Influence of Soft Leadership Skills of a Project Manager on Project Performance: Evidence from Kenya National Youth Development & Training Projects

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Abstract
The purpose of the paper was to determine the influence of soft leadership skills of a project manager on project performance of Kenyan national youth development and training projects. The research design for this study was a descriptive research design. The study targeted one hundred and forty-three respondents who were drawn from ninety youth development and training projects which are randomly selected. A close ended and an open ended questionnaire was used to collect the data. The arithmetic mean and the standard deviation was used as the tools for data analysis with the aid of Statistical package software for social sciences (SPSS) was also used for data analysis. This study had several findings based on the four research objectives drawn. Findings showed communication skills and interpersonal skills of a project manager influences project performance. Based on the findings the study recommends that project managers should be trained on communication skills every quarter of a year. Additionally, it was recommended that written communication should be adopted as the formal mode of communication when implementing projects. It was also recommended that project managers should use formal language and practice precision when communicating project information to ensure clarity and concision of information received. Further, it was recommended that project managers should organize for team building sessions at least once a year to train and motivate the project team. Additionally, it was recommended that project managers should outline various ways of reinforcing hard work and achievements while implementing projects. It was also recommended that project managers should be trained on conflict resolutions once a year.
Keywords: *Communication Skills, Interpersonal Skills, Project Managers, Project Performance, Training Projects, Youth Development*

1.1 Introduction

Project managers play a significant role in determining the success or failure of any project (Young, 2013). As the key decision makers and executioners, project managers' soft leadership skills not only dictates how project activities are carried out to achieve project objectives, but also the nature of inter and intra organizational relationships between and among the individuals and teams involved (Munns & Bjeimi, 2010). The larger part of the 20th century, project management focused on effective planning and execution as the key pillars of any successful project (Leen, 2007). However, this approach has evolved over time, and 21st century perspectives have sought to understand project management beyond the traditional focus on the objective and hard skills dimensions of leaders' input into a project's success (Zhang, 2010). Soft attributes of project management such as problem solving, coordination, interpersonal, communication, and analysis are now considered key ingredients for professional endeavors (Siguroarson, 2009).

Additionally, Kilian (2013) states that the need for soft skills in projects is significant, indicating that 80% of reported projects performance was linked to project managers soft management skills. Emerging trends in the study of project management, however, encompasses what has been referred to as "subjective" and "soft" leadership skills, which include a leader's understanding of group dynamics, motivation, interpersonal and intercultural communication, as well as the ethical aspects of decision making (Muller, 2012). Owing to the increasing emphasis on a leader's soft skills as indispensable leadership elements in successful projects, there is corresponding interest on what specific role soft leadership skills play in determining the outcome of a project (Haddad, 2014). Indeed, the soft and subjective attributes of leadership models have become widely acknowledged as essential to all areas of corporate management (Reh, 2017). As a result, contemporary studies on leadership have advocated for the application of both hard and soft skills in project management.

This shift is supported by cases of projects whose success was largely or partly attributed to leaders who employed the right balance of hard and soft skills (Royal Media Learning, 2017) hence showing the importance of leaders to possess intercultural communication skills and coordination skills at a personal level.

The implication of these developments in the realm of project leadership is that a leader's technological knowledge and skills, professional experiences and domain expertise, which collectively consist of the project leader's tangible qualifications, are no longer the only determinants of a project's outcome (Randolph, 2009). The research explores a case study analysis to provide empirical evidence and generate new insights into the nature of the nexus between project managers skills and the performance of projects. Evidently, project performance is a crucial concept though determining the degree to which it contributes to either success or failure is complex (Chan & Scott, 2004).

In the implementation of the Kenya National Youth Development and Training program (KNYD&T) supported by the County Government of Kiambu in collaboration with the Visionary Empowerment Program (VEP), Omukami (2015) indicates that out of the 1000 youth funded projects per year, a success rate of only 45% was registered with timely completion, within scope and budget. The 55% inadequate performance was attributed to poor planning, weak communication and organizational abilities of the project managers. Nancy (2015) adds that Organizational ability, planning and decision making among the youth projects teams attributes to poor performance with inadequate training on project management prior to funding disbursement. In this regard, Jared (2015) indicates that approximately 45% of the youth projects qualify for second time funding yearly in Kikuyu sub- County.

