

Final Project 1
Code: MGM 496-PMG496
Project Template

Faculty of Management
Midocean University

Midocean University

Faculty of Management

Department/ Specialization



Project title

**The Impact of Time Planning on the Success of Small
Commercial Company Projects in Saudi Arabia**

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2025 – Third Semester

Abstract

The proposed research project will analyze the impact of time-planning techniques on the performance of small projects conducted in commercial companies in Saudi Arabia. The SMEs play a significant role in the economy and because the Saudi Arabia Vision 2030 is forcing the economy to take a more diversified economic stance, appropriate project management is essential. Although the application of organised time-planning strategies by these bigger firms has not been particularly new, the influence they have had on the SME sector, and in particular the Saudi Arabian one, is a subject that has been under-investigated. The study will aim at filling this gap by conducting a study that will look at the extent to which planned time-planning procedures including monitoring milestones, setting a schedule, allocation of resources and time buffers influence the success of the project. Particularly, it measures their impacts on time to completion, cost management and satisfaction among the stakeholders. In the study, both quantitative survey data and qualitative data were employed and determined by means of open-ended questions, which is why the mixed-method design was employed. The questionnaire was administered to 150 participants representing 30 SME of various sectors, and I conducted a correlation and regression analysis of the results. Based on the findings, time planning can be regarded as one of the aspects that enable the project in question to become more successful overall, and particularly when such tools online as Trello and Microsoft Project are employed. Another issue that defines the effectiveness of time planning is organizational capacity such as its resource availability and qualified staff.

On the whole, the research may provide useful insights that the owners of the SMEs, project managers, and policymakers may learn in order to show that the introduction of formal time planning and the use of digital tools and effective organizational resources may lead to significantly increased results in the success of a project.

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction

1. introduction

Time planning is one of the foundations of effective project delivery, especially for small commercial organizations operating in dynamic, resource-limited environments (Alharbi, 2024). In Saudi Arabia, SMEs face growing pressure to perform under the rapid economic changes associated with Vision 2030, which

demands efficient project implementation and time management (Abdulrab et al., 2022). Despite its importance, the link between time planning and project success in these firms remains under-researched. This study examines how systematic time planning, including realistic scheduling, milestone monitoring, and risk buffers, influences project outcomes like timely delivery, cost control, and stakeholder satisfaction. It addresses a significant gap by connecting time management knowledge with SME practices in an emerging economy.

Saudi Arabia is currently undergoing structural economic reforms to diversify beyond oil and empower SMEs. These businesses are expected to drive productivity and job creation, yet many struggle due to inconsistent time planning. Poor scheduling and inadequate contingency planning often lead to delays, budget issues, and lost opportunities. Such inefficiencies are particularly detrimental in competitive sectors like retail and logistics that demand fast service and responsiveness (Abdulrab et al., 2022).

Time planning reflects an organization's strategic maturity. Small firms typically have lean teams where staff juggle multiple roles, and structured planning may be seen as impractical. However, even basic tools like task sequencing, milestone tracking, and time buffers enhance coordination and clarity (Alharbi, 2024).

Effective time management allows SMEs to allocate resources wisely, respond to change, and meet expectations.

Digital tools such as Microsoft Project, Trello, and Asana make time planning more accessible. These tools help visualize tasks and deadlines. Still, many Saudi SMEs do not fully utilize them due to digital literacy gaps, cost, and cultural preferences for informal communication (Reed, 2021). Thus, it is necessary to explore how time planning can be culturally aligned and operationally feasible.

Time planning also interacts with other project management processes like risk management, cost control, and stakeholder engagement. A well-designed schedule aids in real-time progress monitoring and corrective actions (Hillson, 2024). It can improve transparency and accountability, strengthening stakeholder relationships.

However, without empirical evidence linking time planning to outcomes in Saudi SMEs, tailored interventions remain difficult.

Globally, SMEs often suffer from poor planning. In the GCC, poor scheduling and unrealistic timelines are key causes of failure (Ghak and Zarrouk, 2022). Al-Otaibi et al. (2022) further noted that limited training and resistance to formal procedures hinder adoption of time planning in Saudi SMEs. These findings highlight the need for culturally compatible planning tools.

This research focuses on how time planning affects project success in Saudi SMEs, moving beyond studies of large or public-sector projects. These small firms face unique pressures requiring flexibility and quick decision-making. By studying how they manage time constraints and scheduling complexity, the research provides insights for both theory and practice.

Findings from this study will benefit business owners and project managers with practical planning approaches, guide consultants in creating relevant interventions, and inform policy makers developing SME support initiatives (Sinnaiah, Adam and Mahadi, 2023). It will also examine cultural attitudes that shape planning behavior, such as preference for relationship-based communication and tolerance for ambiguity. The study explores how such factors interact with formal tools and whether adaptations are needed for success (Alzahrani, 2022).

Ultimately, the aim of the study is to see how well time planning practices will influence the success of small commercial company projects in Saudi Arabia. This

incorporates the discussion of the correlation between structured planning, milestones tracking and proactive time-risk management to the most critical project deliverables, timely execution, budget accuracy, and stakeholder satisfaction. The primary research question guiding this inquiry is:

By generating empirical evidence and practical insights, this study aims to support both scholarly debate and managerial action. It also intends to contribute to ongoing policy development and academic curriculum designs that aim to boost SME success and competitiveness within the framework of Saudi Arabia's economic reform strategy. Through its findings, the study seeks to inform strategic frameworks that not only elevate project success rates but also bolster the broader sustainability and scalability of SMEs in the national economy.

1.1. Research Problem

In the realm of project management, the significance of time planning has been repeatedly emphasized as a pivotal determinant of project success. However, despite this general acknowledgment, the role of time planning in small commercial companies in Saudi Arabia remains poorly understood. This disconnect presents a pressing theoretical and practical challenge: while literature documents the success of time planning in large, resource-rich projects, much less is known about its function and effectiveness in small enterprises characterized by limited personnel, lean operational budgets, and highly flexible project scopes. As such, existing knowledge is insufficient to guide SMEs in Saudi Arabia toward adopting time planning practices that are both feasible and impactful.

Recent studies in the construction and infrastructure sectors in Saudi Arabia confirm that ineffective time management is among the leading causes of project

delays, cost overruns, and diminished stakeholder trust (Almatari, 2021). These findings are reflected even in infrastructure and manufacturing projects that either have overly ambitious and unrealistic schedules or otherwise do not take into account local conditions that limit the schedule. Yet, this evidence largely stems from large-scale, often public-sector projects. There is a clear need to distinguish the context of small commercial companies, which operate with vastly different strategic and operational capacities (Abduljawwad and Almaktoom, 2021). These companies may lack project management offices, experienced planners, or even digital scheduling tools, making the relevance of conventional time planning models questionable. Without tailored guidance, these enterprises are left to rely on trial-and-error approaches, which can be costly and inefficient.

Theoretical Gaps

A significant gap also exists at the theoretical level. While global literature provides substantial discourse on project success factors, the specificity of time planning's impact in SMEs is often generalized or conflated with broader planning and risk management activities. Zahari et al. (2023) argue that rigid scheduling may be ill-suited to the dynamic nature of SMEs, where change and uncertainty are part of day-to-day operations. However, their study primarily examines regional trends and lacks a focused application in the Saudi business environment. Lack of localised research data, therefore, leads to poor information on how Saudi SMEs conceptualize, implement, and gain through time planning techniques ((Sogaxa, Simpeh and Ndiokubwayo, 2021). For example, it remains questionable how these companies manage to harmonize an organized use of Gantt charts against informal patterns of communication and improvisation techniques used in many organizations of the region.

Practical Gaps

there is a gap in the empirical research of time planning that do not provide distinction on industries or organizational scales, leaving an insufficient knowledge base regarding the occurrence of the contextual variables that define the efficacy of planning. What works for a manufacturing SME may not translate to a serviceoriented business or a retail operation. In Saudi Arabia, where commercial SMEs are diverse and rapidly growing, a one-size-fits-all planning approach is unlikely to be effective. Almatari et al. (2022) underline the value of a tailor-made project management approach depending upon the organizational level of maturity and the requirements of specific industries. Consequently, it is essential to learn how the time planning can be correlated with the firm size, the type of industry, and internal capabilities to make up practical frameworks.

