

Significance of competencies of project managers on the performance of projects within NGOs in Mogadishu, Somalia

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Abstract

The main objective of the study was to evaluate the competencies of project managers on the performance of projects within Non-Governmental Organizations in Mogadishu, Somalia. Descriptive research design was used, and the target population consisted of 78 managers and 390 senior employees in the 78 NGOs in Mogadishu. The study adopted a stratified random sampling technique, and the sample size was 216 respondents chosen using Yamane's (1967) formula. The data was collected using questionnaire, and descriptive and inferential statistics were applied in the data analysis. The study findings indicated that employees' skills and competencies influence NGO performance and there was an information sharing within the project team employees. The NGO had a competent project manager, NGO adhered to the project management process, all members were aware of the project's nature and that there was active involvement of external stakeholders. The result indicated that the intercept between Skills and Competencies of project managers and Performance of Project becomes better by $\beta = 0.709$, $p < 0.01$ meaning that when Skills and Competencies of project managers is improved by a single unit, the project performance also significantly improves by 70.9%. The study concluded that skills and competencies of the project managers is a must for any successful delivery of project assignment. The ingredients of soft, technical and professional skills offers an effective combination for the success of any project. The study recommends that NGOs embrace the merit-based selection of individuals for any position based on the competencies required for effective performance of their roles.

Key Words: Significance, competencies, project managers, performance, projects, NGOs, Mogadishu, Somalia.

Introduction

A competency is generally defined as a combination of skills, knowledge, attributes, and behaviors that enable an individual to perform a task (Manullang, 2017). This is based on scientific analysis of psychological and educational literature. It also includes individually-oriented and practical-activity technology, which means the ability of a person to complete a specific activity at a high quality level (in this case the research).

The United States firmly believes that a robust civil society – independent of state control or government involvement- is necessary for democracy to thrive. From the earliest days of

U.S. history, civil society organizations have played a key role in protecting human rights and advancing human progress (Cheatham, 2016). Approximately 1.5 million NGOs are operating in the United States. These NGOs undertake various activities, including political advocacy on foreign policy, elections, the environment, healthcare, women's rights, economic development, and many other issues. They often develop and address new approaches to social and economic problems that governments cannot address alone (Bush, & Hadden, 2019).

The role of project manager competence in project performance has been widely studied and documented in recent years. Project manager competence refers to the set of skills, knowledge, and abilities that are necessary to effectively plan, execute, and manage projects. Kiggundu (2017) study found that the competencies of project managers have a significant impact on the performance of construction projects in developing countries. The study found that the following competencies were most important: leadership, communication, problem-solving, technical knowledge, and decision-making. The results indicate that organizations should focus on developing and enhancing these competencies in their project managers to improve project performance.

Al-Mashari and Al-Mashari (2019) analyzed the results of previous studies to determine the impact of project manager competencies on project success. The results indicate that project manager competencies have a positive impact on project success. The most important competencies were found to be leadership, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and technical knowledge. The study also found that organizations that have project managers with these competencies tend to have higher levels of project success. Jang and Kim's (2021) study found that project manager competencies have a significant impact on the performance of software development projects. The study found that the most important competencies were communication, leadership, technical knowledge, problem-solving, and decision-making. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to evaluate the competencies of project managers on the performance of projects within Non-Governmental Organizations in Mogadishu, Somalia.

Methodology

Descriptive research design was used because it helped in collecting information, making summary, presenting data, and interpreting it so that the results obtained would be interpreted with clarity (Serakan & Bougie, 2013). Saunders et al. (2016) postulated that descriptive research gives an investigator the opportunity to gain an accurate profile of events, persons or situations. Kothari and Garg (2014) define descriptive research as a structure and design used to measure the features identified in the research questions. The population for this study comprised 78 managers and 390 senior employees in the 78 NGOS in Mogadishu City. Therefore, the sample frame was obtained from human resource data bases. Stratified random sampling techniques was used to choose participants from the two categories. The sample size was obtained using Yamane's (1967) formula. To calculate the sample size that was used in the study to collect data.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

n = sample size required

N = Population size

e = allowable error (%)

