



EFFECTS OF CONFLICTS ON PROJECT PERFORMANCE IN GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS IN KENYA

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Abstract

Conflict is an inevitable part of the workplace and is part of everyday life. Conflicts are everywhere and they affect everyone directly or indirectly. When they are in organizations they affect the management, employees, and also customers. This study sought to establish the effects of conflicts on project performance in Government Institutions in Kenya. The objectives of the study were to establish the effect of role related conflicts on project performance in government institutions, to find out the effect of process conflicts in performance of projects in government institutions, to analyze the effect of relationship conflicts on project performance and determine the effect of interdependence conflicts on project performance. This study had a target population of 526 respondents. The population involved top managers, middle level managers, lower management, and employees. The study used descriptive research design. Data was collected using questionnaires. Data analysis and presentation was done by use of descriptive statistics. The analysis were done both quantitative and qualitatively to the closed and open ended questions. The study used the formula below to calculate the sample size: $n = \frac{z^2 p(1-p)}{\sigma^2}$. The sample size therefore, was 165 respondents. The data was then displayed using charts through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and MS Excel. Multiple linear regression model was used to get the linear relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. The results established that role conflicts, process conflicts and relationship conflicts have a significant negative effect on project performance. The study results however, established that relationship conflicts did not have a significant effect on project performance in the energy sector. The study recommends more study on the effect of conflicts on project performance in other sectors of the economy and upcoming companies in Kenya who are involved in massive projects cross-culturally. The study recommends other studies targeting the project team. The study also recommends another study on how to avoid the conflicts and, how to resolve the specific types of conflicts experienced.

Key words: Interdependence Conflicts, Process Conflicts, Project Performance, Relationship Conflicts, Role Related Conflicts

Introduction

Conflict management is a major concern to many organizations. Wherever there are people who have differences in values, races, languages, and backgrounds and who share one goal which is working for the organization and making it profitable, conflicts are inevitable. Conflict is classified into the following four types, Brookins, (2014). Interpersonal conflict refers to a conflict between two individuals due to their differences. Intrapersonal conflict occurs within an individual. It is a type of conflict that is psychological involving the individual's thoughts, values, principles, and emotions. Intragroup conflict is a type of conflict that happens among individuals within a team. The incompatibilities and misunderstandings among these individuals lead to an intragroup conflict. It arises from interpersonal disagreements or differences in views and ideas. Intergroup conflict takes place when a misunderstanding arises among different teams within an organization. This is due to the varied sets of goals and interests of these different groups and also competition contributes for intergroup conflict to arise.

Conflicts can arise due to different causes and therefore there are many types of conflicts. According to (Meer, 2013), there are three types of conflicts; task, relationship and process conflicts. Task conflict refers to the conflicts and disagreements among individuals related to a certain task, its content, direction, and goal. Different opinions, viewpoints, decisions, and proposed changes are some of the chief causes of task conflict. It is said to be advantageous because it stimulates creativity, healthy competition and provides the possibility of a better outcome through constant discussions and different perspectives. Relationship conflict focuses on interpersonal relationships and hostilities among individuals of an organization. Because of its volatile and counter-

productive nature, relationship conflict is considered completely destructive and harmful. Relationship conflict also leads to delayed projects and poor outcomes because most of their time is wasted in resolving the relationship conflicts among their employees, co-workers, and staff members.

Process conflicts refer to the disagreements about how the work should get done. Process conflicts are easily observed in large groups, where disputes and frustrations over responsibilities and assignments are visible. Low level of process conflict is considered beneficial, because it stimulates healthy competition and motivation among individuals but intense arguments should be avoided because they lead to jealousy, loss of motivation and job dissatisfaction (Meer, 2013). Interdependence Conflicts are the types of conflict that happen when a person relies on someone else's co-operation, output or input in order for them to get their job done. Interdependence conflicts can often be easily overcome by ensuring that people have a good handle on delegation skills, people that are well trained in how to have challenging conversations, that consequences (natural and imposed).

Project performance can be measured through: cost to make sure they achieve the set goals in terms of cost, schedule and performance; project internal processes which enable sound internal processes that enable efficient and effective execution of the projects; innovation and learning where the projects are used as capacity- building process and for developing expertise; and customer where any project should fully satisfy the needs of the customers. It is measured using the resources, progress, technical, quality, productivity, completion activity, change, staff and risk, (CBP, 2005). About 1.2 billion people live in countries affected by fragility, while about 800 million people live in developing countries with the highest homicides rates.