On the practical side, the absence of evidence-based planning guidance leaves many SMEs vulnerable to avoidable failures. In situations where clients require deliverables within a short time and scope changes are common, time planning can either make or sink a project. Nevertheless, when there are no empirical standards or local cases, managers cannot formulate informed decisions regarding the type of tools or strategies to utilize (Sogaxa, Simpeh and Ndiokubwayo, 2021). This can lead to under-planning, missed deadlines, budget inflation, and reputational harm. In the case of Saudi Arabia, where the SMEs are supposed to play a crucial role in GDP and employment as one of the components of Vision 2030, they represent a national-scale issue due to compounding inefficiencies.

The other challenging problem is absence of research on skills and competencies required for effective time planning in the SMEs. Are Saudi SME managers well trained on the techniques of scheduling? Is there an adequate institutional support in the form of access to software or mentoring networks? What is the mechanism of SMEs to take into account stakeholder feedback or risk factor in schedules?

These questions have not yet been satisfactorily answered but they are fundamental in the design of interventions that can build better planning capacity within and across the sector.

How does time planning influence project success in small commercial companies operating in Saudi Arabia?

1.2. Research Significance

1.2.1. At the theoretical level

This study contributes to project management theory by contextualizing time planning in small Saudi firms. While traditional literature emphasizes large-scale projects, this research broadens academic understanding by incorporating data from underrepresented business environments. It examines how scheduling, timerisk management, and milestone tracking apply in SMEs, challenging generic project management models (Zahari et al., 2023).

It also contributes to the debate between rigid and adaptive planning. Large companies may follow fixed schedules, but SMEs need flexibility to respond to changing scopes and constraints. The study proposes a hybrid model combining structured tools with agile practices. This enhances understanding of planning maturity models and their scalability (Sayed, 2023).

Moreover, it expands success measurement frameworks. While project success is often defined by cost, scope, and quality, time adherence may be more critical for SMEs. This study adds nuance by analyzing how time planning affects performance in sectors with tight schedules and client-driven demands.

1.2.2. At the practical level

Practically, this research provides actionable guidance for SMEs by identifying effective time planning practices that require minimal resources. It frames time planning as a strategic advantage that enhances delivery, client satisfaction, and internal coordination. It also examines real-world planning behaviors, comparing formal tools like Gantt charts and software with informal methods like team meetings and verbal planning. This comparison bridges the gap between theory and practice and identifies areas for improvement.

The findings can guide institutional support efforts. Training programs and mentoring networks can be tailored based on the challenges SMEs face in adopting formal time planning. For example, workshops on milestone setting or digital tools can address specific skill gaps (Alharbi, 2024). Consultants and external advisors will benefit from localized, evidence-based recommendations. Rather than using generic frameworks, they can offer targeted support based on SMEs' real capacities. Academic programs can also integrate findings into project management education, preparing future professionals for SME contexts.

Finally, the research lays a foundation for future studies. Its data and analysis can support longitudinal research on planning practices, digital adoption, and the longterm impact of training and policy interventions. Overall, the study aligns academic theory with practical needs in Saudi Arabia's evolving SME sector.

Main Research Question:

How does time planning influence project success in small commercial companies operating in Saudi Arabia?

1.3. Research Questions

1. Which specific time planning practices are most effective in promoting successful project outcomes among SMEs?
2. How do constraints such as limited personnel and flexible scope moderate the effectiveness of time planning?
3. How do project managers perceive the trade-off between rigid scheduling and the need for adaptive responses?
4. What role does organizational culture play in influencing adherence to time planning frameworks in small Saudi firms?
5. How do external pressures, such as client demands or regulatory timelines, influence SME time planning strategies?

1.4. Research Objectives

1. To evaluate the impact of structured time planning practices such as scheduling, milestone tracking, and time buffering, on project success in small commercial companies in Saudi Arabia.
2. To examine how internal organizational factors, such as staffing levels, planning experience, and overall capacity, affect the effectiveness of time planning.

3. To explore how cultural norms and communication behaviors influence the adoption and use of formal time planning practices.
4. To assess the role and effectiveness of digital time planning tools in enhancing project delivery within SMEs.
5. To analyze the extent to which external pressures, including client demands and regulatory timelines, influence the adoption and success of time planning strategies.

1.5.

1.6. Research Hypotheses

Although time planning is commonly regarded as one of the pillars of effective project management, its practical implementation in small Saudi companies is not evident. They are also known to work in rapidly paced environments that lack the formal processes and the big question is whether structured practices in planning have a role to play in such settings. This paper will attempt to answer this question by proposing a series of research hypotheses based on the available literature and the real life experiences of small business companies.

The first and main hypothesis proposes that when small businesses adopt structured time planning practices, such as scheduling tasks, tracking milestones, and building in time buffers, they are more likely to see their projects succeed. Here, project success refers to completing work on time, staying within budget, and meeting the expectations of clients or internal stakeholders.

H1: Structured time planning practices significantly improve project success in small commercial companies in Saudi Arabia.

To understand the nuances of this relationship, several additional hypotheses are proposed. These explore the different ways time planning might function in realworld situations, where tools, resources, and habits vary from one business to another.

For example, while many time planning tools are available, like Trello, Microsoft Project, and Asana, not all businesses use them. The second hypothesis looks at whether the use of digital tools specifically makes a measurable difference.

H2: SMEs that use digital scheduling tools show higher levels of project time performance than those that rely on informal methods.

Of course, the impact of time planning may depend on the internal capacity of the business itself. A firm with a dedicated project coordinator or a well-trained team may benefit more from planning tools than a business where one person manages everything. This leads to the third hypothesis.

H3: The effectiveness of structured time planning is moderated by organizational capacity, such that planning is more effective in firms with greater internal resources and expertise.

Cultural preferences also play a role. In some small Saudi firms, verbal agreements and flexible deadlines are the norm, and this might limit how well-structured tools are received or used.

H4: Cultural norms favoring informal communication weaken the relationship between structured time planning and project success.

Finally, outside forces like regulatory deadlines or demanding clients can push firms to adopt more structured planning, even if they wouldn't normally do so.

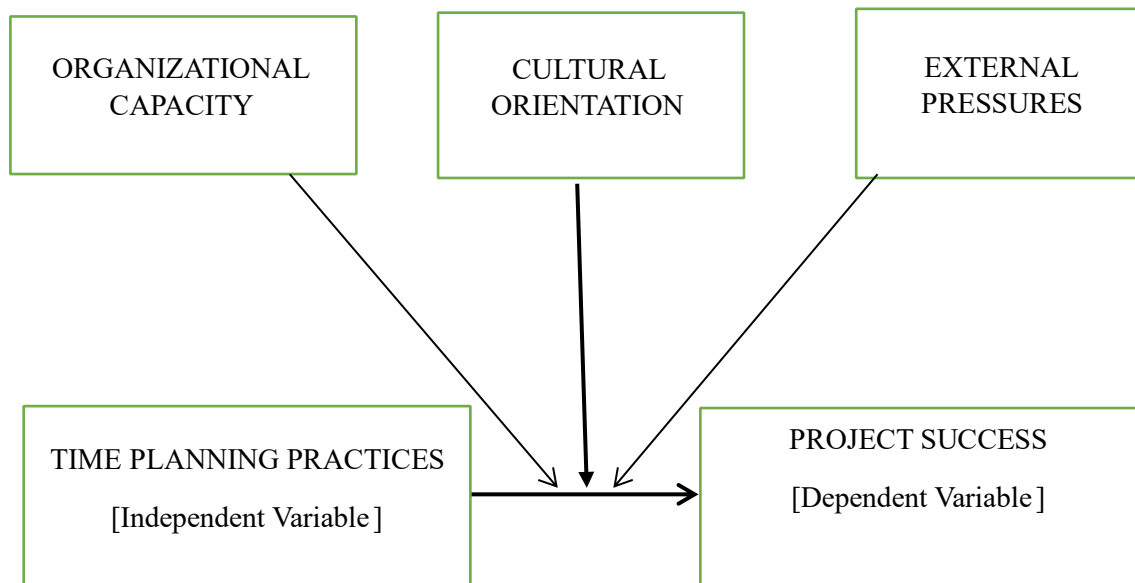
H5: External pressures, such as regulatory or client-imposed deadlines, increase the likelihood that SMEs will adopt and benefit from time planning tools.

Together, these hypotheses provide a framework for exploring how time planning works in practice, not just in theory.

1.7. Research Model

The research constructs are framed upon the conceptual model which addresses the role of formal time practice of planning and its ways of affecting project success within small business corporations in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, it examines the possibility of tools like milestone progress tracking, scheduling and the time-risk cushion to improve project outputs such as cost management, on time delivery, and customer satisfaction.