At 95% confidence level with $\pm 10\%$

The sample size for this study will be;

$$468 / \{1 + 468(0.05)^2\} = 216$$

Primary data collection was used with the aid of questionnaire tool which had questions on a five point Likert scale where; 5= strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3=neutral, 2= disagree and 1= strongly disagree. A pilot study was done using at least 5% of the respondents (10) to ensure that items in the research instrument are clearly stated and have the same meaning to all participants (Kothari, 2014). Feedback obtained after conducting a pilot study was used to make necessary corrections on the questionnaire. Necessary editing was then done on the questionnaires used to collect data the actual data for the study. Data coding, cleaning and sorting were done. Data was then analyzed using SPSS version 25. The study also used descriptive and inferential statistics. Pearson correlation and regression analysis were used for the inferential statistics to determine relationship between variables and the regression model were as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1$$

Where:

Y= performance of NGOs in Mogadishu

$\beta_0, \beta_1,$ = Regression coefficients for the independent variables.

X_1 = employee skills and competences

Results

Response rate

The target sample of the study was 216 and about 172 respondents responded to the administered questionnaire for analysis yielding a response rate of 80%. This response rate is in line with Mugenda and Mugenda (2008)'s assertion that a response rate of above 75% is adequate for drawing statistical conclusions. The results are as shown in the Figure 1.

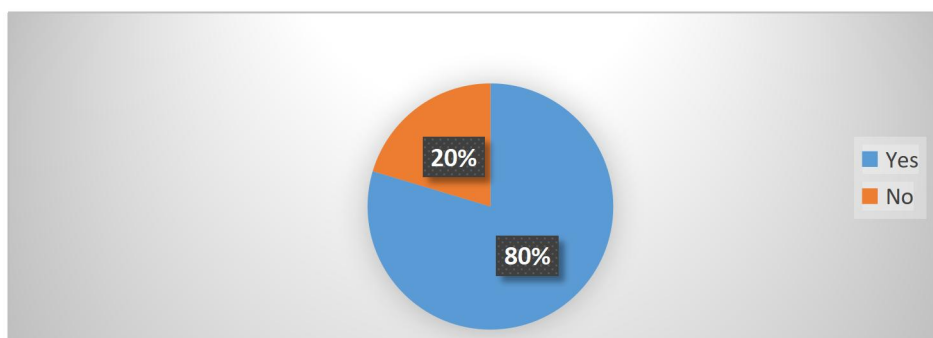


Figure 1. Response Rate

Descriptive Statistics

Competencies of Project Managers on Performance of Project

On using standard deviation scale of 1-5, the employees were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with the statements on the skills and competencies of project managers. A

standard deviation score of 1.0 to 1.4 means that, the statement is not true (no extent), a score of 1.5 to 2.4 means that, the statement is true to a little extent, a score of 2.5 to 3.4 means that, the statement is true to moderate extent, a score of 3.4 to 4.4 means that, the statement is true to a great extent and 4.5 to 5 means that, the statement is true to a very great extent.

The findings showed that, all the statements were true to a great extent with a mean of 3.5 and above. This is an indication that to a great extent; there was information sharing within the project team employees, learning from current and past experiences, an effective monitoring and control, and the NGOs had a competent project manager, adhered to the project management process. All members were aware of the project's nature and that there was active involvement of external stakeholders. The results are as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Performance of Project

Statement	N	Missing	Mean	Std. Dev
There is an information sharing within the project team.	171	1	3.77	1.153
We learn from current and past experiences.	171	1	3.76	1.230
There is an effective Monitoring and control.	172	0	3.75	1.119
We have a competent project manager.	170	2	3.75	1.212
We adhere to the project management process	169	3	3.74	1.135
All members are aware of the project's nature	169	3	3.57	1.233
I am aware of external factors affecting the project	170	2	3.57	1.240
There is a proper selection of project resources	171	1	3.56	1.179
Level of emphasis on quality of product/process	172	0	3.54	1.146
Active involvement of external stakeholders	172		3.53	1.126
Aggregate	171		3.654	1.177

Using a standard deviation score on a scale of 1-5, the employees were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with the statements on the skills and competencies of project managers. A standard deviation score of 1.0 to 1.4 means the that, statement is not true (no extent), a score of 1.5 to 2.4 means that, the statement is true to a little extent, a score of 2.5 to 3.4 means that, statement is true to moderate extent, a score of 3.4 to 4.4 means that, the statement is true to a great extent and 4.5 to 5 means that, the statement is true to a very great extent.