Recognizing Youth as Kenya's most indispensable untapped resource, the Kenya National Youth Development & Training Project (KNYD& T) was developed to counter the wide array of challenges affecting them (MOYA, 2010). The goal of KNYD& T was to contribute to sustainable livelihoods for the Kenyan Youth through entrepreneurship improvement and support of youth Polytechnics (Kitili 2011). The KNYD&T undertaking seeks to enhance the potential of Kenya's micro and small enterprises and the youth to achieve their full potential (UNDP, 2014). Waswa (2010) points out that a major challenge on the success of these projects as been largely on the management despite fully funded. Wanguhu (2011) indicates that out of 300 youth development projects funded in Kikuyu division only 25% were successful on budget, within schedule and scope and registering profits, while 45% operate under cost overruns and schedules with no profits and 30 % halted.

In the implementation of the vocational training 1000 trainees target program in Muranga for the period 2008-2009, Mukadi (2011) states 40% project failure rate attributing to poor planning communication skills, weak decision-making ability, and inadequate problem-solving skills. Additionally, Mukeu (2011) indicates that in Muranga polytechnics, out of the Five major vocational pieces of training that were initiated by the project namely fashion design, carpentry, motor vehicle mechanic, welding and fabrication and Information communication technology, only three training were conducted, with I.C.T and motor vehicle mechanic training stalling. This research provides a case study analysis of KNYD&T project in Kikuyu Sub-county , within the larger Kiambu County in central Kenya to examine how the project manager's soft skills have contributed to the poor project performance.

UNDP-Kenya (2010) indicates that 65% of the national youth development projects inadequate performance is attributed to the management skills. Additionally, Ministry of Youth affairs (2008) in regard to inadequate performance of the KNYD&T projects indicates that project managers place emphasis on the technical aspects of a project, without considering the need for soft skills. Time, cost and scope are the indicators of project performance (Grover & Henry, 2013). In the implementation of the mandated vocational youth training in Kikuyu division, Howard (2012) indicates that 20% of the youth polytechnics had a significant performance within budget and schedule, while 80% had inadequate performance experiencing cost overrun. Nancy (2012) adds that the vocational youth training in the youth polytechnics in Kikuyu division have

stretched beyond stipulated time frame with 65% of the trainees completing the training way beyond the assigned period. UNDP-Kenya (2011) indicates that the KNYD&T projects success rates stand at 25% success and 75% inadequate performance attributed to project management soft skills at the implementation level despite fully funded by the government and United Nation Development Program. Waweru (2012) indicates that 40% of the youth projects funded by the youth enterprise fund in Kikuyu division operate beyond scope and budget hence failing to pay up its loan installments on time and to completion affecting the continuity of the fund to other needy youths in the region. Mugambi (2013) adds that 35% of the funded youth projects in Kikuyu division experience an overstretch in the scope of their project with limited funding hence registered failures. Similarly, Wambugu (2012) points that 40 in 100 of the funded youth projects in Nyeri, 30% being farming fail as a result of scope stretch, introducing new items in project operation with no additional finances. The youth project managers need adequate training on management and necessary skills (Wambugu, 2013). Thus, this paper attempted to investigate performance gaps on the Kenya National Youth development & Training projects through the identification of the influence of the project manager's soft leadership skills on project performance. The study was guided by the following objectives;

i. *To establish the influence of communication skills of a project manager on project performance.*
ii. *To assess the influence of interpersonal skills of a project manager on project performance.*

Theoretical framework

Agency theory gives a detailed account of the factors that lead to either project success or failure. In the context of the theory, there is a contract between the project managers and the system developers which in turn reduces goal conflict (Robert C.Mahaney & Albert L. Lederer 2009). The resulting outcome is a superior project performance. On the other hand, when the projects are monitored, it reduces privately held information leading to project success.

