REDEFINING THE IMPACT OF THE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGERS SKILLS ON THE WORKING PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Although many studies have addressed the critical role of the project manager for construction projects, the consensus shortage of these studies was indicated. As such, this paper aims to review the related studies that discussed construction project management, project management skills and the working performance to redefine the impact of these skills on the performance of the construction projects. Through the present review, the significant influence of the project manager on the project performance has been confirmed and elaborated which can be a basis for further investigations.

KEYWORDS: *Project Manager for Construction Projects & Project Performance*

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INTRODUCTION

Many studies discussed that every project manager needs to have several characteristics to confirm the project success which required a wide experience. For instance, Leung et al., 2009 discussed that the managerability to deal with the different situation during the whole process of the project enhance the project performance. Moreover, Mouchi et al. (2011) elaborated that due to the manager responsibility for the project outcomes, they need to be effective for the working staff to achieve the aimed objectives. Similarly, Patanakul and Milosevic (2008) explained that managers need to create strong relationships with the working team and consider the customers' anticipations to improve the project's profits.

Moreover, Whelton (2004) elaborated that construction projects are related to the organization's vision, strategies since they consider the means to support the aimed objectives. The researcher also highlighted the considerable impact of several management strategies on reaching these objectives, including the strategy of working practices where the owners continually reform which impact the facilities performance. Moreover, the workplace strategies that affect the business performance, as the study argued, include the "workplace cost management, workplace efficiency, workplace productivity, and user satisfaction with the work environment" (p.2). Accordingly, the impact of the project manager on the construction project performance is indicated.

Construction Project Management

The project consists of an interrelated group of activities that controlled by a certain scope, financial plan, and working schedule to produce the required investment assets for achieving the Agency strategic objectives, as Shadan (2012) discussed. As such, the researcher explained that the project manager would be the one who is responsible for executing this project by planning and controlling the operating strategies. The project management procedure, as Shadan described it, is the process that begins with identifying users' requirements, project restraints, required resources

in order to reach the strategies objectives; therefore, the related manager needs to have prior experience and adequate information. Moreover, ForcadaMatheu (2005, p.11) mentioned that The Project Management Institute (PMI) defines the project management as “the application of knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements.”

On the other hand, construction projects are a set of actions that determine, plan, construct and utilize the construction work (Hughes and Murdoch, 2001). They also include simple and complex projects according to the implemented procedures which defined as significant achieved mission (Mouchi et al., 2011; Safa et al., 2015). In addition, the construction project management, as ForcadaMatheu(2005) defined it, is planning, controlling, and contradicting a project from its beginning until its completion phase on behalf of the customer where his objectives are identified to determine the required cost, schedule, time, and quality. The researcher also explained that the project management for construction needs also to integrate, monitor, and evaluate the project output be separating the functions of management from the executions.

Forcada Matheu also explained that the construction project management has three fundamental requirements: thinking forward which uncovers the problems to find suitable solutions, communication that manage the collaboration of reports and stakeholders’ participation, and the evaluation of the project outcomes. In other words, the construction managers spend most of their time on the information transmission and the communication procedures. This information, as the study explained, is complex due to the great data flow of a construction project that includes different considerations in time, resources and related entities which they need further utilization and monitoring to enhance the project success.

To improve the construction project management, the Project Management Institute has published in 2003 the PMBOK Guide Construction Extension that emphasizes on the important methods for the project branches, as Guérin(2012) elaborated. The study also mentioned that this type of projects frequently faces several challenges in the budget, time, scope, communication, changes’ controlling, and schedule. For maintaining the construction project schedule, several factors need to be considered; such as, “weather, geography, geology, environmental and other regulatory constraints, and numerous stakeholders representing a wide diversity of interests in the project” (p.5). Similarly, other aspects are in need of deep monitoring to identify the possible challenges.

Guérin (2012)explained that the manager of a construction project might face these challenges due to the presence of two factors. The first factor is using the virtual project teams that become more frequent in different types of projects since the actual work duration is restricted to the daylight availability, safety consideration, and labor regulations. On the other hand, the second factor is related to the organizational interfaces which include formal and informal reports, funding constraints, and communication. Poor communication, as the study explained, weakens the project budget, schedule, and scope.

Forcada Matheu (2005) discussed several limitations of the construction project management, which were categorized into three groups; communication adequacy, management practice automation, and standard procedure shortage. For communication, the researcher explained that the management is frequently concerned with managing the individual problems, including the reworking obstacles that may cause additional expenditure, and the lack of supplies integration. The second group that addresses the automation of managerial practices may cause several problems; such as, the resources diversity (i.e., electronic and hard copies), the isolation of the software tasks, the international standards shortage, and the shortage of appropriate decision-making methods. Finally, the third group that highlighted the shortage of

standard application where the project manager experience becomes the main source for the management practices which led to the practice variation, thus affecting the information coordination and controlling.

Project Manager Required Skills

Effective project management depends on the project manager's capability, expertise, and authorization, as Dainty et al. (2003) discussed. The researcher investigated the project manager performance by determining several attributes including leadership, decision-making, team building, understanding, and self-efficacy where each factor consists of several indicators. Firstly, the leading indicators include "monitoring and evaluation," "forward-thinking," "responsibility," "direction," "delegation," "assertiveness," and "flexibility" (p. 213). Moreover, the decision-making indicators include "clear decision-making approach," "recognizing key issues," "safety management and awareness," "problem-solving," "risk management," and "achieving production targets."