Employees agreed to a great extent with a mean score of 3.5 that education and training play an important role for young people in building interest in entrepreneurship as a career and that, the leadership is supportive and committed to strategy implementation. The employees also agreed to a moderate extent with a mean score of about 3.0 that, the leadership built networks, and hence succeeded in the long run. The leadership ensured that the coordination of activities was sufficiently effective. The organizations had enough competent staff to accomplish goals, Training offered had helped the employees to develop their business ideas and undertook regular training and development to improve the performance of employees. There was lack of adequate reward system which affected

strategy implementation adversely. Training offered was evaluated against the job that an individual held. The results are as shown in the Table 2.

Table 2. Skills and Competencies of Project Managers

Statement	N	Missing	Mean	Std. Dev
Education and training play an important role for young people in building interest in entrepreneurship as a career	165	7	3.53	1.295
The leadership is supportive and committed to strategy implementation	167	5	3.50	1.113
The leadership builds networks and hence succeeds in the long term.	166	6	3.46	1.224
The leadership ensures that the coordination of activities is sufficiently effective.	168	4	3.39	1.194
I have enough competent staff to enable the Organization to accomplish its goals.	167	5	3.36	1.163
Training offered has helped the employees to develop their business ideas,	168	4	3.17	1.321
Training offered is focused on the job that individual currently holds	168	4	3.08	1.199
We undertake regular training and development to improve the performance of employees	167	5	3.07	1.243
The lack of an adequate reward system affects strategy implementation.	169	3	3.04	1.255
My employees can meet difficult demands by using psychosocial resources such as skills and attitudes	168	4	2.91	1.120
Training offered is evaluated against the job that an individual currently holds	168	4	2.73	1.242
Aggregate	167		3.204	1.215

Correlation between Skills and Competencies of project managers and Performance of Project

A Pearson's correlation was done to investigate if there was significant relationship between skills and competencies of project managers and performance of project. The results shown in Table 3 indicate that there is strong positive significant relationship between competencies of project managers and performance of project ($r=0.677$, $p=0.00$). This, therefore, indicates that any significant change in competencies of project managers would significantly affect performance of project.

Table 3. Correlation between Skills and Competencies of project managers and Performance of Project

		Project Performance	Skills and competency
Project Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.677**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
Skills and competency	Pearson Correlation	.677**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N		172	172

****.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analysis between competencies of project managers and Performance of Project

Model Summary for Competencies of project managers and Performance of Project

The model summary for Skills and Competencies of project managers and Performance of Project has been presented in Table 4 below. The findings show that R-Square= 0.458. This means that competencies of project managers predicted 45.8% of the project performance, while 54.2% of project performance was explained by other factors.

Table 5. Model Summary for Skills and Competencies of Project Managers and Performance of Project

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.677 ^a	.458	.454	.72241

a. Predictors: (Constant), Skills and competency

ANOVA between skills and competencies of project managers and performance of project

The ANOVA between Competencies of project managers and Performance of Project is presented in Table 6. The results showed that there was significant linear relationship variance between Skills and Competencies of project managers and Performance of Project ($F = 121.688, p < .05$). Therefore, the linear regression model is $Y = B_0 + X_1 B_1$ where Y is the Project performance, X_1 is the Skills and Competencies of project managers, B_1 is the coefficient or effect of Skills and Competencies of project managers (X_1) and B_0 is the constant in the model.

Table 6. ANOVA between skills and competencies of project managers and Performance of Project

		ANOVA ^a				
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	63.506	1	63.506	121.688	.000 ^b
	Residual	75.151	171	.522		
	Total	138.657	172			

a. Dependent Variable: Project Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Skills and competency

Regression Coefficients for Skills and Competencies of project managers and Performance of Project

Table 7 represents the regression coefficients between skills and competencies of project managers and performance of project. The result indicated that, the intercept between competencies of project managers and performance of project becomes better by $\beta = 0.709$, $p < 0.01$. This therefore means that, when competencies of project managers was improved by a single unit, the project performance also significantly improved by 70.9%. The significant linear regression model explained in Table 5 above is therefore $Y = 1.432 + 0.709X_1$.

Table 7. Regression Coefficients for Skills and Competencies of project managers and Performance of Project

		Coefficients				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.432	.214		6.682	.000
	Skills and competency	.709	.064	.677	11.031	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Project Performance

F Critical was 121.688

F calculated= $63.506 / .522 = 121.659$

The calculated F value in a test was smaller than the F critical value, we therefore accept the null hypothesis and state that Skills and competencies of project managers has a significant influence on the performance of project.