Further, on the same, Makena (2010) elucidated that if monitoring is done for an information system, the likelihood of information asymmetry is reduced which directly predicts project overall performance which in extension project leader's soft leadership skills play a significant role. Ceric (2012) also cites application of agency theory in the construction projects, highlighting that the theory has been used successfully to focus on the relationship between the project owner and the contractor as the agent to achieve the desired project performance.

The Malibu (2011) contributes that contract type checking, goal clash, and privately held data are multi-dimensional develops and gives instruments to their estimation. Moreover, recommending that the checking of frameworks engineers and other colleagues in ventures might be a more compelling approach to improve venture result than promising to compensate them for that result.

The Agency Theory has been employed in other projects apart from information systems projects to drive assured project performance thus the project managers operate on an outcome basis (Malibu, 2011). In addition, Mahaney (2013) cites that the Agency Theory forces the project manager's application of leadership skills to be able to meet the project goals within budget, time and scope or in the contract guidelines. In this soft leadership skills are significant.

Velaz (2008) identifies with the Theory of Motivation indicating that human has a host of an alternative to purely economic self-interest. The emphasis is that if the motivation is the attraction towards certain goods, then it is acknowledged that human beings are driven by various motives besides money. This theory argues that project performance can be achieved through individual internal motivation factors other than the external binding agency contract of economic value. This study adopts to the Agency Theory as one of the three theories to support the investigation as monitoring predicts project performance which in extension project leaders soft leadership skills play a significant role.

Empirical Review

This section examines the link between each of the four independent variables and the dependent variable.

Communication Skills and Project Performance

Communication skills are listed broadly in the project management literature mainly due to its importance in attributing to project performance (Purna Sudhakar, 2012). Niinimaki et al. (2012) point out that communicating effectively within the project is of utmost importance in that it ensures each member in the project team is connected. The eventual outcome is that there is a commonality of purpose that ensures each project members works towards ensuring that the project is a success.

Benita Zulch (2014) on leadership communication in project management, conducted a questionnaire survey targeting project managers, architects, engineers, construction managers, and quantity surveyors. The study targeted 302 respondents. The findings indicated that medium and clarity of information as key in the communication process within a project. Knowledge of suitable leadership styles to adapt to a specific situation also as vital. This study, however, did not identify the concision of communication as a factor for project performance.

Rajkumar, Sivasankari (2010) on the art of communication in project management, with the use of an interview survey at Springfield Community Hospital with 55 respondents identified that for effective communication within a project, project managers must have a good understanding of the communications process. The communication process needs to be effective and efficient which is determined attributed by the medium and clarity of information. This study, however, did not recognize the concision of communication as an attribute of project performance.

White Fortune (2007) on best practices in project management conducted a questionnaire survey with a distribution of 172 questionnaires and 55% response rate. This study identified a medium of communication as an attribute of project performance. This study did not identify the clarity and concision of information as contributors to project performance. Viivi Mentula (2015) on project communications in two case organizations conducted an open-ended interview targeting 6 project managers that were from the business and education field. The results indicated that the type of the project has an influence on the manner in which information is conveyed to both the project team as well as the stakeholders. This study did not identify medium, clarity, and concision of communication as attributes to project performance.

2.4.2 Interpersonal Skills and Project Performance

Jahad Keshavarzi (2010) on the relationship between interpersonal communication skills and project performance conducted a descriptive survey with the use of a questionnaire. Random sampling used with 106 respondents attained. Its findings indicated that project performance is facilitated by team building strategies. This study, however, did not identify conflict resolution and reinforcement as contributors to project performance.

Riza Yosia Sunindijo (2015) on project management skills for improving project performance conducted a questionnaire survey with data collected from 107 project managers. This study found that interpersonal influence components of conflict resolution and reinforcement have a positive relationship with project performance. This study, however, did not identify team building as an effect to project performance.