Theory and hypothesis

The general objective of the study is to analyze the effects of conflicts on project performance in government institutions in Kenya. The specific objectives of the study are: to establish the effect of role related conflicts on project performance in government institutions in Kenya; to assess the effect of process conflicts in performance of projects in government institutions in Kenya; to analyze the effect of relationship conflicts on project performance in government institutions in Kenya; to assess the effect of interdependence conflicts on project performance in government institutions in Kenya. The research questions of the study are: what is the effect of role related conflicts on project performance in Kenya; how do process conflicts affect project performance in Kenya; to what extent do relationship conflicts affect project performance in Kenya; what is the effect of interdependence conflicts on project performance in Kenya.

There are existent theories that support the variables in this study. Realist argue that the imperfection in the world, namely conflict, has its roots in forces that are inherent in human nature, that human nature is selfish, individualistic and naturally conflictive, and that such interest will come into conflict with those of others leading to the inevitability of conflict. Durkheim, (2015), suggests that actors hence should prepare to deal with the outcome and consequences of conflict since it is inevitable, rather than wish there were none. Realist theory helps to explain the process conflict. Relational theory argues that the belief that cultural and value differences are as well as group interests all influence relationships between individuals. A number of conflicts grow out of a past history of conflict between groups that has led to the development of negative stereotypes, racial intolerance, and discrimination. The theory links

relationship conflicts to past experience, politics, economic and sociological causes thus the study would like to find out whether these factors in relationship affect project performance.

Systemic theories provide a socio-structural explanation for the emergence of violent social conflicts. social factors and the effects of large scale (usually sudden) changes in social, political and economic processes that would usually guide in trying to cope with the different challenges and crises of modernization, most governments that find it difficult to gain the legitimacy needed to attract support from the people usually resort to unconstitutional means and force rather than processes that are in line with the rule of law, in an effort to surpass the legitimate demands of the people, prevent opposition and civil society groups from criticizing policies that they do not agree with, and generally attempt to dictate the terms on which peace will be attained, Durkheim, (2015). This theory acknowledges that social, economic, and political factors can cause violence; therefore. Thus, the theory helps explain the role related conflicts.

Interdependence theory attempts to describe the social exchange components of personal relationships. It states that human relationships are basically a cost versus reward scenario with individuals trying to minimize costs and increase the benefits within the relationship. (Interdependence theory, 2015), the theory states that interdependence of either relationship or roles involves cost and rewards. In projects any delay will translate to extra cost whereas implementation of every task as planned translates to successful completion (reward). Thus the theory will help discuss the interdependence conflicts.

Methods

The methods used for this study include the research methodology, the sample and sample size, and data analysis and interpretation method. Research design as discussed by Kothari, (2004) is the strategy that one chooses to integrate the components of a study in a logical way in order to address the research problem. It includes how data is to be collected, what instruments will be employed, how the instruments will be used and the intended means for analyzing data collected. The descriptive design was adopted for this study. In descriptive design, information is collected without changing the environment meaning there is no manipulation done. It answers the questions who, what, where and how and may have the researcher directly or indirectly interact with the participants. The descriptive design was appropriate for the present study as it was important to gauge the conflict management strategies in different conflicts, (Kothari, 2004).

Population is the conglomeration of subjects, objects, or people that have the characteristics under study within a defined boundary. The nature of this study involves diverse groups of people ranging from top managers, supervisors of the projects and the employees who are involved in conflicts and conflict management. Due to the large number of employees in the institutions, a sample was used. Sample is a small fraction of the population that is representative of the entire group. The statistical considerations will include the desired precision of the range in which the true value of the population is estimated to be, confidence level which is the number of times out of 100 that results can be expected to be within a specified range, degree of variability and population size.

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), if a population is above 1,000 items then 5% will be a

reliable sample size, and if the population is below 1,000 a 10% sample size is representative. For the purpose of this study 5% of the population was used, according to Mugenda and Mugenda, (2003) because Miriam, (2013) used it and had a successful research involving project *energy sufficiency* where she investigated ways of reducing the consumption of energy. This study applied stratified random sampling technique. A stratum which is a subset of population that shares at least one common characteristic is first identified then random sampling is used to select sufficient number of subjects from each stratum, (Shahrokh.Estafani Mohammed, 2014). Random sampling was conducted to select sufficient number of subjects from each stratum and to avoid biasness. The study used the formula below to calculate the sample size; $n = \frac{z * p(1-p)}{\sigma^2}$ Where n= sample size; z= confidence level (1.96); p= percentage picking a choice (30%); σ = confidence interval (0.05)

