



Everyone's Smart University

Project (Spring 2021)

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Section	Date	Course Code
Master	Saturday 08 / 05 / 2021.	(PMG511)

PROJECT LEADERSHIP

The Implications of Team Management Skills on Project Outcomes

Introduction

Though one of the most important elements of project success, managing a project is the most challenging when misunderstood. It helps apply project resources to achieve set goals and objectives (Radujković & Sjekavica, 2017). Effective implementation and coordination of project ideas, elements, and activities require the leadership to develop, possess, and incorporate exceptional skills in different areas. This research emphasizes coaching leadership style, associated skills, agile team structure, and team needs and their implications on project success and

team performance. The coaching leadership style has emerged as a practical framework for managing complex, challenging, and multifaceted projects. Unlike most other styles, coaching incorporates trust and safety, collaboration, active listening, learning and development, belief in the potential of others, and feedback as essential skills. When implemented effectively in project management, the approach may improve team-building and management, crucial for project success. The study examines the intersection of coaching leadership style, team structure, and team needs and its implications on project outcomes and team performances. The study focuses on a reputable organization that implements the coaching style to understand employee performance and satisfaction with the leadership and policies.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

An evaluation of previous literature provides a comprehensive and well-articulated understanding of the relationship between study variables in team building and management as applied in project management. The review also helps identify gaps in the literature for further research and develop a conceptual framework, which may help understand and improve team management and team-building.

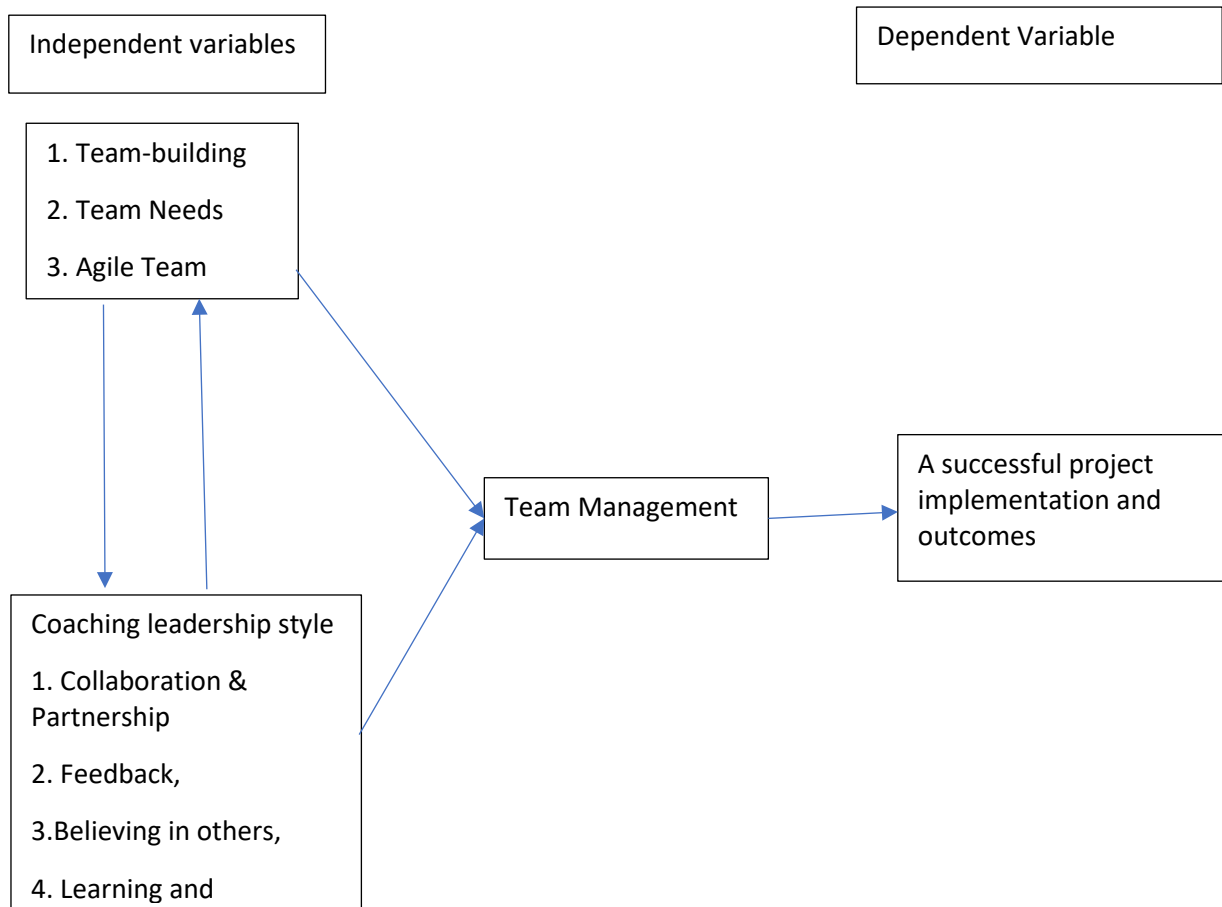
In project management, leadership skills play an inherent role in project outcomes. The study by Scott-Young and Samson (2008) recognizes project success from a multidimensional perspective. It also affirms that success can be achieved when diverse aspects and elements are integrated effectively and efficiently to align with project goals and objectives (Scott-Young & Samson, 2008). In that regard, all elements (project leadership being one) must perform at exceptional levels to achieve set goals and objectives. Nawaz et al. (2016) concur by suggesting that project managers influence the outcomes of any projects through the application of effective (or ineffective) teamwork and team-building practices. Project leadership provides a practical framework for organizing other elements, predominantly financial resources, project teams, equipment, and facilities, to align with strategic goals. Besides, studies define project leadership as the art of managing and guiding teams to successfully implement and complete projects. In contrast, team