More on the same, Wajid Zulqarnain (2015) did a study that focused on the influence of project managers soft leadership skills on project performance. The study was a questionnaire survey targeting 178 respondents. The results of the study indicated that project managers problem solving and coordination skills

were the key elements that lead to project success. This study, however, did not identify conflict resolution, team building, and reinforcement as contributors to project performance.

Research Gaps

Benita Zulch (2014) on leadership communication in project management identified medium and clarity of information as key in the communication process within a project. Knowledge of suitable leadership styles to adapt to a specific situation also as vital. This study, however, did not identify the concision of communication as a factor for project performance.

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Viivi Mentula (2015) established that Organization and project type affect project communications management and stakeholder communications in case organizations leading to poor project performance. This study did not identify medium, clarity, and concision of communication as attributes to project performance.

Jahad Keshavarzi (2010) on the relationship between interpersonal communication skills and project performance indicated that team building has a significant impact on project performance. This study, however, did not identify conflict resolution and reinforcement as contributors to project performance.

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Wajid Zulqarnain (2015) indicated that project managers problem solving and coordination skills were the key elements that lead to project success. This study, however, did not identify conflict resolution, team building, and reinforcement as contributors to project performance.

Anantatmul (2010) on project manager leadership role in improving project performance indicated that the organizational and decision-making ability of the project manager attribute greatly to the performance of the project. This study, however, did not indicate planning as an attribute to project performance.

Godwin Idoro (2009) on evaluating the link between project planning and project performance in the construction industry in Nigeria indicated that the level of project planning by project managers has an impact on project performance. This study did not identify organizational ability and decision making as an attribute to project performance.

Mohamad Redhuan Bin Mohamed (2015) did an analysis focusing on project managers leadership skills and its subsequent effect on project performance. The results of the study indicated that for a project manager to be successful, it is utmost necessary for them to have expertise in goal setting and planning. This study, however, did not indicate organizational ability and decision making as a requisite for project performance.

Silva de Araújo (2015) on IT project manager competencies and IT project success indicated that the most relevant coordination competencies for an IT project manager include team management and business domain knowledge. The study, however, did not indicate organizational ability, decision making, and planning as competencies that contribute to project performance.

Berger (2010) on the contribution of individual project participant competencies to project success identified problem solving skills competencies as a requirement by all project management leaders to enable project success. This study considered analytical thinking skill as the most competent of the skills. This study, however, did not identify creative thinking as one of the skills for project performance.

Vhance Valencia (2007) on a project manager's personal attributes as predictors for success presented decision making style, analytical ability and leadership through teamwork as key attributes that need to be developed and improved to maximize success in project management. This study, however, did not present creative thinking as an attribute to project performance.

Fung, Han Ping (2014) did an analysis on the link between both critical and creative thinking as well as the skills possessed by managers and project success. The findings indicating that project success was attributed to both critical and creative thinking skills of managers. This study, however, did not indicate analytical thinking skill as an aid to project performance.

Similarly, Araujo (2015) while investigating the link between project managers competencies and the success of IT projects established that successful IT project managers are the ones that have the ability to identify, analyse and effectively solve problems during the phase of projects. This study, however, did not indicate creative thinking and analytical thinking skills as required skills for project performance.

Material and methods

The study made use of descriptive research design. The target population of this study was four hundred and fifty respondents from ninety youth development and training projects as represented per ward namely Kikuyu, Karai, Nachu, and Sigona, while simple random was sued to select a sample of 143 individuals in the youth training and development projects in kikuyu sub-county. The study used questionnaires to collect primary data (Creswell, 2011). A five The Likert type scale was used using a scale of SD – Strongly Disagree; D – Disagree; N –Neutral; A – Agree; and SA – Strongly Agree as recommended by Alan (2001). Carifio and Rocco (2007) indicate Strongly Disagree (SD) $1 < SD < 1.7$; Disagree (D) $1.8 < D < 2.5$; Neutral (N) $2.6 < N < 3.3$; Agree (A) $3.4 < A < 4.1$; and Strongly Agree (SA) $4.2 < SA < 5.0$. The interpretation of descriptive data obtained by the use of a Likert scale adopted the same plan in data analysis. The open-ended interpretation of data was in tabular form categorized based on the various responses.