Data collection is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes, Mugenda & Mugenda, (2003). The research used both primary and secondary data. Secondary data from books, academic articles, and journals was used. To collect primary data, questionnaires were used to obtain data relevant to the study in order to answer the research questions. In the study, the researcher drafted several questions in the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to respondents of the sample population, and then they were collected later to allow them enough time to fill. Both open-ended and close-ended questions were used. The advantages of using this method includes: its' inexpensiveness because once the questionnaires are given to willing respondents there is no further cost, some respondents can give

the feedback immediately, and it enabled the researcher to make extensive inquiry from the respondents who were not easily approachable being contacted through the questionnaire.

A pilot study of 30 respondents was done before the real study to ascertain if the questionnaires will give the required information. Pilot testing is the assessment of the factor of the research material or procedure utilized. Pilot testing is necessary to test for validity and Reliability, (Pam, MS). In data analysis, Descriptive statistics were used to describe the basic features of the data in a study and provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. The research focused on use distributions (frequency) which were converted to percentages and measures of central tendency (mean, mode, and median) to analyze the data. The data was then displayed using charts to make it easy to interpret and simple to understand (Trochim, 2006). These were achieved through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and MS Excel.

A linear relationship was proposed between the dependent variable and the independent variables and a Multiple Linear Regression Model (Kothari, 2004) was used if the collected data satisfied the assumptions for this analytical approach. Otherwise the most appropriate analysis was used depending on the characteristics of the collected data. The multiple regression model that was used is: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \beta_4x_4 + e$
Where; Y= project performance; β_0 = constant (coefficient of intercept); X_1 = role-related conflicts (independent variable); X_2 = process conflicts (independent variable); X_3 = relationship conflicts (independent variable); X_4 = interdependence conflicts (independent variable); e = Error term; β_1, \dots, β_4 = regression coefficient of four variables. SPSS

was used to determine the coefficient regression which showed the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Most of the respondents were female of lower level management and Middle level management just as the sampling was done. The respondents were of undergraduate level and masters' level second, so they are able to give reliable information. The study was conducted on people who had worked between 0-5 years in the company. It found out through a likert scale (SA-strongly Agree, A- Agree, N-Neutral, D-Disagree and SD- Strongly Disagree), that role conflicts, process conflicts, relationship conflicts and interdependence conflicts are present in projects.

Regression analysis

Multiple linear Regression was conducted on the data to establish the effect of the conflicts on project performance in government institutions in Kenya's energy sector. The independent variables in the study were Interdependence conflicts, Relationship Conflicts, Role conflicts, and Process conflicts. Project performance was the dependent variable. The measures that acted as input into the model were the ratings provided for the different variables. The average ratings for each respondent in relation to each independent variable were computed. The procedure was also applied on the independent variable (project performance). The analysis was then conducted using SPSS version 23. Table 1 presents the model summary whereby the r and r squared are presented. The table indicates that the model was able to explain 59.2 percent of project performance.

Table 1: Model Summary and R squared

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.769	0.592	0.486	.73745

Table 2 presents the statistical significance of the independent variables (role conflict, process conflict, relationship conflict and interdependence conflict) in the model.

Table 2: Significance of Independent Variables

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	.964	.257		3.751	.000
Role conflicts	-.251	.122	-.160	-2.057	.038
Relationship Conflicts	-.010	.086	-.014	-.121	.904
Process conflicts	-.376	.141	-.384	-2.667	.007
Interdependence conflicts	-.319	.147	-.374	-2.171	.033

Correlation

Correlation coefficients of the study variables were computed using spearman rank correlation coefficient. This was used since the data involved ranks from 1-5 for the various conflicts and project performance. The table below shows the ranks of each variable.

		Role conflicts	Relationship Conflicts	Process conflicts	Interdependence conflicts	Project Performance
Role conflicts	Correlation Coefficient	1.000				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.				
	N	98				
Relationship Conflicts	Correlation Coefficient	.447**	1.000			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.			
	N	98	98			

Process conflicts	Correlation Coefficient	.547**	.458**	1.000		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.		
	N	98	98	98		
Interdependence conflicts	Correlation Coefficient	.653**	.415**	.733**	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.	
	N	98	98	98	98	
Project Performance	Correlation Coefficient	-.326**	-.162	-.308**	-.402**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.110	.002	.000	.
	N	98	98	98	98	98

Discussion

In order to answer the research questions which were set for this study, a statistical analysis of the responses to the questionnaire will also be undertaken in this chapter. The recorded response obtained from the interview will also be analyzed and interpreted. This was a response rate of 59%, which was adequate.

