

Organisational Behaviour and Success of Construction Projects

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Abstract

Projects are set up for specific purposes which are to be achieved within a stipulated time period, but not all projects achieve it set objective within the set time. In order for a construction project to be executed successfully, a team has to work closely together and implement project goals. All project stakeholders including the sponsor and the project implementation team are responsible for the successful completion of any project. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate organisational behaviours necessary for successful completion of a construction project. The study was conducted in Gauteng Province, South Africa and a structured questionnaire was administered to construction professionals. Retrieved questionnaires were analysed using the relative importance index. Findings from the study revealed that efficient relationship management, proper documentation of progress and effective teamwork are the most important traits required from project stakeholders to ensure successful completion of projects. It was, therefore, concluded certain behavioural traits must be inherent in project stakeholders and team members for a project to reach successful completion.

Keywords

Organisational behavior, Project stakeholders' behavior, Construction process, Project team behaviour, Project team selection.

1. Introduction

Construction projects are dynamic and complex in nature as it involves carrying out a fragmented set of activities by different project stakeholders and teams (Rahman and Kumaraswamy, 2004). Similarly, Studies like that of Whitley (2006) and Meng and Boyd (2017) has established that the construction industry is the largest and most complex project-based industry in the world which is characterized with volatile projects. This makes it difficult to measure project success in the construction industry. One major problem of project success is the complexity of defining what is successful or not. This is because success itself is subjective to individual opinion (Ojiako et al., 2008). In the past, construction project success is usually measured by accomplishments against time and budgets (Collier, 2009). More recently, success has been described as a function of performance measurement and since individual projects are unique to each other, the criteria for measuring performance and success will also vary from one project to another (Toor and Ogunlana, 2010). Contractors must, therefore, ensure that the construction project management style and procedures are customized to meet individual project dynamics (Müller and Turner, 2007).

Baccarini, (1999) and Cooke-Davies, (2002) explained that while there are interlinkages between both, project success and project management success are two distinct concepts. Project management success has to do with the internal efficiency of the project while project success has to do with the external performance (Shenhar et al., 1997). Previous studies have emphasized that the success or failure of a construction project can be attributed to the performance; personalities; skills; and style of the project leaders. These attributes of construction contractors, subcontractors and consultants greatly impact the outcome of a project (Duy, et al., 2004). Furthermore, Ahadzie et al. (2008) classified performance of construction project team members into six areas of competences which includes; job knowledge; job dedication; task proficiency; experience; cognitive ability; and interpersonal facilitation.

A lot of researchers have become conscious of the fact that human qualities and attitudes should be part of the criteria for construction project success and they must be included with the widely established technical parameters of project success. Since it will be extremely difficult to measure human qualities, this area of research is often neglected (Kloppenborg and Opfer, 2002). Efficient management of projects will most definitely contribute to project success but might not be able to avert failure. Numerous times, project success or failure is attributed to different construction decisions and actions performed by one or more of the stakeholders involved. However, some organisational behaviours of project participants could be pertinent to the success of projects. Hence, this study seeks to investigate organisational behaviours necessary for successful completion of a construction project.

2. Construction project team members and organisational behaviour

Alzahrani and Emsley 2013 noted that different researchers have from time to time come up with a set of criteria for project success, but there is yet to be a general concession about the criteria for it, nor is there a single comprehensive definition for it. However, it was emphasized that the success of projects is closely linked to the performance of project team members. The project team is a temporary, dynamic, multi-cultural, and multi-disciplinary group of professionals put together and ultimately tasked with the responsibility of delivering a successful project against all odds (Wu et al., 2017). This makes the process of team selection in construction projects very delicate as the qualities peculiar to each person might be beneficial or detrimental to the project (VanDuinkerken, Kaspar and Sullenger, 2019).

Chow, Then and Skitmore (2005) pointed out that construction team members are highly interdependent and in order to enhance productivity, team members must interact among themselves. Furthermore, if one member of the team loses focus or motivation, this will affect team functionality and productivity. To successfully execute a construction project, a strong team must be assembled to implement project goals (Tarmizi and Mohyin, 2012). VanDuinkerken, Kaspar and Sullenger (2019) noted some issues that should be considered during the selection process, these issues include previous experience; work delegation structure; attentiveness and communication skills; verbal skills; enthusiasm; capability; temper; and openness to opinions. These considerations will enhance an efficient project team selection process as the information to be retrieved will reflect the kind of people the project needs. These peculiar issues in conjunction with other parameters of the project will help choose the right people for the job, thus, improving the chances of project success.

