

## Effective Project Management Practices in Private Organizations in Tanzania

**Joyce Singu Kilinga**

Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation  
[tp071682@mail.apu.edu.my](mailto:tp071682@mail.apu.edu.my)

**Jugindar Singh Kartar Singh**

Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation  
[jugindar.singh@apu.edu.my](mailto:jugindar.singh@apu.edu.my)

**Noraini Ahmad**

Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation  
[noraini@apu.edu.my](mailto:noraini@apu.edu.my)

### Abstract

This study aimed to understand the challenges faced, the adoption of project management best practices, and the effect of adopting these practices within private organizations in Tanzania. Several projects in Tanzania, such as the Kigamboni City Project, have failed, resulting in the loss of billions of dollars. Despite the importance of adopting project management practices for achieving project success, there is a gap in the literature regarding a deeper understanding of specific challenges and best practices that contribute to project success. This qualitative study was based on an interpretivism philosophy. Using purposive sampling, rich data was collected from six project managers in Tanzania. Thematic analysis identified key challenges, including team conflict, scope creep, resource constraints, technology uncertainty, and inadequate planning. The best project management practices include a clearly defined business case, setting up a unit to manage a project, scope definition and control, resource management, and team development. The study results will provide project practitioners with better insights, enabling them to increase the likelihood of project success by addressing the challenges and implementing best practices specific to the context of Tanzania. A deeper understanding of these challenges and best practices will lead to higher project success rates in Tanzania.

**Keywords:** *Project Management Practices, Project Success, Private Organization, Scope Definition*

### 1.0 Introduction

There has been a slight increase in the visibility and importance of project management among private companies in Tanzania (McGrath and Košťálová, 2020). However, in the Tanzanian context, project management still has many pitfalls. According to the Standish Group, the success rate of projects was lower in 2015 compared to 2013. The Standish Group International's Chaos revealed that in 2015, only 29% of all the projects that were surveyed were successful and 19% of the projects failed (Manifesto, 2015). In 2022, the Standish Group research revealed that 31.1% of

projects will be canceled before completion. Only 9% of projects in big organizations were deemed successful. The results further showed that 52.7% of projects will cost 18% of their original estimates. According to a study by Liana et al. (2023), the results show that several problems, such as poor stakeholder participation, inadequate budget allocation, inadequate project planning and commencement, and a shortage of competent individuals, all contribute to the failure of a project. Doval (2019) stated that improved success which includes greater benefit realization is a result of adopting best practices in project management. Due to the high failure rate of projects, there is a need to study and implement improved project management practices in Tanzania (Lester, 2021).

Private organizations in Tanzania are increasingly aware of the importance of effective project management practices to complete their projects successfully (Kindikwili, D. Aunga, 2022). In addition, these practices help to strengthen the ability to respond to risks. Tanzania, like other developing countries, has a higher rate of failed private initiatives than the global average (Doval, 2019). This study showed that there are still problems faced by project managers in Tanzania when implementing projects for private organizations. The ambitious Kigamboni City project in Dar es Salaam is deemed a failed project that drained billions of taxpayers' money (The Citizen, 2020). The Tanzanian water and sanitation project was a complete failure resulting in high losses and repayment of loans (Tanzania Daily News, 2013). This calls for an in-depth study of the best practices and challenges encountered in projects.

Research has shown that Project management practices are gaining more recognition and visibility among organizations (Badewi, 2016; Kerzner, 2018). The value of projects has been shown in several past studies (Joslin & Müller, 2015). Most past studies are focused on critical success factors or other factors such as benefits management and project methodology (Joshlin and Muller, 2015; Badewi, 2016; Banihashemi et al., 2017). There are limited studies done in Tanzania on the project management best practices and challenges encountered. The study by Kavishe and Chileshe (2019) was done to identify the critical success factors of public-private partnerships in affordable housing scheme projects in Tanzania.

A study in Tanzania by Kavishe et al. (2018) was done to rank the challenges faced by housing public-private partnerships and to suggest solutions. There is a paucity of qualitative research that explored in depth the challenges encountered by projects and the best practices to improve the success of projects in Tanzania. Despite the importance of adopting project management practices in achieving the success of projects, there is a gap in the literature regarding the deeper understanding of specific challenges and best practices that can contribute to the success of projects. As stated by Liana et al. (2023), there is little research on the factors that cause the failure of projects in Tanzania. This qualitative study explores in-depth challenges faced, the adoption of project management best practices, and the effect of adopting the best practices within private organizations in Tanzania.