The study found out that in role conflict; roles should be facilitated adequately, assignment of duties should be clear, roles and responsibilities of each team member are clear and there should be no duplication of duties. However, it was found out that some team members are overloaded. The findings indicate that role conflicts that had a significant negative relationship with project performance ($r = -0.326$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that high role conflicts were expected to result to low project performance. The results indicate that role conflicts in projects have a significant negative effect on project performance ($B = -0.251$; $t = -2.057$; $p < 0.05$). These findings indicate that presence of role conflicts in a project reduces project performance. Specifically a unit increase in the level of role conflict would lead to a reduction in project performance by 0.251.

The study found out that in relationship conflict; interaction of employees is fundamental, interpersonal skills are fundamental, different perceptions affect performance, lack of a clear line of authority and diverse backgrounds affect relationships. Results also indicate that relationship conflicts had a negative but insignificant relationship with project performance ($r = -0.162$; $p > 0.05$). These findings indicate that high levels of relationship conflicts were expected to result to low project performance but the effect was not significant. The study results also established that relationship conflicts did not have a significant effect on project performance in the energy sector ($B = -0.010$; $t = -0.121$; $p > 0.05$). This indicates that relationship conflicts are not very rampant in energy sector. Moreover, these conflicts do not significantly affect project performance.

The study found out that in process conflict; unclear channels of communication, performance review are important, deadlines for activities are essential, order of duties should be clear, and processes should be clear. Process conflicts had a significant negative relationship with project performance ($r = -0.308$; $p < 0.05$). This has the implication that increased levels of process conflicts were expected to result to lower project performance. Study results also determined that process conflicts have a significant negative effect on project performance

in the energy sector ($B = -0.376$; $t = -2.667$; $p < 0.05$). These results indicate that presence of process conflicts negatively affect project performance in the energy sector. The findings imply that a unit increase in the level of process conflicts would lead to reduction in project performance by 0.376

Lastly, the study found out that in interdependence conflict; subsequent tasks need to be clear, duties also well structured, and delegation should be done well, and dependent tasks are well structured in the 3 institutions. Interdependence conflicts had a significant positive relationship with project performance ($r = -0.402$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that high levels of interdependence conflicts were expected to result to low project performance. The study established that interdependence conflicts in the energy sector had significant negative effect on project performance in the energy sector ($B = -0.319$; $t = -2.171$; $p < 0.05$). These results indicate that a unit increase in the level of interdependence conflict would lead to a decrease in project performance by 0.319.

R^2 0.592 and adjusted R^2 0.408 indicates that the four independent variables (Interdependence conflicts, Relationship Conflicts, Role conflicts and Process conflicts) applied in the model are able to explain 59.2 percent of project performance in Kenya's energy sector. This implies that 40.8 percent of the changes in project performance are explained by other factors that were not included in the model.

Conclusion

The study found out that conflict among the employees affects project performance. Process conflict and interdependence conflicts were the most prevalent conflicts in projects. Process

conflicts are caused by unclear channels of communication between stakeholders, and lack of performance reviews affects the project because they show progress of the project. The order of activities should also be highlighted with milestones well known and deadlines for each activity written down. The study found out that relationship conflicts are present which are caused by diversity in culture, perceptions, and different backgrounds, and lack of interpersonal skills. The line of authority also causes conflicts in that people do not know their place in the project, and the structure of who to report to. The best way to solve these conflicts is collaboration where people discuss their disagreements to come up with a solution, with or without a third party.

The study found out that role conflicts are present in projects. They arise from unequal distribution of work due to selfishness or lack of delegation skills. This results to overloading some employees. In some cases, the employees do not know their responsibilities therefore they end up conflicting with each other. The roles are not well facilitated in terms of finances, materials, and human resource; therefore, they cause conflicts in the project. The study also found out that interdependence conflicts have impacts on projects. The order of subsequent tasks should be clearly stated because it affects how the project is implemented. Duties in each task should be well structured to enlighten those who execute the tasks. Dependent tasks should also be planned in order to ensure there are no delays in the project. The project manager and other overseers of the project should have good delegation skills, which require every employee's task should match his skills. The order of activities is fundamental in projects to avoid duplication of duties and conflicting roles.

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