International Journal of Leadership and Public Sector Reform (*IJLPSR)*
ISSN: 3005-8368(online), ISSN: 3006-4945(print)
Volume 1, Issue 2, 71-86, December 2023
https://journals.osu.edu.et

Leader's Competency Effect on Project Success: In case of Oromia region, Ethiopia

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Abstract

An evaluation is conducted on the effect that project managers' competency has on the project success of three particular Ethiopian companies. Explanatory research design and quantitative research methodology are used to accomplish the study's goal. A questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale was used to collect data from each organization, and it was successful in getting 120 responses. The knowledge, skill, and personal traits of project managers were utilized as explanatory variables for project success. Regression analysis and correlation were used to accomplish the study's goals. The independent and dependent variables showed a moderately positive correlation, according to the correlation analysis. Regression analysis results also indicated that the three competence variables cited above have an impact on project success; personal traits carry the greatest weight, followed by skill and knowledge. Project Success increases by 0.652 when the project leader's competency increases by 1. Study's findings indicate that project managers' competency affects project success. This might have happened as a result of the study's small sample size and consideration of competence-related factors.

Key Words: Leader, Competency, Project Success

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today's project managers handle complex and varied projects in an environment that is always changing, with many stakeholders and external influences (Nurye et al., 2019). According to Rincón-González and Díaz-Piraquive (2020), a project manager has to possess a range of competences, from technical to behavioral, to effectively tackle the obstacles posed by transformations. The Project Management Institute (PMI 2007) has established three unique competency dimensions on the PMCD Framework, which are performance, personal, and knowledge. Knowledge competency is the ability to do duties assigned to a project manager using the tools, equipment, and procedures that they have been given. According to Rincón-González and Díaz-Piraquive (2020), personal competence pertains to the attitudes and essential personality qualities of the project manager towards the day-to-day operations of the project.

The set of skills, dispositions, talents, and appropriate work experience needed to succeed in particular tasks is known as competence. The IPMA Competency Baseline (ICB 2006) further divides these components into three competency categories. Tesfaye et al. (2022) have identified three distinct kinds of competence, namely technical, behavioural, and contextual. Traditional measurements of project success, also known as the iron triangle or triple constraint, were primarily concerned with meeting a project's budget and schedule objectives (Chonratana & Chatpattananan, 2021). It is now common, if not ubiquitous, to view project success from this perspective. However, Nurye et al. (2019) have proposed a broader definition of project success.

Modern thinking holds that in addition to complying with schedule and budgetary constraints, project success can also be defined as satisfying the requirements of participants, supporters, funding organisations, beneficiaries, and stakeholders. Historically, project success has been measured in terms of the measurable. However, determining these success criteria are more difficult because they need to be evaluated years after the project is finished (Serrador, 2014).

Project managers need to have the skills, knowledge, and other personal competencies pertaining to behavior, attitude, and personality qualities in order to accomplish the project's goals and objectives. Project manager competency and project success are known to be causally related, according to the PMCD framework of PMI 2017 (Chonratana & Chatpattananan, 2021). This project study intends to assess the influence of project managers' competencies on project performance in three successful organizations including a variety of project types, including research projects at the International Live Stock Research Institute (ILRI) and building projects.

2. THEORETICAL LENSES

Leadership competencies are the cumulative knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) that constitute successful leadership in an organization, according to Hollenbeck, McCall, and Silzer (2006). There have been several attempts to create a set of leadership skills that are applicable to different professions and industries.

2.1. Early leadership competency models: The idea for a leadership competence model originated with McClelland's studies conducted in the 1960s on the traits of a good leader. This first step towards leadership competences was strengthened by the American Management Association's efforts in the 1980s to distinguish between operational and ineffective management in terms of performance and conduct (Nurye et a; 2019). Identification and assessment of leadership abilities are components of a broader shift towards a competency-based approach to management. Competency models have gained popularity and are employed by several companies in processes linked to selection, assessment, and progression.

2.2 Boyatzis's leadership competency model: One of the earliest models was developed by Boyatzis (1982), who found 19 characteristics associated with effective leadership.

