Managerial Competencies, Ethical Climate and Performance of Health Projects in Uganda

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Abstract
This study examined the relationship between managerial competencies, ethical climate and performance of Health projects in Uganda. The study adopts a descriptive, cross-sectional, correlational research design. 35 health projects were considered for this study and data were collected through a questionnaire survey and analyzed using SPSSv16. The questionnaires were rendered anonymous to protect participant confidentiality and reduce response bias. Strong associations were found between managerial competencies, ethical climate and project performance implying that competent managers make ethical decisions that enhance superior project performance. Only a single research methodological approach was employed and multiple data sources should be used in future research to triangulate.

Keywords: Managerial competencies, ethical climate, project performance, health projects, Uganda

Introduction
Managerial competences and prevailing ethical climates are vital for the overall performance of any project. As organizations’ move to management by projects, there is an increasing demand for competent project managers and a favorable ethical environment (Crawford, 1997; 2005). More so, with the renewed today’s demand for quality and productivity in many organizations, the questioning of traditional philosophies and principles associated with their management processes and business practices, the demand for managerial competences and favorable ethical climate has become of paramount importance to performance of projects (Hayden, 1996; Mahmood, Hamidaddin and Shafiei, 2006). Edum-Fotwe and McCaffer (2000) in their study equally emphasized the need for strong managerial competences and ethical climates to these changing industry conditions.

Managerial competencies and a strong ethical environment enable project managers to handle their changing roles to meet today's professional demands in a dynamic environment and achieve project performance (Ceran and Dorman, 1995; Russell, Jaselski and Lawrence, 1997). Furthermore, in today’s business environment, acting and behaving ethically is more important than ever. The impact of managers’ competences today is to build strong ethical environment that supports greater levels of ethical decision making (Ford and Richardson, 1994). Strong ethical environment tends to trigger the members of an organization to adjust their behaviors with the norms of the organization, and decline the tendency for members to act unethically in different conditions (Rutledge and Karim, 1999). If there is ethical treatment of all the stakeholders, they become motivated to behave according to the rules of the organization and focus on superior performance (Booth and Schulzb, 2004).

Despite the growing amount of research about project performance (Ahimbisibwe A et al, (2012), little has focused on the impact of managerial competences and ethical climate on project performance in health projects in Uganda. The failure of organizations to embrace managerial competencies and ethical climates has led to poor project performance. Lewis (2006) further highlights that mismanagement and poor ethical climate as factors that affect performance. A project that is poorly managed may result into failure, stakeholder dissatisfaction, time and cost variance, suspension of the project and poor quality output (Shenhar et al, 2002; Howell, Windahl, & Seidel, 2010). In Uganda, most projects fail to meet their objectives in terms of time, budgets, scope, quality and stakeholder satisfaction (Ahimbisibwe et al, 2012). Stories about unethical conduct seem unending in the public sector in Uganda. Specifically, the health sector has been rocked with scandals relating to mismanagement and misappropriation. In 2007, Amolatar district officials were probed for over 300m UNICEF funds. In 2015 UNICEF threatened to withdraw funding from Uganda citing dissatisfaction with management of health projects. In 2013, Uganda returned 4m Euros to Irish government due to misappropriation. The failure of these health projects in Uganda raises the need to establish the extent to which managerial competencies, ethical climate influence project performance in Uganda.

The presentation of this research is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents introduction, the se-
cond chapter provides a review of literature on managerial competencies ethical climate and performance of projects. The third chapter presents research methodology. The fourth chapter presents research results and their interpretation. The fifth chapter presents discussion of major findings, conclusion and recommendations.

**Literature**

**Managerial Competencies and Project performance**

Prior researchers (Crawford, 2005, Boyatzis, 2008, Martina et al, 2012, Mahmood et al. 2002. and Liang 2012) have referred to competencies as a set of skills, knowledge and abilities that enhance superior performance. Potgieter and Coetzee (2010) confirm that managerial competencies are a blend of knowledge, skills and abilities that build capacity needed for success and excellent project performance. Managerial competencies also involve the application of knowledge, skills to project activities to meet project requirements (Jugdev Kam, and Ralf Müller, 2005). All projects need some level of managerial competencies and an increasing number of organizations have adopted managerial competencies as a means to achieve project objectives (Meredith & Mantel, 2003). Excellence in managerial competencies has been viewed as the positive factor to the performance of successful projects (Dulewicz, and Higgs, 2003). Managerial competencies enhance achievement of project objectives (schedule, budget and performance) through a set of activities that start and end at certain points in time and produce quantifiable deliverables Eduardo (2002). This is in agreement with (Mwesigwa and Namijingo, 2014) who stated that the performance of projects in a dynamic environment largely depends on competencies of organizational managers and competent managers strategically guide their organizations to attain success in a highly volatile environment.