Nonetheless, the model also acknowledges that the practices cannot exist independently. They are influenced by other variables, including the number of people with whom they share the work, the style of decision-making that is generally accepted inside the enterprise or the external incentive, such as a regulatory requirement or an insistent customer, which would make them more self-disciplined in time management. With these moderating variables, the model will capture the reality that time planning might perform effectively in certain business condition compared to others.



The Empirical study

The cultural context adds another layer of complexity. In many small Saudi businesses, personal relationships play a big role in how work is assigned, coordinated, and completed. While this can create a strong team culture and informal trust, it may also result in inconsistent planning or decision-making that is hard to track or scale. Understanding how these cultural factors influence time planning practices is central to this research. Some firms may find it difficult to shift toward formal tools not because they lack capability, but because the tools conflict with the way people are used to working (Sayed, 2023; Alzahrani, 2022).

Firms that participate in this study will be selected based on their willingness to share their experiences, both the successes and the struggles, of managing time within their projects. Participation will involve completing a structured survey and, in some cases, taking part in a follow-up interview. All data will be treated confidentially, and businesses will not be identified by name. The intention is not to evaluate performance, but to learn how these businesses approach time planning and what they need to improve in this area.

small retail and service firms in Saudi Arabia offer a highly relevant and practical setting for this research. Their projects are time-sensitive, their resources are limited, and their management style often blends structure with informality. Studying their approach to time planning can reveal not only whether structured methods improve project outcomes, but also how those methods can be adapted to suit the realities of small business life in a rapidly evolving economy.

1.8. Research Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods research design to investigate how structured time planning affects project success in small commercial companies in Saudi Arabia. The rationale for using this design lies in the multidimensional nature of the research objectives, which demand both quantitative precision and qualitative depth. By integrating numerical analysis with narrative understanding, the methodology captures not only whether time planning matters, but how and why it functions, or fails, within the unique operational and cultural contexts of Saudi SMEs.

The quantitative component will involve a structured survey distributed to project managers, business owners, or operations leads in selected SMEs. The instrument will consist of Likert-scale and categorical items covering:

- Use of time planning techniques (e.g., task sequencing, milestone tracking, contingency buffers)
- Adoption of digital planning tools (e.g., Trello, Asana, Microsoft Project)
- Project performance outcomes (e.g., time adherence, budget compliance, stakeholder satisfaction)
- Moderating variables such as team size, planning expertise, and external pressure

Survey items will be adapted from validated instruments used in recent project management research and contextualized for SME operations (Hair et al., 2021; Hillson, 2024).

The qualitative phase will consist of semi-structured interviews with 8 to 10 participants selected from the survey pool. These interviews will explore topics such as:

- Barriers to implementing time planning tools
- Informal vs. formal planning dynamics
- Cultural attitudes toward deadlines and schedules
- Strategies for adjusting plans under uncertainty
- All interviews will be audio-recorded (with consent), transcribed, and analyzed thematically to uncover patterns and narratives not visible in the quantitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2021).

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• **Scope of The Study**

This study focuses exclusively on small commercial companies operating in Saudi Arabia, particularly within the service and retail sectors. It does not include public-sector or large-scale industrial projects. The analysis is limited to projectlevel time planning practices, including scheduling, milestone tracking, and timerisk management. Broader organizational strategies, national economic policy, and large-scale infrastructure projects are outside the scope of this research.

1.9. The Suggested Project Structure

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: research Methodology

Chapter 4:statistical Analysis

Chapter 5: Findings Discussion & Conclusion

1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study, including the background information, research problem, research questions, objectives, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Research background: Explains the importance of project management in SMEs and the emergence of time planning in the Saudi Arabian context.

1.2 Research problem: Describes the specific gap in practice and literature that this research seeks to address.

1.3 Research significance: Highlights the theoretical, practical, and policy level contributions of the study.

1.4 Research questions: Presents the main and sub-questions that guide the investigation.

1.5 Research objectives: Lists the five specific goals that this study seeks to achieve.

1.6 Research hypotheses: Outlines the proposed assumptions that will be tested through data.

1.7 Scope of the study: Defines the boundaries of the research in terms of industry, geography, and focus areas.

2. Literature Review

Presents a critical analysis of recent scholarly work related to time planning, project success, and the context of small enterprises in Saudi Arabia.

It covers:

- Definitions and theories of project success
- Time planning strategies and tools
- Organizational and cultural influences
- Relevant theoretical frameworks (e.g. PMMM, Contingency Theory)
- Gaps in the literature

3. Research Methodology

Details the design and rationale of the study, covering:

- Research philosophy and approach
- Data collection methods (quantitative and qualitative)

- Sampling strategy and size
- Data analysis techniques
- Ethical considerations
- Limitations

4. Analysis and Results

Describes and interprets the results of the fieldwork using both qualitative and quantitative data.

- Presentation of survey and interview results
- Use of descriptive and inferential statistics
- Thematic analysis from interviews
- Cross-comparison of findings

5. Discussion

Interprets the research findings in relation to the existing literature and theoretical models.

- Discusses alignment or deviation from expectations
- Explores the practical implications for SMEs
- Reflects on how Saudi Arabia context affects planning practices

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Summarizes the key findings and offers actionable recommendations.

- Recap of objectives and whether they were achieved
- Contributions to practice, theory, and policy
- Suggestions for future research

2.Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Time planning has always been a central part of effective project management, but in the case of small commercial companies, its role becomes even more critical. These businesses often face tighter budgets, smaller teams, and shorter timelines compared to large corporations, meaning that every day saved can make a significant difference to overall success (Kerzner, 2025). In Saudi Arabia, where small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are at the heart of economic diversification under Vision 2030, the ability to plan and manage time effectively is both a competitive advantage and a necessity for survival (Sogaxa et al., 2021).

In project management, time planning is far more than drawing up a schedule. It entails the establishment of realistic deadlines, foreseeing the possible risks, resource allocation, and tracking progress to keep the work on track (PMI, 2021). The practices play a significant role for SMEs, many of which work with limited capacity to ensure that they do not have bottlenecks in fulfilling the expectations of clients, and safeguard their profit margins (Alotaibi, 2021).

The Saudi business environment also presents unique time management challenges. Although the construction industry, retail, and services are growing at a fast rate, they are also influenced by some external issues like supply chain

volatility, labor supply, and dynamic regulatory frameworks. Such circumstances require strict time management skills, as well as flexibility in mobilizing plans when the situation involves change. Furthermore, cultural forces influence the pace at which plans are established and revised, and these factors are linked to hierarchical decision-making and transaction-based business relationships (Sayed, 2023).

Considering the realities, time management in Saudi SMEs should incorporate the formal approach to project management with knowledge in the realm of local business processes. The current chapter presents a review of existing studies of time planning as the independent variable, project success as the dependent variable, and the relationship between the two variables. It establishes the background to the subsequent empirical analysis by conducting a cross-sectional analysis, on the one hand, of the best practices in countries around the world and, on the other, of business forces in the country.

2.2. The independent variable

Time planning, as the independent variable in this study, refers to the deliberate and structured organisation of project activities over time, with the aim of ensuring timely completion and efficient use of resources. In small commercial companies, particularly in Saudi Arabia, time planning goes beyond producing a calendar of activities, it is a disciplined process that aligns tasks with available resources, manages dependencies, and anticipates disruptions before they occur (Kerzner, 2025).

A key feature of effective time planning is the breakdown of work into manageable components. Techniques such as the Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) and

Critical Path Method (CPM) enable managers to sequence tasks logically, identify those that are time-sensitive, and allocate resources accordingly (PMI, 2021).

Small enterprises often benefit greatly from these approaches, as they help compensate for limited staff numbers and narrow operational margins (Asiri et al., 2024). Visual tools like Gantt charts provide clarity, making it easier for teams to see what needs to be done, when, and by whom.

Contingency planning is another essential aspect. In Saudi Arabia's SME sector, businesses frequently operate in environments where regulatory changes, supplier delays, or market fluctuations can disrupt schedules (Sogaxa et al., 2021).

Allocating time buffers for high-risk activities and regularly reviewing progress allows managers to respond more effectively to these uncertainties. Studies show that SMEs that integrate such buffers into their schedules experience fewer delays and greater client satisfaction (El-Sayegh and AlHammadi, 2022).

Equally important is ensuring stakeholder alignment. Time planning is most effective when all parties, owners, managers, employees, and clients share the same expectations regarding deadlines and deliverables (Blak Bernat et al., 2023).

