** is marginal error or level of confidence.

General scientific formula:
$$= \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

And then the sample size is: $n = \frac{277}{1+277(0.05)^2}$; $n = \frac{277}{1.6925} = 163.7$; then the sample size is 164 respondents. Therefore, for the current study, the sample size was 164 respondents those selected from staff of Hakan Quantum Peat Power Project Rwanda.

Sampling technique

The sampling techniques used are a simple random and purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling (also known as judgment, selective or subjective sampling) is a sampling technique in which researcher relies on his or her own judgment when choosing members of population to participate in the study used to select the participant of interview and those participants were selected randomly because all population had the same chance to be selected.

Data Collection Procedures

The study used questionnaires to collect primary data. Studies by (Bowling, 2017) revealed that the use of questionnaires for survey research was the best instrument for collecting data because as surveys are normally carried out in natural settings, questionnaire increases the external validity of the study. The questions were created based on data and encounters determined from survey of writing on partner interest in development ventures. The choice of the device was guided by the nature of the information to be collected, accessibility of such information as well as the objective of the consider. The surveys utilized since the think about was concerned basically with factors which may not be watched specifically such as sees, suppositions and the populace is proficient and may not have trouble in reacting to the questions.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the degree to which an instrument yields consistent result. Researcher achieved reliability by conducting the appropriate research method and design, where future researchers may replicate the study to confirm the conclusions. Reaching data saturation is essential to produce quality research. In this research, measure of reliability included internal consistency, test-retest, and inter-rater reliabilities as a type of answers the question, to determine whether the scores would be stable over time.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics (SD) and frequencies were used to summarize the data. These equivalences of mean helped to know the perception of each group about the sub-variables. This study employed Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation. The Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation is a method which was used for measuring the degree of relationship between two variables. Regression Model was used to model the relationship between two or more explanatory variables and a response variable by fitting a linear equation to observed data. R-squared is a goodness-of-fit measure for linear regression models. This statistic indicates the percentage of the variance in the dependent variable that the independent variables explain collectively.

Ethical issues

The goal of ethics in research is to ensure that no one is harmed or suffers adverse consequences from research activities. The researcher strictly observed the following: Confidentiality: The participants were guaranteed that the information they provided would not be made available to anyone who is not involved in the study, and they remain confidential for the purposes it is intended for. Permission: The researcher asked a permission letter from University of Kigali (UoK) which was presented to the management of Hakan Quantum Peat Power Project as an insurance of academic purpose. Informed consent: The prospective research participants were fully informed about the procedures involved in the research and were asked to give their consent to participate. Anonymity: The participants were remained anonymous throughout the study, even to the researcher - so as to guarantee their privacy.

Summary of Objectives Finding**Regression analysis for the effect of communication channel on the performance of construction project**

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Interpersonal Skills	Regression	3.735	3	1.245	3.643	.014 ^b
Coordination Skills	Regression	3.087	3	1.029	4.187	.007 ^b
Team Building Skills	Regression	7.573	5	1.515	5.925	.000 ^b

Source: Primary data (2022)

To clarify, changes in the independent variable should be readily explained by changes in the dependent variable, and vice versa. The researcher noticed that the p value in the sig. column in the table was 0.014, which is less than 0.05. Finally, researcher concluded that the regression model was statistically significant and could predict the effect of interpersonal skills on project success

The test for the impacts of coordination skills on the on the project success was projected in ANOVA table. The regression model predicted that the dependent variable would be highly significant, implying that the dependent variable may explain the independent variable and vice versa. The p value was really 0.007, which is less than 0.05. To sum up, I found the regression model to be statistically significant and capable of predicting the link between the coordination skills and project success

The ANOVA test for the influence of team building on project success was presented in the table. The regression model indicated that the dependent variable would be very significant, demonstrating how team building may explain project success. In reality, the dependent variable should clearly explain the changes occurring on the independent variable, and vice versa. The p value in the table was 0.000, which is less than 0.05. To summarize, the regression model was statistically significant and accurately predicted the relationship between team building skills and the success of the project.