2.3. Sparrow's leadership competency model: A subsequent model developed by Sparrow (1997) states that effective leaders have both cognitive and managerial abilities. Both of these models identified competences at the individual level, even though Sparrow (1997) added the organizational competency—also referred to as the strategic competency—with a focus on practices that result in organizational innovation. Since organizational competency is a quality that emerged from the actions of the individuals inside the company, Sparrow (1997) claims that it is an organizational level aptitude as opposed to an individual competency. This supports the hypothesis that circumstance affects the order in which competences is prioritized (Sparrow, 1997).

2.4 Contemporary leadership competency model

Modern leadership competence models reject the antiquated notion that leadership competency could be calculated by summing knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Today's competence models take into account the complexity of organizational life as well as the ways that human variations and conditions may either increase or hinder the efficacy of leadership abilities (Nurye et a; 2019). The models try to combine elements at different levels and were constructed based on scientific research. The main models discussed in this section offer a contemporary method.

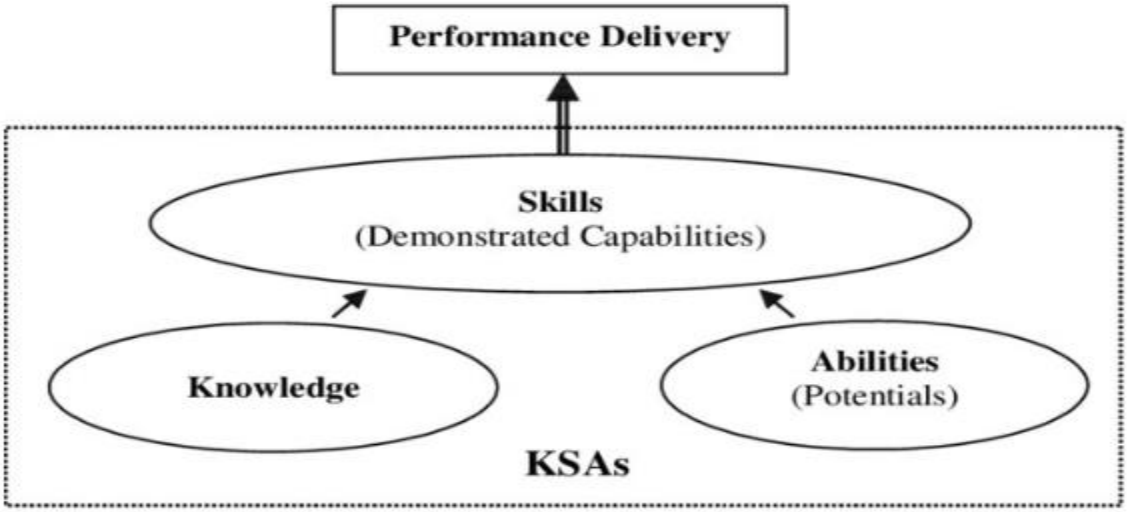


Figure 1: Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs)

Table 1: Meta-Analysis of Theoretical Review

N.	Year	Theory	Founder	Contribution
1	1960	Leadership competency model	McClelland	Idea enlargement
2	1982	Boyatzis's model of leadership competencies	**Boyatzis**	Found 19 skills that were compatible with successful leadership

N.	Year	Theory	Founder	Contribution
3	1997	*Sparrow's leadership competency model*	**Sparrow**	It also presented the organizational competency, or strategic competency, with an emphasis on practices that result in organizational innovation, in addition to Boyatzis's approach.
4	2007	*Leadership strataplex model*	Mumford, Campion, & Morgeson	multiple levels model that incorporates segmented and tiered (strata) skill requirements: 1. 1. Cognitive abilities; 2. Social skills; 3. Business abilities; and 4. Strategic abilities
5	2010	KSA Model	Stevens and Campion	Their thorough taxonomy of collaboration abilities was usefully operationalized with the aid of the collaboration - Knowledge, Skills, and Ability (KSA) Test.
6	2018	The theory of self-determination	Fowler, Zigarmi, Roberts & Shuck	The core psychological demands of their subordinates, such as competence, relatedness, and autonomy, must be met by their leaders.

Source: Researcher Own Meta-Analysis of Theoretical Review, 2023

3. Empirical Studies and hypothesis development

1.) Knowledge management and project Success

Knowledge management and project management are complimentary abilities that work well together to increase an organization's efficacy. It is important to demonstrate the advantages of knowledge management practices prior to incorporating them into project management procedures and methodologies (Jonkers & Shahroudi, 2020). The project manager might take on the role of mentor or change agent to help incorporate knowledge administration behaviors into the project's work. When team members realise the advantages of information sharing, they are more inclined to take part in it (Rincón-González, & Díaz-Piraquive, 2020).