For the team building indicators which consist of "team formation and development", "people management," "maintaining low staff turnover," and "supportiveness." Understanding skill embodied the manager ability to integrate the information for further use; therefore, it covers the indicators of "rapid understanding of situations and issues," "learning from mistakes," "problem identification," "commercial awareness," "thoroughness," and "technical expertise." Since the project manager self-efficacy has an impact on the working performance; it includes several indicators, "task motivation," "dedication," "initiative," "enthusiasm," "self-discipline," "time management," and "ambition." The researchers highlighted the importance of these attributes and indicators; practical skills, for the project manager which also had been emphasized by previous studies as critical requirements for developing the working outcomes.

In addition, Fisher (2010) suggested that six main skills need to be project managers need to have for successful managerial: 1) Support and comprehend the employees' different characteristics; 2) Effective strategies for leadership; 3) Motivate the working staff; 4) Respect and accept the individual' situation; 5) Recognize the sources of conflicts and impacts and have the ability to solve them; 6) Understand the workforce cultural differences. In addition, self-confidence can also play an effective role in the project management since it improves the managers' abilities in decision-making, working performance, and problem-solving (Paglis and Green, 2002; Mouchi et al., 2011).

Danborg (2011) resulted that several management practices that include effective communication, planning, training, and feedback can assist considerably to decrease the expected errors during the project implementation, achievement and success. Also, Whelton (2004) indicated that management problems; such as poor communication, insufficient time determination, and inadequate managerial comprehending practices, often misrepresent the collective project needs, values, opportunities, and innovation decisions. The researcher added that project managers need to manage the stakeholders contradict perspectives that frequently contain conflicted needs and values by adopting and supporting interactive and adaptive management procedures and methodologies for improving the projects' purposes.

Construction Project Performance

In 1996, Mosse and Sontheimer implied that the project performance depends on the projectability to maintain its progress towards the intended objectives during its implementation. Consequently, previous literature has evaluated the construction projects performance on a wide level; such as Whelton (2004) who suggested several indicators for this evaluation. These indicators include 'client satisfaction with the product, client satisfaction with the service, defects in the product, the predictability of cost, the predictability of time, construction time, construction cost, safety, productivity and

profitability” (p.35). The researcher explained that these indicators had provided the construction teams with beneficial considerations for developing the project and facilitating the related stakeholders’ communication. Moreover, Bureau(2015) described that measuring the performance is mainly the measurement of the project outcomes and results that generate reliable information about the working project effectiveness.

Moreover, Anantatmula(2010)also indicated the crucial individual role in the project performance, which underlines the critical role of leadership and management practices for the project manager especially due to two factors. The first factor highlights the importance of managing the team-based working tasks while the second factor emphasizes the project complex considerations. Therefore, the researcher argued that the managerial functions can determine the leadership role; such as, planning and controlling the project resources, during the comprehending with sudden changes and situations. As such, the project manager who is responsible for managing the projectability and aimed vision has a great impact on the project success and performance.

The Project Manager Impact on the Working Performance

Although the traditional criteria for evaluating the performance address only the working schedule, finance, budget, conformance, many studies have developed these criteria to consider several management aspects (Winch, 2010). Moreover, Dainty et al. (2003) argued that due to the importance of the performance management, many organizations have highlighted the need for evaluating the manager performance by investigating the project financial programs estimation, demands fulfillment, and time-cost-quality considerations. The research also mentioned previous studies had discussed that for measuring the project performance, both personal performance and characteristics need to be determined. This confirms the significant impact of the manager skills and attributes on the project performing level.

The Center for Business Practices (CBP, 2005) added that since the performance is based on achieving the determined goals of a project, studies have suggested several methods to measure it for delivering the information to the managers who will increase their ability in project controlling and decision-making. The study suggested that by evaluating the project management for several aspects, the performance can be estimated. These aspects are: “Return on Investment, Productivity”; “Cost of Quality”; “Cost-Performance”; “Schedule Performance”; “Customer Satisfaction”; “Cycle Time”; “Requirements Performance”; “Employee Satisfaction”; “Alignment to Strategic Business Goals” (p.3-4).

Furthermore, Fisher (2010) added that decreasing the project failures depends on the project manager skills since these skills enable overriding the projects’ challenges. This confirms the direct influence of the project managers' skills on the construction projects performance and success. As such, many studies mentioned that for accomplishing the project objectives, suitable managerial practices need to be adopted; such as effective teamwork, communication and resource management (Jiang, 2014; Zakaria et al., 2015). While the project management is responsible for improving the project facilities, it is also responsible for combining the construction stakeholders, including the facility owners, users, investor and design specialists who provide the facility construction knowledge (Whelton, 2004). For the construction project, Dainty et al. (2003) had resulted that due to the specific characteristics of these types of projects, the performance elements are more related to the manager skills in dealing with complex situations, managing the team working activities, and having the suitable leadership qualities.

CONCLUSIONS

Every project including the construction project depends mainly on the managerial practices where the project

manager is responsible for dividing the managerial from the executive functions. The construction project management also required several strategies that essentially addresses two strategies; communication and information transmission, which highlights the impact on the manager's ability to apply these strategies. Furthermore, studies have discussed several challenges that the project construction may face ,which proper management decision can override them.

Moreover, for successful project management, the studies mentioned that a project manager needs to have several skills that will enable him to reach the project objectives, increase the profits, and enhance the project productivity and effectiveness. Also, these skills as resulted can prevent many expected errors and failures since poor managerial practices will obstacle the project to accomplish the required purpose. As such, previous studies tend to measure the project performance by investigating the managerial practices, the individual performance, and the personal characteristics. Accordingly, the project manager skills whether on the personal or the management level have considerable impacts on the construction project performance.

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