

Final Project 1

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Project Template

Faculty of Management
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Project title

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

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction

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:

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

Secondary questions include:

- Which specific time planning practices are most effective in promoting successful project outcomes among SMEs?
- How do constraints such as limited personnel and flexible scope moderate the effectiveness of time planning?
- How do project managers perceive the trade-off between rigid scheduling and the need for adaptive responses?
- What role does organizational culture play in influencing adherence to time planning frameworks in small Saudi firms?

- How do external pressures, such as client demands or regulatory timelines, influence SME time planning strategies?

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 service-oriented 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.

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, time-risk 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 long-term impact of training and policy interventions. Overall, the study aligns academic theory with practical needs in Saudi Arabia's evolving SME sector.

1.3. Research Questions

1.4. Research Objectives

1.5. Research Hypotheses

1.6. Research Model

1.7. Research Methodology

1.8. Scope of The Study

1.9. The Suggested Project Structure

2.Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Brief introduction for the chapter

2.2. The independent variable

2.3. The dependent variable

2.4. The relationship between the independent and the dependent variables

2.5. Conclusion

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