When a project is finished, it is important to maintain key project artifacts such the project constitution, work breakdown framework (WBS), timeline, communication plan, risk and problem log, and modification control documents. After that, these might be utilized as models for other tasks. Knowledge obtained from the post-project evaluation can be added to the knowledge repository. Improved managerial efficiency and the growth of a learning organization are two long-term advantages of helpful knowledge (Chonratana & Chatpattananan, 2021).

Knowledge is a strategic asset that is increasingly considered as being essential to sustaining a competitive advantage. Data and information may be transferred, project knowledge can be recorded as nearly as feasible in real time, as well as lessons learned can be applied to future projects with the help of knowledge management (Tesfaye et al, 2022). Integrating knowledge management approaches into the management of projects may lead to a variety of benefits, including improved communication and venture integration, better decision-making, reduced risks, and ongoing project performance improvement (Bulto & Kant, 2023).

Knowledge management aims to generate and distribute information in an organized way inside a company (Birke & Knierim, 2020). Adopting knowledge management in an organization involves three key elements. (1) People: This means acknowledging the

importance of knowledge and information to an organization's success.(2) Method: This comprises creating an organizational structure for the management of knowledge and integrating it with methods and processes used in project management. (3) Tools: Among the tools and technologies that can help maintaining and sharing knowledge and information simpler are systems for managing documents, online communities that use web portals, data repositories for storing and retrieving knowledge gained, and Web tools (Nurye et a; 2019).

Knowledge is a critical component of project management, and knowledge management maximizes its benefits for the company. Companies that make the most of their understanding assets recognize that cleverer and efficient project management may provide them a competitive edge (Chekole et al., 2021). Put another way, the process of transforming information into a form that an organization can utilize results in the creation of knowledge. Every project we work on teaches us something new, but without management assistance and knowledge management protocols and resources, this information is often lost throughout the course of the project. A change in culture may be required to recognize the strategic importance and value of knowledge as well as data (Birke & Knierim, 2020).

Integrating knowledge management approaches into the process of managing projects may lead to a variety of benefits, including enhanced interaction and project integration, better decision-making, reduced risks, and ongoing project performance improvement (Belay, 2021). Collaboration, idea sharing, and access to the very latest data are all made easier and more favourable by knowledge management. It also makes it possible for individuals to cultivate the innovation and cultural changes needed to progress the business and adjust to the needs of evolving projects (Sampaio, 2022).

H1: Knowledge management has significant relation with project Success.

2.) Skill and project Success

When evaluating the extent to which a PM and project match, factors such as prior exposure to the approach experience are taken into account in alongside the scientific or domain abilities mentioned above (Alvarenga, 2019). A project manager is most likely the team member with the most experience. She is commonly consulted when decisions are being made on the technical and architectural aspects of the project (Birke & Knierim, 2020). Additionally, as more and more key operations are being made IT enabled and outsourced, the PM is required to demonstrate a deep understanding of the corporation goals of the IT system being offered (Naseer, 2022).

We envision hard skills in terms of task familiarity, which is assessing the hard skills needed for the project in connection to the PM's responsibilities. A project manager with expertise in object-oriented technology, for example, might not be able to handle a project using mainframe technology well. Domain experience may also be as significant in the PM. Task familiarity has been shown to improve performance in earlier studies (Zaman, 2023).

IT project characteristics vary, notably in terms of complexity. Projects are dynamic, transitory, and always changing due to organizational, functional, or technical constraints, which call for proactive management. As IT projects grow in size, scope, and complexity, coordination issues arise that may obstruct project progress. Because IT projects might potentially be completed anywhere, they are more susceptible to communication and coordination snags (Tam et al, 2020). Two other features of software development that Gemino et al. (2023) highlight as common qualities that inevitably lead to coordination problems, which obstruct project delivery and raise costs, are scale and interdependence. As IT projects grow in size and scope, more teams are required (Yuliansya & Ayu, 2021).