Competencies strengthen managers’ abilities towards enhancing efficiency and value addition to their organizations (Orr and Ruyle, 2010). Managerial competencies enhance capability to manage projects professionally, by applying best practices regarding the design of the managerial competencies process, and the application of managerial competencies methods. The responsibility of the overall success of the project within the constraints of cost, schedule and quality has been vested with project managers (Mahmood, 2002). Basing on previous research, we agree that, competencies are necessary to achieving the required level of performance through improving management performance and are important sources of achieving competitive advantage in today’s environment. We also infer therefore, that managerial competencies are concerned with the overall planning and co-ordination of a project from conception to completion aimed at meeting the stated requirements and ensuring completion on time, within cost and to required quality standards (Edwardo, 2002). Kakabadse (1991, Verner & Evan, 2005, Gholipur et al 2012, and Lazen, 2009) provide evidence that there is a link between managerial competencies and project performance that is; managerial competencies provide leadership and bring together different teams to work towards a common objective, increase capabilities of organizations towards performance. Other scholars have also provided evidence that; competencies enable managers to deal with specific challenges and problems of an organization in the global competitive environment (Mahmood et al, 2006), improve effectiveness and efficiency in projects (Langley 2013 and Skitmore, 2004) and help project managers to organize resources to complete a project on time, on budget and within specification and are also essential for participation of each person in an organization (Mahmood et al, 2002).

The dynamic environment requires managerial competencies which are an important icon to achieving project goals. Further scholars have argued that managers need to be trained and acquire skills that enhance effective performance (Botha & Camphor, 2008). Boyatzis, (1982); Yau and Sculli, (1990) further state that managers should have competencies in their relevant functional area, particularly in relation to performing tasks and taking decisions. Liang, (2012) urges that managers should be in position to apply knowledge and skills at the work place in order to achieve project success. The way to achieve project objectives is through the use of effective managerial competencies processes and techniques since they enable managers to match a project's goals, tasks, and resources to accomplish a goal as needed (Munns and Bjeirimi, 1996).

**Ethical Climate and Project Performance**

Ethical climate is good for the performance of organizations. Thomas, et al, (2004; Vittal et al, 2010) confirm that ethical climate is becoming an important aspect that organizations cannot just ignore since it can lead the organization to negative or positive direction. Ethical climate is an attribute of performing organizations and an important aspect to promoting project performance (Appelbaum et al., 2005). Commitment to achieve project performance is highly associated with a prevailing ethical climate (Shacklock 2011). Achieving organizational effectiveness is based on employees’ behaviors which is highly influenced by the ethical climate (Kanten and Er Ulker, 2013). Lee (2009, Ambrose et al, 2008) support that ethical climate does not only prevent unhealthy behavior but also inspires performance. Ethical climate promotes commitment and productivity of employees which in turn affect project performance (Victor and Cullen 1987). They further confirm that ethical leaders influence followers to carry out tasks effectively since they
treat employees fairly, express care and concern for followers. Ethical Climate drives performance and researchers such as (Appelbaum et al., 2005; Vardi, 2001; Booth and Schulz, 2004) have stated that a strong ethical environment is vital to reducing the rate at which managers fail projects. According to Torkaman et al (2011), ethical climate has a great influence on the management of projects and it offers both tangible and intangible benefits to the success of project organizations (Ashiraf, 2003).

Empirical research shows that projects in organizations where rules and procedures are perceived to be followed are often successful than projects in organizations where rules and procedures are not followed (Victor and Cullen, 1987). Smith et al, (2009) further states that lack of ethics climate diminishes the managers’ ability to ensure project success.

Managerial Competencies and Ethical Climate
The success of public sector projects depends on good governance which originates from managerial competencies (Williams et al, 2009). Managerial competencies alone without ethical climate cannot facilitate outstanding performance (Camp Bell, 2006). This is further supported by scholars McKinlay (2009; khademfar, 2013) who stated that managerial competencies promote ethical cultures of an organization through constant communication of organizations’ codes of ethics (Parboteeah et al, 2010). Parboteeah et al, (2010) also found that managerial competencies influence selfless decisions among employees. General work climates have been found to influence a number of organizational outcomes such as performance and job satisfaction (Pritchard and Karascik, 1973). Victor and Cullen (1987), 1988) indicated that ethical climates influence attitudes and behaviors of employees by providing information about the organization and guidance regarding appropriate conduct.

According to Victor and Cullen (1987), there are three dimensions within a corporate climate which affect employees’ ethical behavior. These dimensions can be described as individual, local, and cosmopolitan. The organizational climate influences how an individual worker sees himself or herself directly (Erondu et al., 2004). Organizational climate affects how an employee relates with other people and departments. Ethical climate influences how an employee identifies with external groups, including customers, suppliers and other stakeholders.