Once the data collected were grouped, statistical measures of descriptive analysis such as arithmetic mean and the standard deviation was used, which are measures of central tendency and dispersion respectively. Manikandan (2011) indicates that arithmetic mean uses every value in the data and hence is a good representative of the data, thus arithmetic mean was used in this study. Lund (2013) indicates that standard deviation is best used with arithmetic mean to summarise the data. This study also adopted Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software and MS. Excel for data analysis. Graphical methods in the form of tables and diagrams were used for translating numerical facts into a more concrete and understandable form.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings analysis and discussion of the research. Out of the 143 respondents, 105 of them responded, therefore, giving a response rate of 73%. The response rate is considered adequate by Mugenda

and Mugenda (20120 because it is within the threshold of 50% to 70% with the former being good and the later excellent. The above notion is also supported by Kothari (2011).

Sample characteristics

The research findings indicated both the characteristics of the respondents and the descriptive statistics on the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable. The general information on the respondents comprised of questions about their age, job title, number of years they had worked in their job and questions measuring the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The respondents were asked to indicate their age bracket. However, age was not a consideration in the selection of the respondents in this study. This question helped to determine that the ages of the respondents were normally distributed. The results indicated that 20 % were below 30 years old, 33% were aged between 31 and 40 years, 27% were aged between 41 and 50 years while 21% were aged between 51 and 60 years old. From the research findings, 40% were youth training officers, 13% were youth training managers, and 13% were youth development managers, 13% deputy youth training managers, while 20% were youth development officer. This question helped to determine whether the 105 respondents were normally distributed across the five job positions. This data was important because the study equally involved all the five categories of respondents. The results further shown in indicates 86% of the respondents have worked for more than 5 years and therefore presumed to have a significant understanding of the Kenya national youth development and training projects in Kikuyu sub-county.

Discussion of Key Findings

This study was conducted to identify the influence of soft leadership skills of a project manager on project performance. Four variables with eleven indicators were explored in this research.

Descriptive Analysis of Communication Skills on Project Performance

In this section, descriptive statistics on the influence of communication skills on project performance was analysed. Communication skills were identified as an independent variable with its indicators being medium, clarity, and concision of communication. Nine items were used in the questionnaire to measure how communication skills to influence project performance. Table 1 indicates the results of how the extent of communication skills influenced project performance.

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviations of Communication Skills and Project Performance

No.	Parameter	N	Mean	Std.Dev
5a.	The medium of communication influences time taken for project completion	105	4.333333	0.5853175
5b.	The medium of communication influences the cost of a project	105	4.333333	0.6311318
5c.	The medium of communication influences the scope of a project	105	4.066667	0.5430037
5d.	The clarity in communication influences the time for project performance	105	4.4	0.6239096
5e.	The clarity in communication influences the cost of project performance	105	4.133333	0.7338914
5f.	The clarity in communication influences the scope for project performance	105	4.266667	0.5850108
5g.	The concision of communication influences the time for project performance	105	4.133333	0.6309185
5h.	The concision of communication influences the cost of project performance	105	4.2	0.5436644

5i.	Concision of communication influences the scope for project performance Composite Mean = 4.237037 Composite Standard Deviation = 0.60687	105	4.266667	0.5850108