Yang, Huang, and Wu (2011) noted that researchers are gradually beginning to include criteria relating to human attitudes and qualities into attributes of project success. These human qualities measured are behaviours peculiar to individual persons and may include flexibility; confidence; aggressiveness; adaptability; verbal skills; spontaneity; enthusiasm; and so much more. Similarly, in the study carried out by (Pereira, et al., 2008), cultural difference was established as one of the project success criteria. In another light, Belout and Gauvreau (2004) also established that organisational structure is pertinent to the success of a project. Also, Liphadzi, Aigbavboa, and Thwala (2015) explained that leadership styles have critical effects on the success or failure of construction projects.

Construction projects are by nature highly complex, very volatile and interdependent on different organisational activities, which make effective communication essential. Tarricane and Luca (2002) stressed the importance of effective communication and noted that communication breakdown will most definitely lead to inefficiency of the team. Furthermore, conflict is bound to arise as a result of cultural and behavioural differences, however, communication is the best way to mitigate and resolve conflicts (Badir et al., 2012; Buvik and Rolfsen, 2015). Effective communication among project teams and individual members allows efficient synchronization of tasks and thereby, reduce the risk of conflicts and disintegration (Kennedy et al., 2011; Reed and Knight, 2010). Effective communication can only be achieved when there is a receptive environment within the project, and this is only possible when team members portray the right attitude.

Furthermore, Effective teams are known for sharing common goals which strive for successful completion of a project. They must work together, make a commitment to achieve goals, embrace their diversity, concentrate on a common goal, stay loyal and believe in the project, and maintain high team spirits and morale. Ineffective teams are usually as a result of overcompetitive team members, lack of motivation and commitment, poor communication, lack of trust for each other's skills and abilities, and conflict (Chow, Then and Skitmore, 2005). Mohyin, Dainty and Carrillo (2009) emphasized that an ideal team member is someone that accepts the organisation or project's goals, that is willing to make an extra effort and that has a very strong desire to remain part of a project.

3. Research Design

This study's theoretical review has extensively discussed how project team members and their organisational behaviour can be beneficial or detrimental to the success of a construction project. It further stressed the human qualities to watch out for when selecting project team members as these human qualities will make up the organisational behaviour within the project. Since this study is aimed at investigating the organisational behaviours necessary for successful completion of a construction project, this research was streamlined into a descriptive study and thus, the survey method was deemed appropriate for collecting the primary data. The research adopted a quantitative model and a five-point Likert scale structured questionnaire was designed and used as the medium of collecting primary data with the sole purpose of achieving the aim of the study.

This research was conducted in the Gauteng Province of South Africa through a survey of construction professionals which includes; architects, civil engineers, quantity surveyors, contracts managers and construction project managers. One hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed, but only eighty-two were received back and deemed usable and formed the bases of data analysis for the study. In order to determine the level of importance of each rated factor, the five-point scale from the questionnaire was converted into Relative Importance Index (RII) for each of the rated factors. The collated data were tested to check its reliability with the aid of Cronbach's alpha test and returned a value of 0.972 indicating that the collected set of data is very reliable and fit for use for this study.

4. Findings

Background data collected revealed that 47.56% of the respondents are Civil Engineers, 21.95% are Construction Project Managers, 12.20% are Quantity Surveyors, 9.76% are Architects, 6.10% are Contracts Managers and 2.44% are Project Managers. Distribution of the respondents based on the length of work experience in the construction industry shows that 64.63% has 1-5 years of experience, 30.49% has 6-10 years of experience while 4.88% has above 10 years of experience in the construction industry. 61.11% of the respondents worked in the private sector, 32.94% of the respondents worked for both private and public sectors while 6.15% of the respondents worked in the public sector. The slightly even distribution of the respondents in various occupation and engagement sector speaks to the reliability of this research.