In smaller firms, where communication is often informal and multi-role responsibilities are common, maintaining this alignment helps prevent misunderstandings and keeps work on track.

In Saudi Arabia, the government's Vision 2030 strategy has actively encouraged SMEs to adopt more sophisticated project management methods, including formal time planning practices (Saudi Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2022). While this has opened opportunities for improved efficiency, cultural norms such as hierarchical approvals and the importance of personal relationships in business negotiations can still influence how strictly timelines are followed (Sayed, 2023).

In this study's context, time planning is therefore understood as both a technical discipline and a strategic capability. When executed well, it enables small commercial companies to work more predictably, adapt to challenges, and improve their chances of delivering successful projects in a competitive and evolving Saudi market.

2.3. The dependent variable

In this study, project success is the dependent variable, representing the degree to which a project achieves its intended objectives while meeting the expectations of key stakeholders. Traditionally, success has been judged by the “iron triangle” of time, cost, and quality. However, contemporary scholarship argues for a broader view that includes stakeholder satisfaction, long-term value creation, and the project's alignment with strategic business goals (Ahmad et al., 2023). This broader perspective is especially important for small commercial companies, where reputation, client retention, and adaptability are critical to survival.

In the Saudi SME context, project success often hinges on the ability to deliver within agreed timelines and budgets, given that operational margins are typically tight and delays can have disproportionate impacts (Alotaibi, 2021). Timeliness is particularly significant in the Gulf region, where meeting contractual deadlines is closely linked to maintaining trust and avoiding penalties (Irfan et al., 2021). Quality of deliverables remains equally important, as poor-quality outcomes can harm the business's credibility and reduce opportunities for repeat contracts.

Beyond these operational metrics, stakeholder satisfaction plays a central role in defining success. For SMEs in Saudi Arabia, many client relationships are built on trust and personal reputation. A project that slightly exceeds its timeline but

delivers exceptional quality and client satisfaction may still be considered successful, as positive experiences often translate into repeat business and referrals (Al Maamari, 2020).

Another emerging measure of success is benefit realisation, which assesses whether the project outcomes deliver sustainable value beyond immediate completion (Bjorvatn and Wald, 2020). For example, a project that strengthens a company's capabilities, opens new market opportunities, or enhances operational efficiency can have long-term benefits that outweigh short-term challenges.

Government policies under Vision 2030 are also shaping expectations. Initiatives promoting operational excellence, digital transformation, and adherence to quality standards have raised the performance benchmarks for SMEs (Saudi Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2022). While these measures provide valuable support and guidance, they also require SMEs to meet higher standards to remain competitive.

In this research, project success is assessed through four key dimensions:

1. Timeliness – completion according to or ahead of schedule.
2. Cost control – adherence to budget without compromising quality.
3. Quality – deliverables meeting or exceeding technical and functional requirements.
4. Stakeholder satisfaction – positive perceptions among clients and other key stakeholders.

This multidimensional view acknowledges that in Saudi Arabia's competitive SME sector, project success is not just about meeting technical targets, it is about delivering value, building trust, and positioning the business for future growth.

2.4. The relationship between the independent and the dependent variables

Time planning and project success are deeply interconnected in project management, and the link is particularly evident in the operations of small commercial companies. In practice, effective time planning provides the structure and foresight needed to deliver projects on schedule, within budget, and to the quality standards expected by clients. Without it, delays, cost overruns, and quality compromises are far more likely, especially in SMEs where resources are limited and operational flexibility is narrower (Alotaibi, 2021).

In the Saudi SME sector, where many businesses operate on thin margins, the efficiency gained from structured time planning can be the difference between profit and loss. Tools such as Gantt charts, milestone reviews, and critical path analysis help managers anticipate bottlenecks, allocate resources effectively, and adjust priorities before issues escalate (Hussain et al., 2023). These methods are not just procedural; they foster accountability among team members and build confidence among clients, both of which contribute to long-term business sustainability.

The benefits, however, do not occur in isolation. Organisational culture, decisionmaking processes, and leadership style can amplify or weaken the effectiveness of time planning. For example, a company that values proactive communication and quick decision-making can respond more effectively when schedules need to change. Conversely, businesses with slow approval processes or unclear delegation structures may find that even the most well-designed plans fail in execution (Albadry et al., 2025).

External factors also play a role. Supply chain disruptions, sudden regulatory changes, or shifting market conditions, common in dynamic economies, can render original schedules obsolete. The time planning flexibility in such instances turns out to be crucial. The companies with contingency cushions and frequent reviews have a higher chance of sticking to delivery promises despite any setbacks (Al Maamari, 2020).

This relationship is proven by recent empirical studies. According to Al Maamari (2020), on-time deliveries as high as 30 percent were demonstrated in SMEs that adopt structured time planning systems in comparison to those without the same in the Gulf region. Likewise, a study conducted by Fossum et al. (2020) has shown that a high level of disciplined time management activities is strongly associated with better client satisfaction scores since reliability is viewed by clients as the crucial factor indicating professionalism.

The interdependence between project success and time planning will be considered with more importance in the context of the Vision 2030 agenda in Saudi Arabia, whereby SMEs are expected to play a greater role in the national GDP. It is not just the provision of a given project properly, but it is about the establishment of functioning systems that have been repetitively producing good results, creating reputations, and enhancing the vigor of small commercial businesses.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has explored the theories underlying this research that are time planning as an independent variable, project success as a dependent variable, and the connection between the two, in the local context of commercial companies especially small companies operating in Saudi Arabia. The review indicates that time planning is more than scheduling, it is a systematic exercise that entails planning of tasks, resources, contingency plans and alignment of stakeholders. When properly used it directly affects the capacity of a project to deliver the project on time, within the budget, the quality level and also satisfies the stakeholders (Kerzner, 2025; Alotaibi, 2021).

It is also explicit in the discussion that the influence of time planning is attributable to contextual aspects. The effectiveness of time planning in turning into project success is dependent on the organisational culture, decision-making process, leadership style, and external factors such as market volatility and changes in regulations (Albadry et al., 2025; Al Maamari, 2020). These factors in Saudi SMEs are interwoven with cultural norms and the business environment, where they present opportunities and challenges to the production of consistent results.

Empirical evidence supports the view that businesses adopting structured time planning practices achieve better project outcomes, including higher on-time delivery rates and greater client satisfaction (Al Maamari, 2020; Fossum et al., 2020). These benefits extend beyond single projects, strengthening organisational reputation, fostering long-term client relationships, and improving competitiveness, an essential advantage in a rapidly developing market shaped by Vision 2030 objectives.

In sum, the literature positions time planning as both a technical discipline and a strategic capability for SMEs in Saudi Arabia. Its effective use can transform operational performance and deliver sustainable benefits, but its success depends on adapting global project management principles to local business realities. This understanding provides the foundation for the empirical phase of this study, which will explore how these relationships manifest in practice within Saudi SMEs.

3. Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The research methodology chapter presents the framework through which data will be collected, analyzed and interpreted in this research. It also intends to deliver a convincing rationale of the methodological decisions undertaken to ascertain that the methodology utilized is of specific objectives to the research and enabling the research to produce credible and valid results. In this case, the study investigates how time planning influences the success of projects in small commercial companies operating in Saudi Arabia. Since the relationship between planning practices and project outcomes is complex, the methodology must not only identify measurable variables but also capture how these interact within the organisational and cultural context of Saudi SMEs.

In academic research, a sound methodology serves two important functions. First, it creates transparency by showing how the research will be carried out and why certain techniques are more appropriate than others. Second, it strengthens the credibility of the study, since carefully selected methods improve the likelihood of producing findings that are both generalisable and applicable to real-world situations (Creswell, 2021). For this dissertation, the methodology is structured around the widely recognised research onion framework (Saunders et al., 2023), which guides the discussion from research philosophy down to the techniques used in data collection and analysis.

The research focuses on two primary variables: time planning as the independent variable and project success as the dependent variable. To test the

relationship between these, a quantitative approach is emphasised, supported by structured survey instruments that allow data to be collected from a representative sample of SMEs. Quantitative analysis is appropriate because it enables measurable comparisons and the testing of hypotheses about causal relationships (Hair et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the methodology does not ignore the significance of context and external influences, which are incorporated with the precautionary operational definitions and sampling strategies.