management (used interchangeably with team-building) is considered a skill-based approach for coordinating and guiding teams to accomplish specific tasks in project management (Scott-Young & Samson, 2008; and Thamhain, 2007). In that regard, the team management should be a prerequisite to becoming an excellent project leader or manager. Although implementing practical team-building skills is only the tip of the iceberg in project management practices, it remains significant to achieving set goals and objectives.

Besides, the skills of a project leader remain influential in the outcomes of a project when other variables remain constant. A study by Zakaria et al. (2015) identifies a vast assortment of skills such leaders must possess to improve performance in the corporate world, encompassing decision-making and problem-solving, team-building, communication, planning and goal setting, conflict resolution, and sense of responsibility. Most of these skills are crucial and interdependent when actualizing project plans. For instance, Nawaz et al. (2016), Radujković and Sjekavica (2017), and Bond-Barnard et al. (2018) agree that ineffective conflict resolution, communication, planning, and goal setting, and time management skills may have a toll on team-building efforts. As a result, effective project leadership resonates with understanding and applying all the necessary skills to improve performance. Sometimes, it would not matter how effective a project manager is at team-building; if they fail in other skills, it would be nearly impossible to maintain a resourceful team effort and commitment effectively. On the same note, previous scholarship emphasizes integrating different leadership skills to improve teamwork management and team-building practices. These studies have emphasized how these skills interact at a project implementation level to influence the outcomes. Thus, team-building skills are a central factor to project success.

Moreover, most scholars directed their efforts to identify and understand issues that may affect team-building practices in project management, emphasizing team structures, team needs, and leadership styles. Previous scholarship contends that diverse team structures and team needs should be accounted for when improving team resourcefulness and performance. Increased emphasis on such factors helps managers understand how to guide and improve performance whilst addressing

possible conflicts and challenges. For instance, a recent study has identified common organizational structures such as functional, agile, and matrix structures as largely determinative of team performance. Applying the most effective structure can affect the performance of project teams. Besides, team needs' implications to achieve effective team performance cannot be neglected. So, understanding the team structures and team needs are essential variables that can contribute to effective team management, as illustrated in the conceptual framework below.



The framework illustrates that identifying team needs, implementing agile team structure, and integrating them with coaching leadership style (independent variables) would influence the project outcomes (dependent variables). Therefore, the relationship between such variables informs and guides the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data.