Table 1. Organisational behaviour pertinent to project success

Organisational behaviours	RII (%)	SD	Rank
Cordiality in relations	78.20	0.834	1st
Efficient documentation of project progress	78.00	0.811	2nd
Effective teamwork	76.80	0.793	3rd
Respect between stakeholders	75.80	0.828	4th
Effective communication	75.80	0.828	4th
Capture and re-use experience gained	75.80	0.828	4th
Conflict management	75.40	0.806	7th
Sharing of experience acquired	75.40	0.806	7th
Strong desire to complete a project	75.20	0.897	9th
Obligation to complete a project	74.80	0.886	10th
Effective decision making	74.60	0.982	11th
Strong desire to remain part of a project	73.20	0.933	12th
Trust for each other's competencies	72.60	0.824	13th
Willingness to make extra effort	71.80	0.736	14th
Acceptance of a project's goals	68.20	0.684	15th
Strong belief in a project's goals	67.60	0.696	16th

In a bid to ascertain the organisational behaviour of project team members that are pertinent to the success of construction projects, the respondents were asked to rank in their professional opinion the identified organisational behaviours in respect to how impactful they are on construction project success. Table 1 presents the organisational behaviours pertinent to the success of construction projects. Results presented in table 1 reveals that all organisational

behaviours identified by the study which made up the survey are important to construction project success. This is because all behaviours identified in the study returned relative importance indexes above 65%, the indexes ranged between 67.60% to 78.20%. According to the results, cordiality in relations, efficient documentation of project progress, and effective teamwork are the most important organisation behaviours needed for project success as they returned importance indexes of 78.20%, 78.00%, and 76.80% respectively. Also, very important on the list are respect, effective communication, as well as capturing and reusing experience gained with importance indexes of 75.8% each.

5. Discussion

Mickan and Rodger (2000) agree with the results of this study by emphasizing the importance of teamwork and how valuable it is to any kind of organisation. Also, Tarricane and Luca (2002) listed organisational behaviours pertinent to achieving project success to include commitment to the team's success, maintaining a strong belief in project's goals, interdependence among team members, interpersonal skills, effective communication, constructively criticizing team members work, commitment to team processes, leadership and accountability. However, Mohyin, Dainty and Carrillo (2009) disagree with these results as its findings revealed that the most important organisational behaviours for project success are strong desire to remain part of a project, willingness to make extra efforts and a strong belief in a project's goals. These behaviours ranked lower in the current study. Leung (2014), believes that construction team members should have an emotional attachment to a project in order for it to be successful.

Empirical findings of this study revealed that cordiality in relating with team members in a project is very important as this will build up trust among project members and form a sense of familiarity that will be much beneficial during group activities. Efficient documentation during the course of a project is also a very good attribute to possess as this will ensure that all documents pertaining to the progress of the project can easily be assessed as at when needed. This will make the decision-making process more efficient as the evidence of past occurrence in the project are readily available. Furthermore, effective teamwork was also identified as a key contributor to construction project success. Having a good working relationship with colleagues within the same projects will enhance the brainstorming and decision-making process because team members can easily depend on each other. Effective teamwork will also enhance the acquisition of new skills from colleagues and personally improve individual efforts towards team success as well as the ultimate success of the project.

6. Conclusion

As a generally established fact, construction projects are very volatile and complex in nature when compared with other kinds of projects. The volatility and complexity of construction projects can easily be attributed to the large number of multi-disciplined staffs needed to successfully complete individual projects. Since construction projects require a large number of workers, there is a need to examine the personal traits of each worker that will promote project success. This study was therefore aimed at investigating the organisational behaviours necessary for successful completion of a construction project. The theoretical review discussed how project team members and their organisational behaviour can be beneficial or detrimental to the success of a construction project. The empirical findings of this research stressed the vitality for an efficient team selection process, in order for a project team to effectively work together and achieve project goals. Before a team is selected, the skills and experience possessed by possible team members should be evaluated. Each team members' personality should be evaluated as well. Forming a team haphazardly often leads to team destruction and non-realisation of project goals. In selecting construction project team members, it is very important to consider the personal qualities of individual prospective member in addition to their professional capacity and experience. This will ensure a positive organisational behaviour towards the project which will enhance the chances of construction project success.

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Biography

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