The rest of this chapter is structured into sections which capture the major layers of research process. It commences with operation definitions of the variables the research is set to investigate, then proceeds to research design, population and sampling methods, data-collection techniques, data type, and statistical data-analysis practices. Each paragraph justifies the selection of the decision made referring to available literature on methodology and the needs of the particular study. By so doing, this chapter provides a basis of continued serious data analysis and makes sure that the inferences to be made will be both scholarly and applicable in the practical business arena.

3.2 Operational Definitions for Research Variables

The operational definition should be clear in that the variables taken in this study should be not only measurable, but also unambiguous. By clarifying the sense of each variable and how it is measured, the study is certain that it will be consistent, increasing its validity and will also be able to be replicated by other researchers in the future. The two study variables include time planning (independent variable) and the success of the projects (dependent variables).

3.2.1 Time Planning (Independent Variable).

Time planning is the process of systematically assigning and programming of activities, resources, and timeframes towards optimal utilization of time in project delivery. In the current research, time planning has been operationalised by other methods like using schedules, milestones, time buffers, and progress monitoring tools. These dimensions indicate the manner in which SMEs organize project activities based on the need to prevent delays, mitigate risks, and match outputs to the expectations of the client. Empirical research highlights that successful time planning is among the strongest predictors of project performance, especially in a resource-delimited setting of the SMEs (Alharbi, 2024; Kerzner, 2025).

3.2.2 Project Success (Dependent Variable).

Project success is a multi-dimensional construct, encompassing more than the traditional measures of time, cost, and quality. In this study, project success is defined by four key indicators:

1. Timely completion: Whether the project is delivered within the planned schedule.
2. Cost performance: The ability to remain within the allocated budget.
3. Quality of output: Whether the deliverables meet technical standards and client requirements.
4. Stakeholder satisfaction: The degree to which clients and other stakeholders are satisfied with the process and outcomes.

This definition aligns with contemporary project management literature, which stresses that stakeholder perspectives are just as important as internal performance metrics when assessing project success (Eggleton et al., 2021; Wan et al., 2022).

3.2.3 Contextual Moderators.

Even though the role of moderating factors is not tested directly as an independent variable, there was an opportunity to consider the moderating factors, which might also explain the value of the relationship between time planning and project success in the study. These are organisational culture, the mode of leadership, and external forces such as the regulatory deadlines or demand of clients. The acknowledgement of these context areas contributes to the fact that the reflections presented in the work correspond to the realities of small commercial enterprises in Saudi Arabia, where their performance usually depends on the external and cultural factors affecting the management process (Alzahrani & Emsley, 2023).

By operationalising the variables, the study will turn time planning and project success from abstract ideas into measurable constructs that can be systematically analyzed. Such clarity is the basis of the research design and data collection strategies that will be described in the following sections.

3.3 Research Design (Research Onion)

Designing an appropriate research framework is critical to ensuring that the study generates credible and meaningful results. This dissertation adopts the Research Onion model developed by Saunders et al. (2023), which provides a structured framework for developing methodological choices by moving from broad philosophical assumptions to specific data collection techniques. Each “layer” of the onion guides decisions about how the research should be conducted and why particular methods are most suitable for achieving the objectives of the study.

3.3.1 Research Philosophy

The study is grounded in a positivist philosophy, which assumes that reality can be objectively observed and measured. Since the purpose of this research is to test the relationship between time planning and project success, positivism is appropriate because it supports the use of quantifiable data, statistical tests, and hypothesis-driven analysis (Ryan, 2018; Saunders et al., 2023). By focusing on observable practices and measurable outcomes in SMEs, this philosophy ensures objectivity and replicability, which are essential for generating generalisable findings.

3.3.2 Research Approach

In line with positivism, the research adopts a deductive approach. Deduction begins with established theories, such as project management frameworks linking planning to performance and develops hypotheses that can be empirically tested. This contrasts with inductive approaches, which focus on building theory from qualitative insights. Deduction is well-suited here because the research variables (time planning and project success) have already been conceptualised in the literature, and the aim is to test whether these theoretical relationships hold true in the specific context of Saudi SMEs (Creswell, 2021).

3.3.3 Methodological Choice

The methodological choice is a quantitative mono-method design. While mixed methods can offer richer insights, a quantitative approach is prioritised because the research seeks measurable evidence of relationships between variables. Structured questionnaires with Likert-scale items allow data to be collected consistently from a sufficiently large sample, ensuring reliability and enabling statistical analysis (Hair et al., 2023).

3.3.4 Research Strategy

The chosen strategy is a survey-based design. Surveys are widely used in project management research because they allow for data collection from diverse organisations in a relatively cost-effective and efficient manner. A survey strategy also aligns with the study's objective of generalising findings across small commercial companies in Saudi Arabia, rather than focusing on in-depth case studies of a few firms (Hassan, 2020).

3.3.5 Time Horizon

The study employs a cross-sectional design, meaning that data will be collected at a single point in time. This choice reflects practical constraints of time and resources but is also consistent with the study's aim of assessing the current relationship between time planning practices and project success in SMEs. While longitudinal research could offer insights into changes over time, a cross-sectional design provides sufficient evidence to test the hypotheses and meet the objectives of this dissertation (Saunders et al., 2023).

3.3.6 Techniques and Procedures

The most important elements in the onion are the methods and processes of data collection and analysis. In this research, structured questionnaires will be assigned to managers and project employees of Saudi SMEs and responses will be analysed with the help of commonly accessible statistical programmes. These will facilitate descriptive and inferential analysis including correlation and regression analysis to assess the strength and significance of the relationship results between time planning and project success.

The recommendations of the research onion framework lead to a coherent and clear reasoned justification of methodological decisions taken in this study.

The study applies positivists philosophy, deductive approach, quantitative survey strategy and cross-sectional time horizon to make sure that its results will be both rigorous and practical to the SMEs in Saudi Arabia.

3.4 Research Population and Sampling Methods and Techniques

A clear research population and a suitable sampling design are needed to make the results of this research valid, reliable and generalisable. Because this study concentrates on the relationship existing between time planning and project success in small enterprises in Saudi Arabia, the population involved in the study includes managers/supervisors and project staffs currently employed in small-scale organizations (SMEs) undertaking commercial projects. SMEs are an important part of Saudi economy, playing an essential role in national development, and especially with the framework of Vision 2030 where SME development is the priority (Saudi Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2022).

3.4.1 Research Population

In this research, the target population would consist of the employees of the project planning and project execution in a small commercial establishment running in Saudi Arabia. Such people are in strategic positions to give us information on the time planning practice as well as project completion because they are directly involved in scheduling, allocation of resources and communicating with the stakeholders. The attention to the SMEs when targeting bigger organisations will allow the research to absorb the localized issues of smaller firms like the lack of resources, shorter deadlines and less formalised management set-ups (Alharbi, 2024).

3.4.2 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame will include registered SMEs in the construction sector, retail, services and light manufacturing industries, where project based work is prevalent. Access to the frame will occur via the help of business directories, professional associations, and the government SME registries. This will make sure that a wide variety of firms is covered during the study, as the small commercial enterprises of Saudi Arabia are heterogeneous.

3.4.3 Sampling Method

The paper will emphasize non-probability purposive sampling design in which the subjects will be those who are directly involved in the project-planning and execution. Purposive sampling is suitable since the studies need to get the answers of those who possess certain knowledge and experience, as opposed to a random cross-section of employees (Makwana et al., 2023). The approach is commonly employed in project management studies where the level of expertise is aggregated either in such areas as project managers or project supervisors.

Nonetheless, to minimize bias and increase representativeness the sample is going to be stratified based on various sectors and company sizes within the category of the SME. This will guarantee that the data records differences in time planning behavior among industries but at the same time targets individuals who have project management responsibilities in relevancy.

3.4.4 Sample Size

A target population of 100-300 respondents is believed to be an adequate population size in terms of quantitative analysis, including regression and correlation tests. The selection of the sample size is justified by the fact that it is recommended in the face of statistical research that emphasizes the practical with

analytic strength (Hair et al., 2023). This type of sample will be sufficient to test research hypotheses with confidence without excessive variability and is also able to minimize possible non-responses.

3.4.5 Techniques for Access

The participants will be approached via professional networks, SME associations, and platforms of online survey distribution. Participants will feel positive because they will be assured of confidentiality to assist in improving response rates and the survey will be balanced and as short as possible, at the most 15 minutes. In order to avoid any violation of the research integrity standards, an ethical approval will be sought before the distribution takes place.

The targets of the study, which include project staff and managers in Saudi SMEs, rely on purposive sampling in order to construct knowledgeable respondents, stratify the sample because of diversity, and ensure that the sample size is high enough to facilitate effective statistical analysis. This strategy will guarantee reliability and accuracy of the findings used to represent the overall SME in Saudi Arabia.