Discussion

The study revealed that skills and competencies of project managers improves performance of projects on the basis of education and training which plays an important role for young people in building interest in entrepreneurship as a career which is key for a better performance of a project. This is in tandem with Israr and Shuhymee (2021) who indicated that training on soft skills enables employees to master the art of successfully managing projects in effectively in any organization. The study found that the organization has enough competent staff to enable accomplishment of its goals confirming that skills and competencies are determinants of selecting a successful project manager who will drive the needs of the project accordingly. This is in agreement with Bich and Thai (2019) who stated that strategic skills, interpersonal skills, business skills, and cognitive skills are key for any successful project manager.

Training offered, helped the employees to develop business ideas, and it was confirmed that the organization undertakes regular training and development to improve the performance of employees. This has been found to be aligned with Ahmed and Vittal, (2017) who mentioned that project leaders who have the required skills play a big role in the success of a project as they will be having requisite skills in running the affairs of the project. Further it is very wise to select leaders with proper skills so as to offer effective guidance on the project which in turn promotes its performance.

Tracking and monitoring is also among the effective project management skills needed for the progress of any project. Further, a project manager oversees the development and execution of a project, ensuring that it is on track and meeting deadlines which entails team management. This is in sync with Manullang (2017) who noted that employees need soft skills such as; time management, decision making, planning and conflict management skills thus create a good work environment. Through the study, regression coefficients between skills and competencies of project managers on performance of project indicates that skills and competencies of project managers makes project performance better by $\beta = 0.709$, $p < 0.01$. This translates to 70.9% improvement on performance with a single unit of improvement on skills and competencies. This is further in congruence with (Nhung & Phong, 2019) who stated that leaders play a big role in the survival and development of organizations and they can affect and inspire employees to increase their productivity in the company.

Negotiation techniques too are one of the critical project manager skills. They need to be able to negotiate contracts, scope, timelines, and resources with project sponsors, stakeholders and team members. They also need to be able to resolve conflicts that arise during the running of any project. Good negotiation skills can help project managers get the resources they need to complete the project on time and within budget. They can also help project managers build strong relationships with project sponsors, stakeholders, and team members. Through the study, it is revealed that there is a strong positive correlation between skills and competencies of project managers and performance of projects ($r=0.677$, $p=0.00$). This indicates that the performance of a project is significantly affected by any significant change in skills and competencies. Organizations should therefore invest in skills improvement to experience a positive change in their performance. This is in agreement with Manullang (2017) who noted that employees need soft skills such as; time management, decision making, planning and conflict management skills thus create a good work environment and in return positively enhance performance.

The study revealed that the organization undertakes regular training and development to

improve the performance of employees with a mean of 3.07 and a standard deviation of 1.243. Having both hard and soft abilities is necessary for being a successful project manager. This will enable the manager to lead a team to success, develop new abilities, and enhance his/her standing within the organization as the project manager. The study revealed that soft skills enhances the performance of managers in project management. This is consistent with Manullang (2017) who noted that employees need soft skills such as; time management, decision making, planning and conflict management skills thus create a good work environment.

Conclusion

The study concluded that skills and competencies of the project managers is a must for any successful delivery of project assignment. The ingredients of soft, technical and professional skills offer an effective combination for the success of any project. Organizations are therefore encouraged to select qualified individuals as well as develop skills through lifelong learning to experience stable and a competitive growth in the respective projects and or industries. Areas for improvement are; level of awareness of the project's nature among all members, understanding of external factors affecting the project, and selection of project resources. Competencies improvement is also required in quality delivery of project services and involvement of external stakeholders.

Recommendations

The study recommends that NGOs must embrace the selection of individuals for any position to be done on merit based on the competencies set for effective performance of their roles. This should not only be done for projects but in all positions within every organization to remain competitive in the business environment. In addition, all members of the team should be made aware of the nature of the project and its objectives to ensure everyone is on the same page in terms of competencies required. The team should regularly monitor external factors that could affect the project and have contingency plans in place to mitigate potential risks. The team should also put more effort into the selection of project resources to ensure that the right people and tools are in place to achieve project goals. The team should place a greater emphasis on the quality of the product or process to ensure that the end result meets or exceeds expectations. There is a need for more stakeholders' involvement such as clients, to ensure that their input and feedback are taken into consideration throughout the project life cycle.

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