Parameter 5a sought to establish the extent to which medium of communication influences time taken for project completion. The mean score was 4.333333 while the standard deviation was 0.5853175. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that the medium of communication influences time taken for project completion. Parameter 5b sought to establish the extent to which medium of communication influences the cost of a project. The mean score was 4.333333 while the standard deviation was 0.6311318. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that the medium of communication influences the cost of a project. Parameter 5c sought to establish the extent to which medium of communication influences the scope of a project. The mean score was 4.066667 while the standard deviation was 0.5430037. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that the medium of communication influences the scope of a project. Parameter 5d sought to establish the extent to which clarity in communication influences the time for project performance. The mean score was 4.4 while the standard deviation was 0.6239096. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that the clarity in communication influences the time for project performance. Parameter 5e sought to establish the extent to which clarity in communication influences the cost of project performance. The mean score was 4.133333 while the standard deviation was 0.7338914. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that the clarity in communication influences the cost of project performance. Parameter 5f sought to establish the extent to which clarity in communication influences the scope for project performance. The mean score was 4.266667while the standard deviation was 0.5850108. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that the clarity in communication influences the scope for project performance. Parameter 5g sought to establish the extent to which concision of communication influences the time for project performance. The mean score was 4.133333while the standard deviation was 0.6309185. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that the concision of communication influences the time for project performance. Parameter 5h sought to establish the extent to which concision of communication influences the cost for project performance. The mean score was 4.2 while the standard deviation was 0.5436644. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that the concision of communication influences the cost of project performance. Parameter 5i sought to establish the extent to which concision of communication influences the scope for project performance. The mean score was 4.266667 while the standard deviation was 0.5850108. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that the concision of communication influences the scope for project performance. Parameter 5c with a standard deviation of 0.5430037 has less variation as compared to the other parameters hence more consistent finding that medium of communication influences the scope of a project. The composite mean is 4.237037. This implies that communication skills influence project performance. The composite standard deviation is 0.60687. This implies small variations from the mean hence concurs that medium of communication influence project performance.

This research objective had open ended questions asked to the respondents for in-depth probing of responses. The respondents were asked whether they thought communication skills influenced project performance. Respondents indicated that respect, attitude, and presentation by the project manager while communicating with team influenced their performance, hence these findings concur with the descriptive analysis that communication skills influence project performance.

Descriptive Analysis of Interpersonal Skills on Project Performance

In this section, descriptive statistics on the influence of interpersonal skills on project performance was analysed. Interpersonal skills were identified as an independent variable with its indicators being conflict resolution, team building, and reinforcement. Nine items were used in the questionnaire to measure this

parameter. Table 4.6 indicates the results on how the extent of interpersonal skills influenced project performance

Table 4.6 Means and Standard Deviations of Interpersonal Skills and Project Performance

No.	Parameter	N	Mean	Std.Dev
6a.	Conflict resolution influences time for project performance	105	4.666667	0.7120072
6b.	Conflict resolution influences the cost of project performance	105	4.533333	0.6497971
6c.	Conflict resolution influences the scope for project performance	105	4.533333	0.6497971
6d.	Team building influences the time for project performance	105	4.466667	0.6278109
6e.	Team building influences the cost of project performance	105	4.6	0.8496147
6f.	Team building influences the scope for project performance	105	4.666667	0.7120072
6g.	Reinforcement influences the time for project performance	105	4.533333	0.6709965
6h.	Reinforcement influences the cost of project performance	105	4.4	0.5969627
6i.	Reinforcement influences the scope for project performance	105	4.333333	0.5811177
	Composite Mean = 4.57037			
	Composite Standard Deviation = 0.67223			

Parameter 6a sought to establish the extent to which conflict resolution influences time for project performance. The mean score was 4.666667 while the standard deviation was 0.7120072. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that the conflict resolution influences time for project performance. Parameter 6b sought to establish the extent to which Conflict resolution influences the cost of project performance. The mean score was 4.533333 while the standard deviation was 0.6497971. This result indicates that the respondents agreed that the Conflict resolution influences the cost of project performance.

Parameter 6c sought to establish the extent to which conflict resolution influences the scope for project performance. The mean score was 4.533333 while the standard deviation was 0.6497971. This result indicates that the respondents agreed that the conflict resolution influences the scope for project performance. Parameter 6d sought to establish the extent to which team building influences the time for project performance. The mean score was 4.466667 while the standard deviation was 0.6278109. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that the team building influences the time for project performance.