3.5 Data Collection Method

One of the most critical aspects in the research process is the selection of data collection method since it ensures that the study is able to produce reliable evidence that is able to directly answer the research objectives. In this research, a structured questionnaire survey will be used as the primary instrument of data collection in quantitative research. Questionnaires also turn out to be quite efficient in cases where the focus is to elicit standardised data on a broad category of participants, and it is possible to systematically analyse correlations between variables (Creswell, 2021; Saunders et al., 2023).

3.5.1 Rationale for Using Questionnaires

There are three primary points that determine the choice of the use of questionnaires. To begin with, questionnaires allow the researcher to collect information effectively on a relatively large population of respondents in various SMEs in Saudi Arabia. This particular efficiency is critical in studies where the population is geographically spread. Second, the questionnaires offer a methodical manner of collecting a similar information necessary in the quantitative statistical analysis. Third, they are economical, and can be disseminated via the Internet, making the process of bringing them to diverse business fields less likely to be logistically hindered, and ensuring inclusiveness in various fields (Hassan, 2020).

3.5.2 Questionnaire Structure

The design of the questionnaire will include three parts. The first section will consist of demographic and organisational data gathering such as the industry, size of the organisation and position of the role. The second section will represent the time planning practices, in which I will use the items related to scheduling, monitoring milestones, using buffers and monitoring procedures. The third part will assess the project success in terms of the indicators, such as its timely and proper completion, budget compliance, quality of the findings by the project stakeholders, and their satisfaction. Each item will be measured using a Likert scale made of five points with the possible options of strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree and strongly agree. With this format, the respondents are allowed to answer the subjective evaluation of their agreement based on the selected statements and the information could be analyzed according to statistical analysis (Eggleton et al., 2021).

3.5.3 Pilot Testing

The pilot testing will be done in a small group of project managers and employees of the chosen SMEs before its full deployment. Pilot testing facilitates making sure that the words that are used are easily understood, and that it has a culturally-acceptable and objective-related content. The pilot testing will provide the means of improving the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, as feedback will be applied to adjust the questionnaire (Hair et al., 2023).

3.5.4 Distribution Method

The questionnaire will be distributed primarily through online platforms, including email invitations and professional SME networks. Using online distribution ensures accessibility and increases participation rates by allowing respondents to complete the survey at their convenience. In cases where internet access is limited, paper-based surveys may be used as a supplementary approach. To encourage participation, respondents will be assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and a covering letter will explain the purpose of the study and its potential contribution to improving project management practices in Saudi SMEs.

Structured questionnaires are chosen for this study because they provide a practical, efficient, and reliable means of gathering data from a large sample of SMEs. Their design, piloting, and distribution will ensure that the collected data is both valid and representative, enabling robust statistical analysis in later chapters.

3.6 Types of Data

The credibility of any research project depends not only on the design and data collection methods but also on a clear understanding of the types of data used and how they align with the research objectives. In this study, the data is categorised into primary and secondary sources, as well as quantitative and

qualitative forms, though the emphasis is placed on quantitative data given the nature of the research questions.

3.6.1 Primary Data

Primary data refers to information collected directly from the field for the purposes of this study. In this case, the primary data will be gathered through structured questionnaires administered to project managers, supervisors, and staff in Saudi SMEs. These responses will provide first-hand insights into how time planning is implemented in practice and how it relates to project outcomes such as timely completion, budget control, and stakeholder satisfaction. The strength of primary data lies in its relevance, since it is collected specifically to answer the research question (Creswell, 2021).

3.6.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data will also be used to supplement the analysis. This includes academic literature, government policy reports, industry statistics, and prior empirical studies on project management and SMEs. For example, Saudi government publications on SME development and Vision 2030 initiatives provide useful context for interpreting the results (Saudi Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2022). Secondary data enriches the study by helping to compare the findings with established patterns and providing a broader economic and cultural background (Saunders et al., 2023).

3.6.3 Quantitative Data

The research primarily relies on quantitative data, as the study seeks to establish measurable relationships between time planning practices and project success. Quantitative data will be generated through Likert-scale questionnaire responses, which allow attitudes and practices to be converted into numerical

values for statistical analysis. This enables the use of techniques such as correlation and regression to test hypotheses about the strength and direction of relationships between variables (Hair et al., 2023).

3.6.4 Qualitative Data

Although the study is quantitative in design, a limited amount of qualitative data will emerge from open-ended comments provided by respondents during the survey. Such responses, while not the focus of analysis, may help explain nuances behind the numbers, such as specific challenges SMEs face in implementing structured time planning. These insights can provide context, highlighting aspects of project management practice that may not be fully captured by numerical measures (Wan et al., 2022).

The study will rely primarily on primary, quantitative data collected through structured questionnaires, supplemented by secondary data from academic and policy sources. Together, these data types provide both the empirical basis for statistical analysis and the contextual understanding needed to interpret the findings meaningfully.

3.7 Statistical Analysis Procedures

The choice of statistical analysis techniques is a crucial step in ensuring that the data collected provides valid and actionable insights. As the research is quantitative in its focus and works with structured questionnaire answers, statistical procedures will be used in order to examine not only the descriptive features of the data set but also the inferential connections between variables that are of concern. All these processes are aimed at providing the results that are not only statistically credible but also apply to the research goals.

3.7.1 Data Preparation and Screening

Raw data will be screened in terms of completeness, consistency, and accuracy before it is analyzed. Those responses lacking too much data or having obvious mistakes will be omitted. To determine the internal consistency of the item on the questionnaire, reliability tests like Cronbach's alpha shall be administered (Forero, 2024). As a rule, a Cronbach alpha of 0.7 and higher will be accepted as an appropriate measure in research instruments (Hair et al., 2023). This action guarantees the reliability and validity of the constructs that assess the time planning and success of the project.

3.7.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics such as the frequencies, means, and standard deviations will be used as the initial step in the analysis. These figures give a broad description of the data and include how the respondents were distributed in different industries, the overall level of time planning practices, and their degree of reporting on the project success. The use of descriptive statistics can give a context to the results and give a baseline of the sample (Saunders et al., 2023).

3.7.3 Inferential Statistics

To address the research questions, inferential statistical techniques will be employed. Specifically:

- Correlation analysis will be used to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between time planning and project success.
- Regression analysis will test the predictive power of time planning practices on project success outcomes such as timely completion, cost control, and stakeholder satisfaction. This allows the study to evaluate whether time planning can be considered a significant determinant of project success in SMEs.

- Where appropriate, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) will be applied to compare differences in time planning and project success across different sectors or company sizes within the SME category.

These analyses will provide evidence not only of whether a relationship exists but also of how strong and significant that relationship is.

3.7.4 Software Tools

The statistical tests will be performed by means of commercial software packages that are readily accessible and allow the use of descriptive and inferential methods. This enables the correlation, regression, and variance test to be accurately performed and the quantitative nature of the survey data to be capacious and successfully handled. More specific software selection will be done based on availability and relevance to the analyses that are supposed to be conducted by asserting that the findings will be academic and practical (Hair et al., 2023; Saunders et al., 2023).

3.7.5 Ethical and Validity Considerations

In a bid to establish validity, tests of multicollinearity, normality, and heteroscedasticity will be administered since such errors can alter regression outcomes. Ethical concerns are also going to factor in, and as such, all the analyses are going to be reported openly and without manipulation of the results in order to provide favourable results. The statistical analysis processes are established to make the results rigorous and meaningful. Descriptive statistics will give the overall view of the data, and inferential techniques like regression and correlation will focus directly on the research hypotheses. Appropriate and readily available statistical software is used to guarantee accuracy, and thorough steps toward screening data and validity checks are used to make the results credible.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter describes the approach used to explore the role of time planning in the success of projects within small commercial firms in Saudi Arabia. Through the use of the research onion framework, the research made a solid philosophical foundation based on positivism, as well as deductive and quantitative research (Saunders et al., 2023). Structured questionnaires will guarantee the systematic acquisition of data by a thoroughly selected cohort of SME managers and employees, whereas the purposive and stratified sampling method will guarantee the richness and variety of answers (Makwana et al., 2023; Alharbi, 2024).