Similar to this, in a typical large project, several modules need to be closely connected before the program can function. The problem gets considerably more complicated when project teams are dispersed across many businesses or regions, which is the case with most IT outsourcing initiatives. Even with strategies for resolving coordination problems put forth by the literature presently under publication, software development coordination is still a challenging undertaking (Zaman et al., 2019). In these types of coordination duties, hard skills like prior project technology, domain, or methodology knowledge wouldn't necessarily be useful to a PM. Previous study has also advocated the implementation of effective software project management approaches (Rios et al., 2020). Other components, such as collaboration, comprehension of customer demands, and information sharing,

However, the only means to foster these elements are through enhanced management and enhanced soft skills from the PM. The PM cultivates the team's shared goal orientation and communication channels (Kolasa & Modrzejewska, 2020). We believe that the PM's soft skills should be employed to control these project characteristics in order to improve project performance because of the PM's critical role in IT project management.

H2: Skill has significant relation with project Success.

3.) **Attitude and Project success**

Keeping a good attitude even in the face of adversity and inspiring the team are two of a project manager's most important leadership traits. The foundation of project management and leadership is assuring teams that, regardless of how serious an issue is, there will surely be a solution (Afzal & Rajpoot, 2020). Integrity is a vital leadership quality that a project manager must possess in order to set ethical boundaries and promote candid communication. Ahmadabadi and Heravi, 2019).

Project managers ought to recognize openness and integrity as two essential traits of leadership in order to foster more trust among stakeholders, clients, members, and management (Gemino et al., 2021). The project manager has the last word on what should be done to fix problems and enhance workflow. Therefore, the ability of the project leader to make well-informed decisions is one of the most crucial components of leadership in project management (El-khalek et al, 2019).

Making decisions is one of a project leader's most crucial leadership skills that directly influence the project's result. All prospective project managers should become specialists in decision-making if they want to thrive in their jobs (Tonne et al, 2024). Teams that are respected will always support their leader. Depressed leaders are not loved by their devoted followers either. If the group feels that the leader is to blame for their issues, they can even turn against them. And what about the actual work? A committed team may take on additional responsibility as a result of your approach, which might be advantageous (Staniewski et al, 2024).

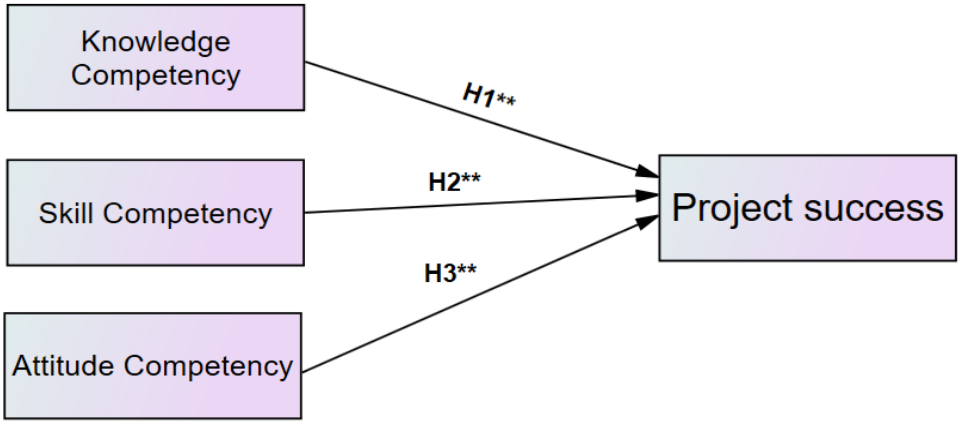
However, an increase in workload can also lead to a decline in morale. The leader is at the core of everything. Your team uses your set visible attitude as the foundation for all other considerations. Understand how attitude affects leadership: you are the only one who can change the situation and encourage the team to concentrate again on the work at hand rather than on you (Węgrzyn & Wojewnik-Filipkowska, 2022).

To acquire the right attitude for leadership, you must understand how attitude affects it. You may then start taking responsibility for your own

viewpoint and actions. If you don't have a positive attitude, your team can abandon you. Your staff will follow your example and become more loyal to you while you have an optimistic mindset, which will increase output (Ghorbani, 2023).