Summary of Hypothesis Finding**Model summary for the communication channel on the performance of construction project**

Model Summary									
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
Interpersonal Skills	.259 ^a	.067	.049	.58466	.067	3.643	3	152	.014
Coordination Skills	.276 ^a	.076	.058	.49570	.076	4.187	3	152	.007
Team Building Skills	.406 ^a	.165	.137	.50559	.165	5.925	5	150	.000

Source: Primary data (2022)

As per table of model summary, displayed is the model summary for the effects of interpersonal skills on project success. The coefficient of regression between the two variables (interpersonal skills and project success) is shown by the value of R which was found to be 0.259, indicating a positive relationship between the interpersonal skills and project success. In addition, the rate at which project success can be explained by interpersonal skills was measured by the R square values also displaying the total variation between the variables and 0.067 or 6.7%. To summarize, there is a relationship between interpersonal skills and project success since this relationship can be clearly explained and it was significant as well. Interpersonal skills – explain 25.9% of the variance with a

p-value of 0.014 which is considered sufficiently significant to confirm this relationship with project success

Interpreting the table, the provided information presents the model summary regarding the implications of coordination skills on project success. The R value for the regression between the two components (coordination skills and project success) was 0.276, indicating that there was a positive connection or relationship between coordination skills and project success. Moving forward, the rate at which one variable can explain another or simply how project success can be explained in terms of coordination skills, was represented by the R square, which had a value of 0.076 or 7.6 percent. In a word, there is a relationship between coordination skills and project success that can be explained and that is significant as well

The table above reveals the model summary for the effects of team building skills on project, as shown in table of model summary. The R value was 0.406, indicating a positive and favorable relationship between the team building skills and project success. And again, the R square value explained the total variation between the two variables (Team building skills and project success) was found to be 0.165 or 16.5 percent. As a researcher, I concluded that there is a clearly established relationship between team building skills and project success since the relationship can be explained and is significant.

Conclusions

Testing Hypothesis: There is statistical significance of communication channel on the performance of construction project.

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Interpersonal Skills	(Constant)	2.817	.496	.689	5.679	.000	1.837	3.796
Coordination Skills	(Constant)	5.428	.644	.577	8.428	.000	4.155	6.701
Team Building Skills	(Constant)	5.041	.605	.804	8.332	.000	3.846	6.236

Source: Primary data (2022)

The Coefficients^a table shows that beta=0.689, with a p value of 0.000 and a t value of 5.679 > 1.96. Because the p value was less than 0.05, the researcher observed and confirmed the affirmative hypothesis saying that interpersonal skills affect project success. It is, thus, concluded that negotiation skills play the role of resource mobilization and securing proper contracts that ensure project success.

According to Coefficients^a table, the researcher involved both standardized and unstandardized test for the effect of coordination skills on project success. As seen from the table, beta was 0.577, p value was 0.000, and the t value was 8.428 > 1.96. Because the p value was less than 0.05, the researcher maintained the positive hypothesis and confirmed that coordination skills affect project success. The study further established that coordination skills are crucial for project success as it enables the project manager to minimize waste and improve project sustainability. Thus, it is concluded that coordination skills play an essential role in reducing waste which enhances project success.

The unstandardized and standardized coefficients for the influence of team building skills on project success are shown in table no.22. Beta was 0.804 with a t value of 8.332 > 1.96 and p values of 0.000, which is less than 0.05 according to the data in the table. In a nutshell, the researcher was

able to validate the affirmative hypothesis saying that team building skills has influence on project success. The study also established that team building is crucial for project sustainability. Therefore, it is concluded that team building plays an important role in achieving project success. Agreed with, Deepa and Seth (2013) stated that team building and delegation skills as well as problem solving skills is important for project success.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings the researcher recommends the following:

However much additional skills might be required to ensure the effectiveness of projects mainly for large companies, there is a need in training the employees in organization about the importance of self-awareness and adapting to differences at the workplace. In fact, it has been challenging for some organizations to have employees who are always willing to quit their responsibilities due to inability to adapt to differences and working with employees with whom they have differences in both personalities and cultural backgrounds.

Since coordination involve taking fellows toward a credible mission statement, organizations need to hire qualified candidates and make sure that the level of competition during the hiring process remain unbeatable.

Lastly, teams which are carefully designed bring more of positive outcomes and less failure. Most of young and middle-sized organizations in Rwanda lack the skill set in building effective team. One most common mistake should be joining team members with the same ability to complete a task. There is a need for managers and leaders to recognize why they need to form groups of people with different abilities and talents.

Each employee in the team must bring unique set of skills to the table which is completely relevant to the project and be able to communicate it clearly.

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