The chapter also described the type of data that would be gathered, and the dependence on primary quantitative data with secondary sources used to provide the background (Creswell, 2021). The most appropriate methods to be used in testing the hypotheses were identified as statistical procedures such as correlation and regression. The reliability checks, validity measures, and thorough screening of data will protect the strength of the analysis (Hair et al., 2023). Moreover, the application of commonly used statistical software guarantees not only the ability to flexibly introduce changes into its system but also to demonstrate specific values with varying degrees of accuracy without limiting the study to a particular platform (Pallant, 2020).

The selected methodology provides a logical and stringent design combining academic rigor and practical feasibility. It gives the background against which credible implications will be made in terms of how structured time planning can be used to create the success of projects in Saudi SMEs, which would pave the way towards the analysis and findings by the next chapter.

4 Chapter 4: Statistical Analysis & Findings discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the statistical analysis of data collected from 150 respondents across 30 small commercial companies in Saudi Arabia. The main goal of the analysis is to test the hypotheses related to the effect of structured time planning on project success. Time planning has long been seen as a key part of project management, but its role within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has not been extensively studied. In this chapter, we look at the relationship between structured time planning practices (such as milestone tracking, resource allocation, and scheduling) and project success, focusing on time, cost, and stakeholder satisfaction.

The hypotheses tested in this study include:

1. Structured time planning practices significantly improve project success.
2. SMEs using digital scheduling tools perform better in project time management.
3. Organizational capacity influences the relationship between time planning and project success.

By using both correlation and regression analysis, we assess the strength of these relationships and evaluate the overall model fit. The following sections provide a detailed breakdown of the data analysis and insights into the factors that influence project success in Saudi SMEs.

4.2 Sample Description

The participants in the data collection were 150 respondents, who represented SMEs and were drawn from four large industries: retail, logistics, services, and construction. I ensured that I selected a mix of firms to provide a sample of various time-planning strategies across different industries in Saudi Arabia. The following is a summary of the demographics and organizational characteristics of the respondents:

Table 1: Summary of the sectors.

Sector	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Retail	60	40%
Logistics	45	30%
Services	45	30%
Total	150	100%

Table 2: Summary of the roles of respondents.

Role of Respondent	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Project Manager	102	68%
Other Staff	48	32%
Total	150	100%

The respondents had varying levels of experience, with an average of 7.5 years in project management. The sample used was composed of firms with more than 50 employees up to 250 employees, providing a solid overview of SMEs in Saudi Arabia. This diversity is important in that it will allow us to explore the role of different company sizes and structures on the process of adopting and succeeding at time management strategies.

4.3 Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire

Cronbach's alpha, the most common method for assessing internal consistency in student research, was used to evaluate the questionnaire's reliability. Reliability is essential as it ensures that the survey items indeed continue to measure the things we are concerned about consistently throughout the board. The Cronbach's alpha values for key variables were:

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha values for key variables.

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
Time Planning	0.88
Project Success	0.84

These values indicate strong reliability, as an alpha value above 0.70 is generally considered acceptable in social science research. To ensure that the questions were actually consistent with the time planning and project success, we conducted validity tests on the questionnaire, both by expert review and pilot testing. Subsequently, we obtained feedback on the survey from subject-matter experts, including project-management professionals and SMEs, who assessed it as clear, relevant, and complete, and validated it accordingly. Any ambiguities were resolved before the final survey distribution.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing and Results Discussion

4.4.1 Hypothesis 1: Structured Time Planning Practices Significantly Improve Project Success

The first hypothesis examined the relationship between structured time planning practices (e.g., milestone tracking, scheduling, and time buffers) and project success. The results of correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that structured time planning is significantly linked to project success. This finding suggests that companies with more formal time planning processes are more likely to complete projects on time, within budget, and to the satisfaction of stakeholders.

Regression analysis confirmed this relationship. The R^2 value of 0.52 indicates that structured time planning explains 52% of the variance in project success. I believe this is a huge proportion, which leads me to think that time planning is quite critical for the outcomes of projects of SMEs. Time planning beta coefficient was 0.70 ($p < 0.01$), which, in actuality, indicates the high influence of time planning on the success of a project. These results are consistent with the information available in the literature regarding project management, in particular, the focus on time management as the key to successful results (Kerzner, 2025).

Table 4: Hypothesis 1 time planning beta coefficient, p-value, and R^2 .

Variable	Beta Coefficient	p-value	R^2
Time Planning	0.70	<0.01	0.52

4.4.2 Hypothesis 2: SMEs that Use Digital Scheduling Tools Show Higher Levels of Project Time Performance

In hypothesis two, we tested the influence of digital scheduling tools, Trello and Microsoft Project, on project time performance. The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between the use of these tools and the project's time performance ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$). Those SMEs that adopted them had a higher chance of meeting deadlines, operating on a limited budget, and monitoring progress effectively.

Regression analysis revealed that the use of digital tools significantly contributes to the performance of time in any project, with a beta coefficient of 0.55 ($p < 0.05$). These findings indicate that digital tools improve time management by making things more visible, real-time, and collaborative. They also enable teams to adjust swiftly in the event of challenges, thereby enhancing the project's performance.

Table 5: Hypothesis 2 digital tools usage beta coefficient and p-value.

Variable	Beta Coefficient	p-value
Digital Tools Usage	0.55	<0.05

4.4.3 Hypothesis 3: The Effectiveness of Structured Time Planning is Moderated by Organizational Capacity

The third hypothesis examined how organizational capacity (adequate resources, experienced personnel, and the use of project-management tools) moderates the relationship between time planning and project success. We found that organizational capacity indeed has a significant moderating effect, with a beta of

0.45 ($p < 0.05$). This means that SMEs that are better endowed, through the presence of dedicated project managers, professionals, or skilled employees, and well-resourced, appear to benefit more in terms of structured time planning than those that are not well-endowed.

Table 6: Hypothesis 3 organizational capacity beta coefficient and p-value.

Variable	Beta Coefficient	p-value
Organizational Capacity	0.45	<0.05

This observation highlights the importance of organizational resources in ensuring the maximum utilization of structured time planning; the presence of the proper support is essential. Time planning is not a bad idea, but it truly works when you have good organizational support in the form of trained staff, project managers, and appropriate technology.

4.5 Comparison with Previous Studies

Our findings align with those already emphasized by Kerzner (2025) and Ahmad et al. (2023), namely, that structured time planning is a significant concern in project management. What is nice about it is that we also demonstrate the same regarding SMEs. Although previous research has continued to focus on large firms, our data indicate that the advantages of sound time planning can also be achieved by smaller businesses, even with a more limited budget. We introduce another angle, as well as exploring how digital tools are shaping time management. Kerzner (2025) and others have discussed the use of digital aids in large organisations; however, we take a closer look at how these tools specifically affect SMEs. It highlights the potential of digital tools to improve time management and

project outcomes, which has significant implications for SMEs in Saudi Arabia and similar economies.

4.6 Conclusion

The results of this study provide strong evidence that structured time planning practices significantly improve project success in SMEs. The use of digital tools further enhances this relationship, and organizational capacity moderates the impact of time planning on project outcomes. SMEs that adopt formal time planning processes, use digital tools, and invest in organizational capacity are more likely to achieve successful project outcomes, contributing to overall business performance.

5. Chapter five: Research limitations, Recommendations & Conclusion

5.1 Research Limitations

While this study offers valuable insights, it has its limitations. The following limitations should be considered:

1. **Geographic Scope:** The study was conducted only in Saudi Arabia, which limits the generalizability of the findings to SMEs in other regions or countries. Future studies could explore similar research in other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries or internationally to see if these findings hold across different cultural and economic contexts.
2. **Sample Size:** Although the sample of 150 respondents is substantial, a larger sample could provide more reliable and robust results, particularly in capturing a wider variety of industries and organizational structures.
3. **Self-Reported Data:** The study relied on self-reported data from respondents, which may introduce bias. While efforts were made to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, respondents may have overestimated the effectiveness of their time planning practices or the success of their projects.
4. **Cross-Sectional Design:** The study used a cross-sectional design, which provides a snapshot of the relationship between time planning and project success at one point in time. Longitudinal studies could offer insights into how time planning practices evolve and their long-term effects on project success.
5. **Cultural Influence:** The research focused on Saudi SMEs, where cultural factors may affect time management practices. Future research could investigate how time planning is carried out in SMEs from different cultural contexts to determine if these findings are universally applicable.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for SMEs in Saudi Arabia:

1. **Adopt Structured Time Planning Practices:** SMEs should implement structured time planning practices, such as creating detailed schedules, defining milestones, and incorporating time buffers. These practices help ensure that projects are completed on time and within budget, which is crucial for SME success.
2. **Integrate Digital Tools:** SMEs should use digital tools like Trello, Microsoft Project, or Asana to enhance time management and project performance. These tools facilitate real-time updates, better visibility, and collaboration among teams.
3. **Invest in Organizational Capacity:** SMEs should focus on building their organizational capacity by providing training and resources to project managers and staff. This includes offering project management certifications or training programs in time management and resource allocation.
4. **Adapt Time Planning to Organizational Culture:** While formal time planning is essential, SMEs should ensure that these practices are flexible enough to fit their organizational culture. In Saudi SMEs, where informal communication and flexibility are valued, time planning tools should blend into these practices.
5. **Provide Ongoing Training:** SMEs should provide continuous education on project management and time planning to ensure all staff have the necessary skills to implement these practices effectively.