H3: Attitude has significant relation with project Success.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of the Study



Source –Researchers own framework (2023)

4. Descriptive of Study Area

The home territory of the Oromo people, Oromia (Oromiyaa in Oromo) is also a regional state in Ethiopia (Amharic: ኦሮሚያ).The capital of Oromia is Addis Ababa (Finfinne). The Somali Region borders the region on the east; the Amhara, Afar, and Benishangul-Gumuz Regions border it on the north; Dire Dawa borders it on the northeast; the Eastern Province of Kenya borders it on its western boundary; and the South Sudanese state of Upper Nile, Gambela, South West Ethiopia, Southern Nations, Ethnic groups, and Peoples' Region, and Sidama Region border it on the south. In addition, Addis Ababa, an enclave surrounded by a Special Zone, and East Hararghe border the geographical area on the east.

5. Research Design

An explanatory research design was employed for this project, as the main objective of the research is to investigate the impact of project managers' abilities on project success. Three firms were included in the study by the researcher based on many aspects such as accomplishment success, longevity in the industry, simplicity of use, and corporate preparedness. Project managers who managed projects and department heads were among the target audience. There were 120 questionnaires total, 40 of which were given to randomly selected staff members from each of the three companies.

6. Method of Data Analysis and Presentation

The collected data was examined using the quantitative data analysis approach. The data collected using closed-ended questionnaires was analysed using the SPSS and AMOS software packages to produce a descriptive analysis of the data.

The sampling size has been determined by applying Yamane's (1967) statistical approach. The following formula has been used to determine the sample size:

$$n=\frac{N}{1+N(e)2}\frac{280}{1+280(0.05)}\mathbf{2}$$
$$= 120$$

7. Reliability

Table 2: Assessment of data Adequacy

KMO and Bartlett's Test

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Appropriateness of Sampling Measure		.901
Bartlett's examination of Sphericity	Chi-Square (Approx.)	6487.127
	Degree of freedom (df)	378
	p-value (Sig.)	.000

Source: SPSS OUTPUT, 2023.

Table 2 shows how it appeared as the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sample adequacy. Given that the estimated value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test's measure of sampling adequacy (.901) falls between the range of.7 and 1, it is evident that the test's result confirms sampling adequacy. Additionally, the accept table shows that the significance value was.000, less than.05. The Chi-Square (Approx.) was 6487.127. These numbers show that the degree of importance is appropriate.