Parameter 6e sought to establish the extent to which team building influences the cost of project performance. The mean score was 4.6 while the standard deviation was 0.8496147. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that team building influences the cost of project performance. Parameter 6f sought to establish the extent to which team building influences the scope for project performance. The mean score was 4.666667 while the standard deviation was 0.7120072. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that team building influences the scope for project performance.

Parameter 6g sought to establish the extent to which reinforcement influences the time for project performance. The mean score was 4.533333 while the standard deviation was 0.6709965. This result indicates that the respondents concurred that reinforcement influences the time for project performance. Parameter 6h sought to establish the extent to which reinforcement influences the cost of project performance. The mean score was 4.4 while the standard deviation was 0.5969627. This result indicates that the respondents agreed that reinforcement influences the cost of project performance.

Parameter 6i sought to establish the extent to which reinforcement influences the scope for project performance. The mean score was 4.333333 while the standard deviation was 0.5811177. This result indicates that the respondents agreed that reinforcement influences the scope for project performance. Parameter 6h with a standard deviation of 0.5969627 has less variation as compared to the other parameters hence more consistent finding that reinforcement influences the cost for project performance.

The composite mean is 4.57037. This implies that interpersonal skills influence project performance. The composite standard deviation is 0.67223. This implies small variations from the mean hence concurs that interpersonal skills influence project performance. This research objective had an open ended question asked to the respondents for in-depth probing of responses. The respondents were asked whether they thought interpersonal skills influenced project performance. Respondents indicated that delegation, mentorship, and supervision by the project manager while leading the team influenced their performance, hence these findings concur with the descriptive analysis that interpersonal skills influence project performance.

Conclusions and Discussions

Research objective one sought to establish the influence of communication skills of a project manager on project performance. This study established that the communication skills of a project manager influences project performance. The results are in line with that of Jetu and Riedl (2012) which established that a project manager that is a good communicator and clearly communicates with the project members, the eventual outcome is teamwork effectiveness that translates to project success. The results are also in tally with that of Jean Scheid (2011) which indicated that in well-defined projects, where scope definition is clear and specified there are fewer possibilities that the triangle would change its form by a bigger margin. This is, however, the opposite in a poorly defined project. Therefore, it is always a desirable notion for Project Managers to put substantial effort & time to define the scope of the project as much as possible so that there are fewer variations on cost and time.

Research objective two in this study was to assess the influence of interpersonal skills of a project manager on project performance. This study has established that the interpersonal skills of a project manager influences project performance. This supports the findings of Brenton & Levin (2012) indicating that the more proficient a project leader is, in developing associations with his peers, the quicker the understanding of their capabilities and limitations and accordingly can capitalize on them which attracts project performance. Project managers should, therefore, invest their time and resources in building a project team, motivating and resolving conflicts amicably to create an environment for achieving desired project performance.

The recommendations of this study were derived from the conclusions that all the independent variables significantly influence project performance which was measured by the constraint of time, scope and cost. Poor or lack of application of soft leadership skills by the project manager in all aspects of running a project influence project performance. The following were the recommendations of this study.

Based on the results from communication skills, It was therefore recommended that project managers should be trained on communication skills every quarter of a year. Additionally, it was recommended that written communication should be adopted as the formal mode of communication when implementing projects. It was also recommended that project managers should use formal language and practice precision when communicating project information to ensure clarity and concision of information received.

Based on findings from Interpersonal skills, It was therefore recommended that project managers should organize for team building sessions at least once a year to train and motivate the project team. Additionally, it was recommended that project managers should outline various ways of reinforcing hard work and achievements while implementing projects. It was also recommended that project managers should be trained on conflict resolutions once a year.

This study focused on four soft leadership skills variables which are communication skills, interpersonal skills, coordination skills and problem solving skills with indicators such as medium, clarity, and concision of communication, conflict resolution, team building and reinforcement, organizational ability, decision making and planning, analytical thinking and creative thinking respectively. Future researchers may research on other soft leadership skills besides the ones on this study such as This study focused on a single project in Kiambu County with a relatively small population, future researchers may consider exploring other projects of different sizes in different counties with a relatively large population.

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