Methodology
A cross sectional research design was adopted for this study. Cross sectional was used because a section of the population was studied at one specific time (Wagner, 2008). The study also adopted quantitative approach. A quantitative research approach was adopted for this study because it is more reliable and objective. The study population comprised of 35 selected health projects in Ministry of Health (Annual Health Sector Performance Report 2012/2013). Since the study population is small, the study was a census in nature. The unit of analysis was health projects under the Ministry of Health in Uganda and unit of inquiry were project managers, project accountants, project coordinators and project officers. They were selected purposely since they are the individuals charged with the performance of these projects. Simple random sampling and purposive sampling were used to select respondents from the organizations. According to Bordens and Abbott (2002), the justification for using random sampling technique is to eliminate the possibility that the sample is biased by the preference of the individual selecting the sample. However, according to Bernard (2002), purposive sampling was used because it helps researchers to decide what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience.

The main source of data was primary data using self administered questionnaire since it is believed to be a quicker method of data collection. Self administered questionnaires were used for data collection since it is easier data collection (Bakkabulindi, 2004). The questionnaires were designed according to the objectives of the study. A 5 point likert scales that ranges from 1-Strongly agree to 5- Strongly disagree was used. Part one of the questionnaires gathered biographic information of the respondents and part two gathered information on the study variables.

The validity of the study instrument was performed using the Content Validity Index (CVI). The questionnaires were assessed by experts to ensure that the scale items are meaningful; the statements are generally understandable and capture the issues under study. To ensure the accuracy, internal consistency and completeness, reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient test (Cronbach 1946). Alpha coefficient of above 0.7 for individual test variables was accepted meaning the instrument was reliable (Nunnally, 1979).

The instrument was tested for reliability and the cronbach values show that the instrument was reliable with all values above 7.0. While some scholars like McAllister (1995) have set the acceptable minimum at .70, others have set it at .50 (Cronbach, 1951, Nunnally, 1978). The target value for the current study was .50 and cronbach alpha reliability coefficients indicated high levels of reliability of the instrument with all values above the acceptable minimum.
Variables were measured based on studies of previous scholars and managerial competencies were measured basing on Knowledge, Skills and behaviors according to Boyatzis (2008). Ethical Climate was measured based on Ethical Climate Questionnaire (Egoism, Benevolent and principle) by Victor and Cullen, (1987); Talha et al 2013; Suar and Khuntia, (2004). Project performance was measured using (Shawn , Donald & Warren, 2015) Attiknson’s (1999) iron triangle of Time Variance, Cost Variance and Quality output.

Data collected from the primary survey were compiled, sorted, edited, classified, coded into a coding sheet and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical package for Social scientists). We carried out correlation analysis to establish the relationship that exists between variables and regression analysis to determine the predictive potential of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Regression analysis was also carried out to determine the extent to which managerial competences, ethical climate predict project performance.

Results
Response rate
Out of sample 35 health projects, 34 health projects were actually studied giving a response rate (97%).

Sample characteristics
Majority 55 (53.4%) of the respondents were females compared to 48 (46.6%) males implying that there is a female dominance in health projects in Uganda. Most of the respondents 52 (50.5%) were married, 27 (26.2%) were single 18 (17.5%) were divorced while 6 (5.8%) were widowed. Further, 43 (41.7%) of the respondents were aged between 30 and 39 years, 28 (27.2%) were aged between 40 and 49 years 21 (20.4) were aged between 20 and 29 years while 11 (10.7%) were above 50 years. This implies that respondents were mature enough to understand the subject matter. 58 (56.3%) of the respondents hold a degree, 31 (30.1) hold a masters degree, 11 (10.7%) hold a postgraduate while 3 (2.9%) hold a diploma. This implies that majority had attained the highest level of education to be able to understand the subject matter and provide right information. 45 (43.7%) of the respondents had been in service for a period between 5 and 8 years, 31 (32%) had been in service for a period between 8 and 11 years, 21 (20.4%) had been in service for a period between 2 and 5 years while 4 (3.9%) had been in service for a period above 11 years. This implies that majority of the respondents had been actively in the planning, design and implementation of projects and had knowledge about projects.

Most projects 18 (52.9%) are donor funded, 12 (35.3%) are government – donor partnership and the projects entirely funded by the government were 4 (11.8%). This could explain why they have been performing in such a way.