Table 3: Explained Total Variance

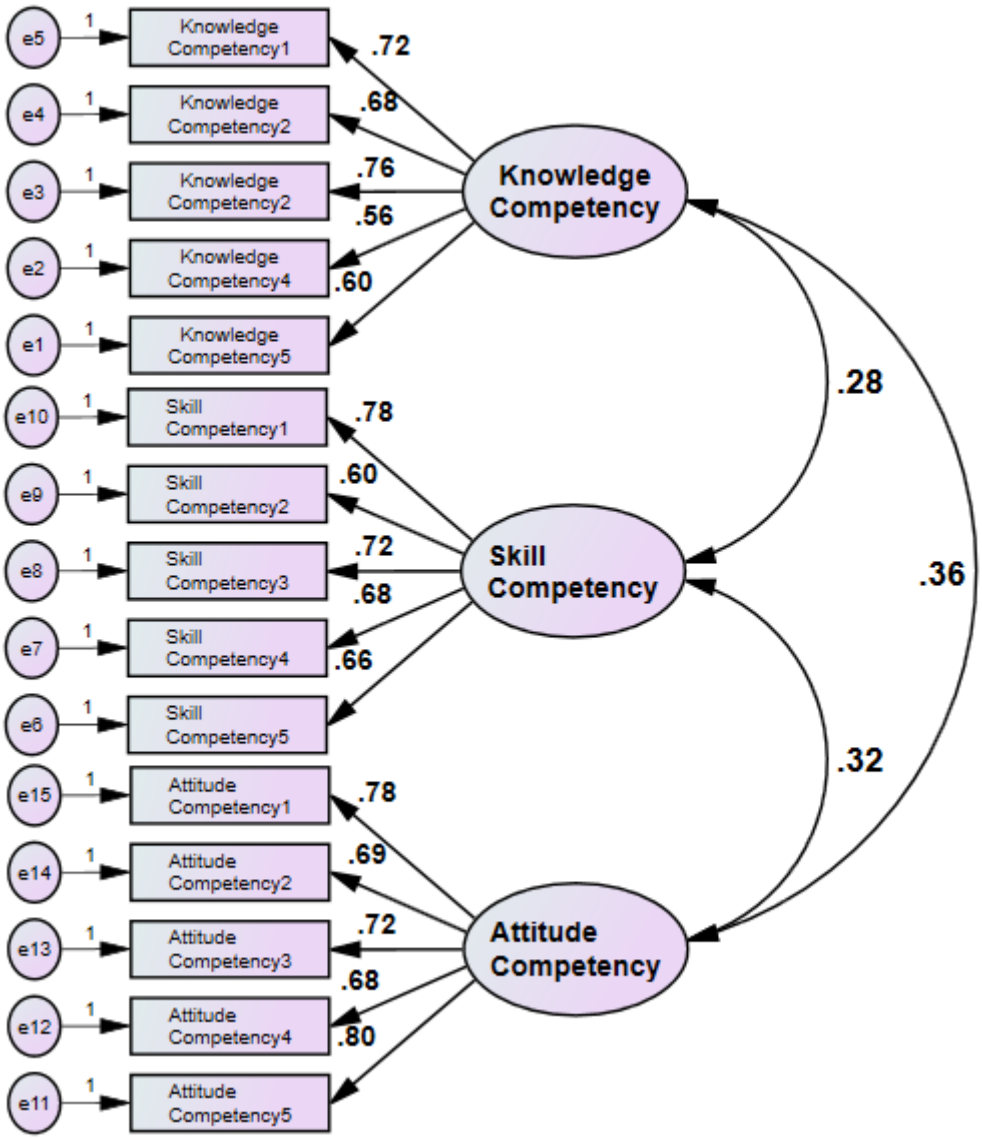
Component		Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
dimension0	1	9.933	35.474	35.474	9.933	35.474	35.474
	2	3.339	11.925	47.399	3.339	11.925	47.399
	3	1.994	7.120	54.519	1.994	7.120	54.519
	4	1.274	4.551	59.070	1.274	4.551	59.070
	5	1.226	4.380	63.450	1.226	4.380	63.450
	6	1.079	3.855	67.305	1.079	3.855	67.305
	7	.925	3.303	70.608			
	8	.840	2.999	73.607			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Source: SPSS OUTPUT, 2023.

When the Eigen-values (Initial) for all components were merged, Table 3 demonstrates that the explained Total Variance was larger than 1 (1.079) with a 67.3% Variance and a 67.3 Cumulative %. The results of Principal Component Analysis showed that the sums of Squared Extraction Loadings Cumulative% were 67.3, meaning that the dependent variable was influenced by all components collectively by 67.3%.

Figure 3: Confirmatory factor analysis



Source: AMOS output, 2023

All of the items had factor loadings > 0.5, according to confirmatory factor analysis, demonstrating that they all include enough reflective components to warrant discriminative validity.