Methodology

The research implements a mixed-method approach to collect, analyze, and interpret empirical data, crucial reaffirming the relationship between study variables and their implications on project management. Understandably, the approach incorporates qualitative and quantitative research techniques when collecting raw data and applying it to the research (Fetters & Molina-Azorin, 2017). The research applied interviews, observations, surveys, and secondary data to collect data for analysis. A reputable organization believed to apply coaching leadership style was studied comprehensively. In the research, 50 employees responded and completed surveys distributed through the HR department, while 20 workers were interviewed. The surveys measured employee satisfaction, experiences, and perspectives on leadership style using the Likert scale, incorporating the items “Strongly disagree” (1) to “Strongly agree” (5). Interviews and observations utilized open-ended questions on employee satisfaction, performance, focus on team needs, and interpersonal relations. In addition to observations, interviews and surveys emphasized employee satisfaction and experiences with the coaching leadership style. The research also incorporates findings from previous scholarship to achieve the research aims and objectives. In that line, mixed-method analysis methods are utilized to examine, appraise, and evaluate raw data turning it into actionable information. Overall, the research combined qualitative and quantitative frameworks to analyze the data and achieve the objectives and aims.

Results and Discussions

The data has shown that correlations exist between the independent and the dependent variables, illustrating the importance of team-building and team management practices on project success. The following results were obtained from the surveys. Out of the 50 respondents, 30 of them ticked the boxes with either sometimes (3), often (4), or very often (5) in regards to leadership commitment to improving employee satisfaction. This resonates with team needs as an essential element of leadership skills. In addition to the coaching leadership style, the organization appears to implement an agile team structure in managing projects. For instance, the

surveys, interviews, and observations have shown that freedom, autonomy, collaboration, and partnership are crucial elements of the organization's structures. From that perspective, it is understandable that a combination of coaching leadership style, focus on team needs, and agile team structure is central. An investigation into the implication of team structure on project performance exemplifies that flat teams (agile) create team mental models (Singh et al., 2011; Ji & Yan, 2020; and Okoronkwo, 2017). This resonates with Koi-Akrofi et al. (2019) and Muhammad et al.'s (2021) studies suggesting that members provided with autonomy to manage and implement specific strategies in agile team structures contribute to better performance. As for this organization, approximately 40 (surveyed) and 17 (interviewed) employees suggest that the organization's performance has improved considerably over the years, whilst 30 of them attribute such progress to leadership skills in managing teams. Therefore, the coaching leadership style implemented in this organization promotes the adoption of agile team structures and focuses on team needs, promoting improved success in project management.

In addition, the research connects improved performance and project success to leadership skills (associated with coaching style). Based on the findings, 33 out of 50 employees surveyed and 16 out of 20 employees interviewed affirmed that the organization's leadership fosters autonomy, partnership, and collaboration. In addition, 34 out of 50 surveys and 14 out of 20 interviews showed satisfaction with leadership, suggesting that it promotes creativity, development, and increased focus on teamwork. The results reverberate previous scholarship suggesting that team-building as a practical leadership skill incorporates effective communication, impeccable conflict resolution practices, excellent problem-solving and decision-making, and time management strategies to guide members towards success. In that regard, deciding on the best structures should emphasize project scope, team needs, and leadership skills. For this case, a combination of coaching leadership style and agile team structures fosters an augmented focus on team needs, collaboration and partnerships, effective conflict resolution, learning and development, problem-solving, and decision-making, crucial to achieving success. Therefore, integrating suitable team structure and leadership skills in team management can

improve project outcomes. Based on the analysis, the research recommends applying leadership styles that align with specific team structures to augment team-building skills and successfully address team needs to achieve project success.

The research helps identify the inherence of coaching leadership style and agile team structures on organizational team needs and team building on project success. The study incorporates qualitative and quantitative studies to understand employee satisfaction and performance based on implementing such leadership styles and structures. Besides, the research combines information from different sources to understand how different leadership and team management variables can be integrated to augment project management success. However, further research is required to identify the intersection of different leadership styles and team structures to achieving strategic goals and objectives.

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