To summarize data, means and standard deviations were generated as seen below,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managerial competencies</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>57.00</td>
<td>93.00</td>
<td>74.0000</td>
<td>9.30624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical climate of the work place</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>37.00</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>47.1765</td>
<td>4.01867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project performance</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>111.00</td>
<td>156.00</td>
<td>131.3235</td>
<td>11.29151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (list wise)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The means were used to summarize the data while standard deviations were used to show how well the means represented the data. This was to establish whether the means represent a good fit of the observed data. From the above results, the means represent a good fit of the observed data since deviations are smaller than the mean.

To determine the relationship between the variables Pearson (r) correlation tests were carried out. Pearson’s correlation coefficient analysis was carried out to establish the relationships between predictor variables and criterion variable as shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlations</th>
<th>Managerial competencies</th>
<th>Ethical climate of the work place</th>
<th>Project performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.355**</td>
<td>0.696**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results show a significant positive relationship between managerial competencies and project performance ($r=.696^{**}p<.01$). This implies with managerial competencies, projects performance will be achieved leading to realization of the hoped for results since performance of a project largely depends on the competence of managers. Findings also show a significant relationship between Ethical climate of the workplace and project performance ($r=.588^{**}p<.01$) implying that project performance is highly associated with managers' ethics. Further, findings revealed a significant relationship between managerial competencies and ethical climate ($r=.355^{*}p<.05$) implying that managerial competencies alone without ethical climate cannot facilitate outstanding performance.

The regression model was used to determine the degree to which Managerial Competences, Ethical climate and project performance in health projects. Regression analysis helped us to determine the extent of the relationship between the variables and thus helps in making predications as seen below;

**Regression model coefficients**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>29.605</td>
<td>15.640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Managerial competencies</td>
<td>.676</td>
<td>.144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethical climate of the work</td>
<td>1.096</td>
<td>.334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>.785</td>
<td>.617</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A regression analysis was carried out to determine the predictive power of Managerial competencies, ethical climate on project performance and it was found that the variables predict project performance by 59.2% adjusted $R^2$. Implying 40.8 is explained by other environmental factors not in the study scope. It should also be noted that based on the results of standardized Beta coefficient, managerial competences ($Beta = .557$, $Sig. = .000$) was a better predictor of project performance followed by ethical climate ($Beta = .390$, $Sig. = .000$). This means that ministry of health should put more emphasis on the managerial competences than ethical climate if project performance is to be achieved.

**Discussion Of Findings**

Results show a significant positive relationship between managerial competencies and project performance. This implies with managerial competencies, projects performance will be achieved leading to realization of the desired goal. This supports the findings by various scholars (Crawford, 2005, Boyatzis, 2008, Martina et al, 2012, Mahmood et al, 2002), and Liang (2012) who agreed that competencies enhance superior project performance. It also means that managers who possess competencies produce effective on a job than managers who do not have. This is in line with the idea of Orr and Ruyte (2010) who found out that star performers are managers with competencies. It is thus reasonable, to infer that managers who display competencies have positive effects on the performance of their organizations. This is in
line with Martina et al, (2012) who stated that managerial competencies are an important icon to achieving required level of performance. Boyatzis, (1982); Yau and Sculli, (1990) further recommended that managers should have competencies in their relevant functional area, particularly in relation to performing tasks and taking decisions.

Findings also show a significant positive relationship between Ethical climate of the workplace and project performance implying that project performance is highly associated with mangers’ ethics. The results are consistent with Booth and Schulz (2004) who noted that a strong ethical environment is vital to reducing the rate at which managers fail projects. It is also consistent with (Vittal et al, 2010 who concluded that project performance depends on the ability of a manager to ensure an effective working environment for the project team.

Further, findings reveal a significant positive relationship between managerial competencies and ethical climate implying that managerial competencies alone without ethical climate cannot facilitate outstanding performance. The results are in line with McKinlay (2009) who opined that managerial competencies promote ethical cultures of an organization. It is also in line with Victor and Cullen (1993 Parboteeah et al, 2010, ), who suggested that ethical climates influence behaviors and attitudes of employees towards selfless decision making.

Conclusion
The study examined the relationship between managerial competence, ethical climate and project performance of Health projects in Uganda. The findings indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between managerial competence, ethical climate and project performance. We found out that competent managers strategically guide their organizations to attain success in a highly volatile environment. These findings are not different from other studies elsewhere. This means for health projects to be completed on time, with in the budget, offer quality services that meet customer satisfaction, there is a need to recruit managers with the necessary competencies ( skills, knowledge) The ministry should also ensure that working environment is favorable where project team members can perform their duties and responsibilities in relations to rules and procedures

Limitations Of The Study
The quantitative research design has a challenge of generalizing the findings to the sampled population at the time of the survey. This study has not provided findings over a long period of time since a cross sectional research design was used yet it does not allow for change in perception and attitudes over time and there was non – response and untimely response because of respondents’ busy schedules

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