Table 4: Discriminate validity Test

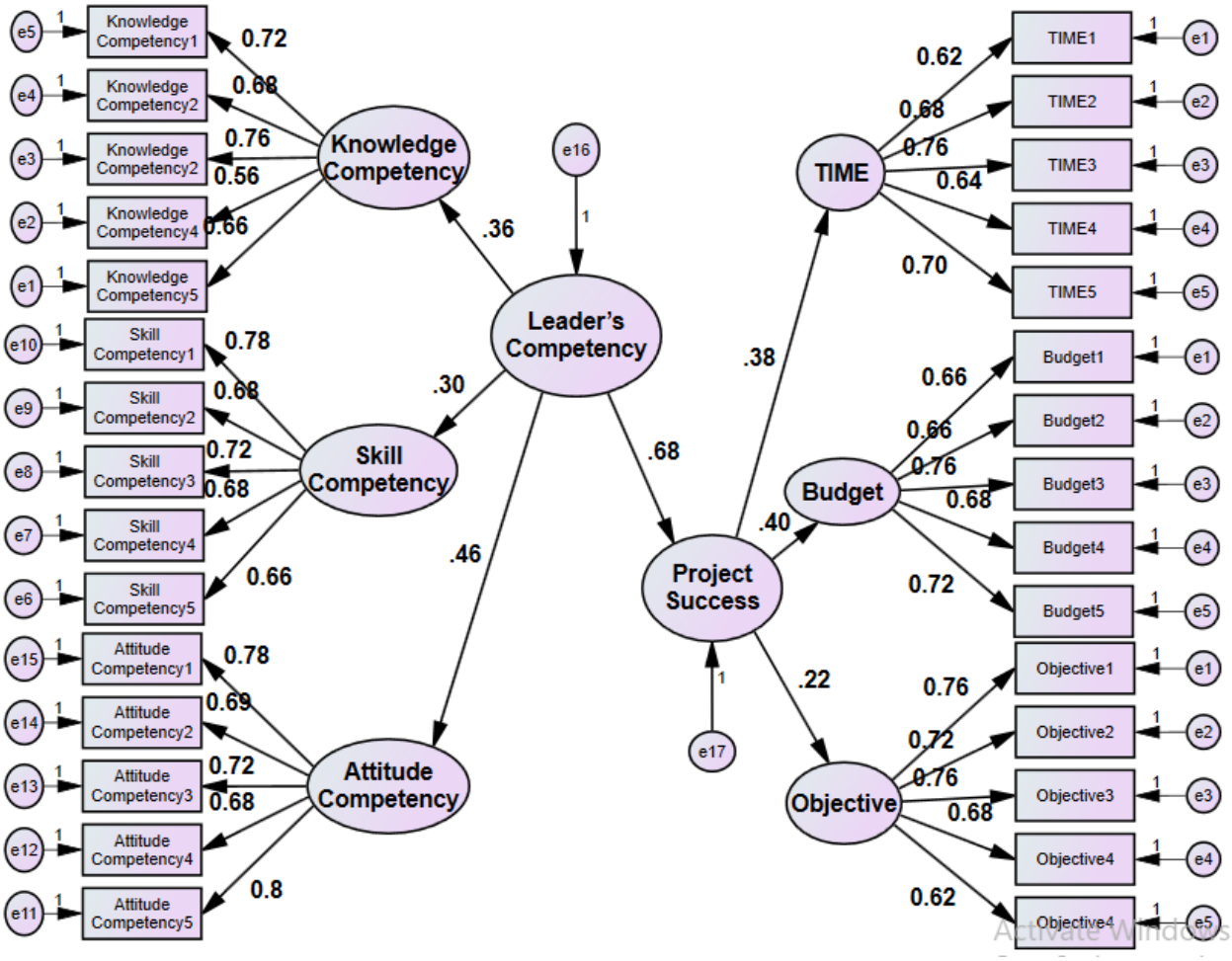
	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	KC	SC
KC	0.796	0.507	0.453	0.848	**0.712**	
SC	0.716	0.593	0.410	0.750	0.640	**0.677**
AC	0.738	0.516	0.453	0.749	0.673	

Source: StateWiki, 2023

The discriminate validity yields a CFA model result together with its acceptable values, as seen in the above table. Researchers discovered that AVE represented the discriminatory validity when they

compared the CFA model fit indices with the standardised values. Greater than the equivalent correlations of all items, the AVE root square was founded.

Figure 4: Confirmatory factor analysis



Source: AMOS output, 2023

Table 5: Hypothesis testing

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Hypothesis
PROJECT SUCCESS	<---	**PROJECT COMPETENCY** **LEADER'S**	.652	.087	7.515	***	Accepted

Source: AMOS output, 2023

Project Success increases by 0.652 when the project leader's competency increases by 1. The standard error of the regression weight estimate,.652, is approximately.087. Z =.652/.087 = 7.515 is the result of dividing the regression weight calculation by the estimated value of its standard error. Stated otherwise, the estimate of the regression weight is 7.515 standard errors above zero. There is a less than 0.001% chance of obtaining a crucial ratio with an absolute value of 7.515. Stated differently, at the 0.001 level (two-tailed), the regression weight pertaining to the project leader's skill in predicting project success differs substantially from zero.

8. Conclusion

The study's conclusions show that a project manager's expertise, abilities, and character attributes significantly affect the project's success. Although there is some room for improvement, overall the project success result shows that respondents have a moderate degree of agreement on the characteristics given as project success criteria. It is shown that quality, which is defined as meeting customer requirements, following through projects that correspond with predetermined demands, meeting objectives, and developing backup plans to minimise unforeseen risks, is the variable that most those surveyed agreed upon as defining project success. Regarding the cost element of project success, they diverge considerably, indicating that certain projects incur substantial cost variations that are unavoidable due to their influence on project continuity.