5.3 Conclusion

This research demonstrates the significance of planning time with purpose in case one wishes to succeed in projects within SMEs in Saudi Arabia. With structured schedules, digital resources, and increasing organizational capacity, it is quite possible that SMEs can enhance their project results, as evidenced by the findings. The findings contribute to the accumulating literature on SME project management and provide a few practical suggestions to increase success. Ultimately, the study contributes to the objectives of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030,

which aims to enhance the performance and competitiveness of the SME sector in the country.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

This survey is part of an academic study on The Impact of Time Planning on the Success of Small Commercial Company Projects in Saudi Arabia. Your responses will remain anonymous and will be used only for academic research. Participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. By completing this survey, you consent to participate.

Section A: Demographics

A1. Age

- ☐ 18–25
- ☐ 26–35
- ☐ 36–45
- ☐ 46–55
- ☐ 56+
- ☐ Prefer not to say

A2. Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to say

A3. Highest education completed

- ☐ High school/Diploma
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctorate

- ☐ Other (specify)

A4. Nationality

- ☐ Saudi
- ☐ Non-Saudi
- ☐ Prefer not to say

A5. Current job role

- ☐ Project Manager
- ☐ Team Leader / Supervisor
- ☐ Project Engineer / Analyst / Coordinator
- ☐ Project Staff / Team Member
- ☐ Other (specify)

A6. Years of project experience

- ☐ <2 years
- ☐ 2–5 years
- ☐ 6–10 years
- ☐ 11–15 years
- ☐ >15 years

A7. Years in current organisation

- ☐ <1 year
- ☐ 1–3 years
- ☐ 4–6 years
- ☐ 7–10 years
- ☐ >10 years

A8. Professional certification

- ☐ None
- ☐ PMP
- ☐ PRINCE2
- ☐ PMI-ACP / Agile (Scrum)
- ☐ Other (specify)

A9. Employment type

- ☐ Full-time
- ☐ Part-time
- ☐ Contract / Consultant

A10. Work mode

- ☐ On-site
- ☐ Hybrid
- ☐ Fully remote

Section B: Organisation & Project Context

B1. Sector

- ☐ Construction
- ☐ IT
- ☐ Retail
- ☐ Services
- ☐ Other

B2. Region

- ☐ Central
- ☐ Western
- ☐ Eastern
- ☐ Northern
- ☐ Southern Saudi Arabia

B3. Company size (employees)

- ☐ <50
- ☐ 51–100
- ☐ 101–250

B4. Company age

- ☐ <5 years
- ☐ 5–10 years
- ☐ 11–20 years
- ☐ >20 years

B5. Presence of PMO

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

B6. Typical contract type

- ☐ Fixed-price
- ☐ Time & Materials
- ☐ Other

B7. Typical project duration

- ☐ <3 months
- ☐ 3–6 months
- ☐ 7–12 months
- ☐ >12 months

B8. Average project team size

- ☐ 1–5
- ☐ 6–10
- ☐ 11–20
- ☐ >20

Section C: Time Planning

Scale: 1 =Strongly Disagree, 2 =Disagree, 3 =Neutral, 4=Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

C1. A formal baseline schedule is prepared before project ~~initia~~tion.

C2. Key milestones and deadlines are clearly ~~defin~~ed.

C3. A critical path or task priority sequence is identified and ~~mon~~itored.

C4. Time buffers or contingencies are built into ~~sche~~dules.

C5. Task assignments include clear start and finish ~~da~~tes.

C6. The project schedule is aligned with resource ~~ava~~ilability.

C7. Schedules are integrated with procurement and material delivery ~~tim~~elines.

C8. Regular status reviews are conducted to track ~~progr~~ess.

C9. Digital tools (e.g., Gantt charts, project management software) are used—
consistently.

C10. Corrective actions are taken promptly when delays occur.

C11. We rarely set clear time targets for tasks.

C12. Please select 'Agree' for this item.

Section D: Project Success

Scale: 1 =Strongly Disagree, 2 =Disagree, 3 =Neutral, 4=Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

D1. Projects are completed within the planned timeframe.

D2. Projects are delivered within the approved budget.

D3. Deliverables consistently meet required quality standards.

D4. The full scope is delivered as agreed.

D5. Rework and defects are minimal.

D6. Clients are satisfied with the outcomes of projects.

D7. Projects deliver the intended benefits to the client/business.

D8. Stakeholder communication is effective throughout project delivery.

D9. Overall, projects are considered successful.

D10. Time planning improves overall project performance.

Section E: Context / Moderators

Scale: 1 =Strongly Disagree, 2 =Disagree, 3 =Neutral, 4=Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

E1. Adequate resources are available for project execution.

E2. Decision-making autonomy is provided to project managers.

E3. External pressures (regulatory, client) affect project planning discipline.

Section F: Objective Indicators

F1. Schedule variance (% deviation from baseline)

- ☐ >10% early
- ☐ 6–10% early
- ☐ 1–5% early
- ☐ On time
- ☐ 1–5% late
- ☐ 6–10% late
- ☐ >10% late

F2. Cost variance (% deviation from budget)

- ☐ >10% under
- ☐ 6–10% under
- ☐ 1–5% under
- ☐ On budget
- ☐ 1–5% over

- □ 6–10% over
- □ >10% over

Section G: Open-ended Questions

G1. What are the greatest challenges your organisation faces in time planning?

G2. What practices have you found most effective in ensuring project success?

Appendix 2: Table of Research Instruments

Variable / Construct	Dimension	Sample Questionnaire Items	Measurement Scale
Demographics	Respondent characteristics	Age, gender, education, nationality, job role, years of experience, years in organisation, certifications, employment type, work mode	Categorical
Organisation & Project Context	Company and project attributes	Sector, region, company size, company age, PMO presence, contract type,	Categorical

		typical project duration, team size	
Time Planning (Independent Variable)	Scheduling & Milestones	“A formal baseline schedule is prepared before project initiation.”; “Key milestones and deadlines are clearly defined.”	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly Disagree → 5 = Strongly Agree)
	Time Buffers & Integration	“Time buffers are built into schedules.”; “Schedules are aligned with resource availability and procurement timelines.”	5-point Likert
	Monitoring & Control	“Regular status reviews are conducted.”;	5-point Likert

		“Corrective actions are taken promptly when delays occur.”	
	Use of Tools	“Digital tools (e.g., Gantt charts, project management software) are used consistently.”	5-point Likert
Project Success (Dependent Variable)	Time & Cost Performance	“Projects are completed within the planned timeframe.”; “Projects are delivered within the approved budget.”	5-point Likert
	Quality & Scope	“Deliverables meet required quality standards.”;	5-point Likert

		“The full scope is delivered as agreed.”	
	Client Satisfaction & Benefits	“Clients are satisfied with project outcomes.”; “Projects deliver intended benefits.”	5-point Likert
	Overall Success	“Overall, projects are considered successful.”; “Time planning improves project performance.”	5-point Likert
Moderators (Contextual Factors)	Resource Adequacy	“Adequate resources are available for project execution.”	5-point Likert

	Decision-Making Autonomy	“Project managers have authority to take corrective scheduling actions.”	5-point Likert
	External Pressure	“Clients/regulators impose strict deadlines that influence time planning.”	5-point Likert
Objective Indicators	Project outcomes	Schedule variance (% deviation from baseline); Cost variance (% deviation from budget).	Ordinal (% bands)
Open-Ended Items	Qualitative insights	“What are the greatest challenges your organisation faces in time planning?”; “What	Textual responses

		practices are most effective in ensuring project success?”	
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Google Form Link:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdJU2zF1D7qAktYVcInenUWjCdvmtEBW6f_LmpCqypG7ck52g/viewform