But it also seems that the project managers' experience helped to eliminate certain unnecessary resources and the expenses that came with them. Time is related to meeting delivery deadlines, scheduling milestones, and completing tasks on schedule—a success metric that elicited differing opinions.

9. Recommendations

Increase the scope of professional development programs to improve the personal attributes and skills that managers need to uphold in order to have a lastingly beneficial influence on projects. These attributes and skills include teamwork, coaching, motivation, self-control, and leadership. Corporate training should be given to project managers, and they should be encouraged to participate in different courses to expand their project management expertise. Because project managers' work can be demanding at times and negligence could jeopardize the project, they should undergo regular refresher training. Since competence development is a continuous activity, performance needs to be evaluated on a regular basis to determine competence levels and identify areas for improvement that will support the project's success, following the provision of a variety of development alternatives.

10. Future and Managerial Implications

The research on the impact of leader competency on project performance in Ethiopia's Oromia area may have a number of management ramifications in the future. Here are a few possible outcomes to think about: The research can assist in determining the particular skills that have the biggest impact on project success in the Oromia area. Organizations and project managers in the area may find this material useful as it offers insights into the essential competencies and skills that should be prioritized in their hiring or development efforts in order to improve project outcomes.

The Oromia region's leadership development programs may be designed and implemented

with the help of the study's results. The competencies that have been identified can serve as a foundation for training and development programs aimed at improving the leadership skills of project managers inside organizations. This can raise the possibility of project success by resulting in better project planning, execution, interpersonal interaction, and stakeholder management. The study may have an impact on the region's project leaders' hiring and selection procedures. The competencies that have been discovered can be used by organizations as standards to evaluate applicants for project management positions. Through the integration of these capabilities into their selection procedures, organizations may enhance the probability of recruiting executives who have the essential abilities and qualities to propel project triumph.

The study's conclusions might help project managers in the Oromia area with their performance reviews and feedback procedures. Organizations may provide project leaders focused feedback and assistance by matching their performance evaluation criteria to the recognized competencies. In addition to enabling businesses to offer suitable opportunities for training and development, this may assist people in identifying their areas of strength and opportunity for growth. The results of the study may have an impact on how project management-related organizational policies and procedures are developed in the Oromia area. The recognized competences can be included by organizations into their standard operating procedures, project management frameworks, and guidelines. This can foster the growth and use of critical competences for project success by establishing a stable and encouraging environment.

All things considered, the study can improve project management techniques in the Oromia area by offering fact-based understandings of the skills that lead to project success. Organizations may enhance project results, boost productivity, and ultimately accomplish their strategic goals more successfully by using these implications.

11. Limitations of study

In the context of Ethiopia's Oromia area, it is imperative to consider ethical considerations as well as biases and limitations in the data collection technique while analyzing the effect of a leader's competency on project performance. It's possible that essential information on project performance and leader competency isn't always simply or quickly accessible. This might impact how comprehensive and reliable the study's results are. Researchers may need to rely on pre-existing data sources or employ other methods, such as surveys and interviews, in order to collect the necessary data.

Bias may be introduced throughout the project and leader selection process for the research. The results could not fairly represent the

population as a whole, for instance, if the sample is not typical of the entire region or if specific project kinds or leaders are overrepresented or underrepresented. Respondents may give false or biased information if the data gathering process depends on self-report measures. Results may be skewed by participants' propensity to show themselves or their initiatives in a more favorable light. To lessen this bias, researchers want to think about utilizing a variety of data sources or validation techniques.

12. Ethical considerations

Researchers had made sure that participants are well aware of the study's goals, methods, potential dangers, and rewards. All participants were asked for their informed permission before beginning the research, and they should be allowed to leave at any moment without facing any repercussions. Privacy and confidentiality of participants was maintained during the process of gathering, analyzing, and reporting data. All provided data was aggregated or anonymised to avoid identifying specific participants or projects. Identifiable information should be securely kept.

The researchers made an effort to reduce their own biases' impact on the study since they were conscious of them. Throughout the study procedure, neutrality and objectivity were upheld to guarantee the integrity of the results. In order to guarantee that the data collecting procedure does not unfairly burden participants or divert resources away from existing projects or activities, researchers have taken ethical resource utilization into consideration.

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