Studies have shown that several obstacles impede the success of projects in Tanzania's private sector. Although research has identified the best practices for the success of projects, there is little known about the challenges faced and the best practices adopted for projects in Tanzania's private sector. By examining the project management practices in the Tanzanian private sector, this study seeks to close the existing knowledge gap. The development of best practices and specific solutions is hampered by the lack of tailored insights into the challenges faced by projects in Tanzania. Thus,

research and analysis into the challenges and the best practices in Tanzania's private sector projects are considered essential. It is critical to comprehend these challenges to develop context-specific best practices and strategies that can uplift project success in Tanzania.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

Studies have identified several project management practices that influence the success of projects. This encompasses stakeholder participation, executive support, communication, resource allocation, integrated change control management, and sustainability practices. One of the highly cited practices is stakeholder participation and leadership support are critical for project implementation (Jessica, 2023). The study highlighted that the success of projects is dependent on how the projects are managed but she cautioned that it is not guaranteed that project management practices will result in the success of projects. Another study by Wong et al. (2023) stated that the best practices are for improving project mindset, processes, and culture. The study revealed that open and regular communication with the project team and stakeholders is important for the success of projects. Wekesa and Kimutai (2023) highlighted that project management practices that are critical include funding, risk management, ICT adoption, and training.

Ferrarez et al. (2023) added that the right resource allocation will assist in better teamwork and resource availability. The findings of the study by Ferrarez et al. (2023) further revealed that good project management for project success includes funding, risk management, technology adoption, and training. The paper discusses five key practices for incorporating sustainability in project management: environmental efficiency, compliance, social responsibility, continuous improvement, lessons learned, and project success. Berssaneti, and Carvalho (2015) added that project management maturity is significantly related to project success. This includes time, cost, and technical performance dimensions of success. The study by Giles and Cormican (2014) focused on practices at the front end of the innovation process in a large organization. The study revealed that practices relating to strategy, resources, process, and climate are very important at the front end. Therefore, there are several best practices, but it is not clear which are the top practices that contribute to the success of projects.

The Project Management Institute (PMI) provides best practices and guidelines for successful project management. The PMBOK guide is a clear and complete resource for good project management best practices. The five process groups stated encompass guidelines and practices on project initiating, planning, executing, monitoring, controlling, and project closing. There are ten knowledge areas incorporated. The PMBOK Guide also guides project management tools and techniques, such as the critical path method, earned value management, and project charters (PMBOK Guide, 2021).

Based on past studies, some of the challenges encountered in projects (Sagita et al., 2023; Baizanhova et al., 2023). In a study by Sagita et al. (2023), the challenges revealed include difficulties in collaborative activities, contributions, time management, problem-solving, teamwork, and investigation techniques due to a lack of self-regulation. In another study by Baizanhova et al. (2023) the challenges related to bottom-managing individual projects and top-managing the relationships between projects and their environment. The challenges in construction projects identified by Alameri et al. (2021) encompass resource allocation, time, cost, quality, safety, project complexity, changes, uncertainties, and communication. Another study by Akhvan

Tabassi et al. (2019) highlighted the challenges in project management, including scope management, information technology, team dynamics, customer satisfaction, lean management, communication, innovation, and quality. Based on past studies, there is a long list of challenges faced by projects and it is not clear what are the critical challenges. There is also a lack of in-depth studies of the challenges faced by projects in Tanzania.

### 3.0 Methodology

According to Saunders et al. (2019), the notion of research technique is presented in detail, going from the outermost to the innermost layer of the research onion. This basic and explanatory research used an inductive approach and constructivist philosophy. In this basic qualitative study, the philosophy of interpretivism underpinned this work. This study used a basic qualitative strategy as specified by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from six respondents. Thematic analysis was done to identify the themes.

The qualitative study used purposive sampling to get the right participants who could provide rich data. A semi-structured interview technique to collect rich and in-depth information from qualified participants. There is no clear rule of thumb on the sample size for qualitative research. As stated by Kuzel (1992) as cited in Guest et al. (2006), 6-8 interviews are enough for a homogeneous sample, and 12 to 20 interviews when trying to achieve maximum variations. According to Guest et al. (2006), 6-12 interviews are enough for one qualitative research project. The sample size for this study was 6 interviews as the sample is homogeneous and the participants are considered experts in project management.

Thematic analysis was done based on the six steps specified by Braun and Clarke (2006). This thematic analysis was chosen because it is a popular technique for analyzing qualitative data, which usually comprises thick descriptive data. The six steps by Braun and Clarke (2006) encompass familiarizing oneself with the data, initial code generation, identifying themes, reviewing themes, defining, and naming themes, and producing the report. To establish trustworthiness, Guba, and Lincoln (1989) criteria were applied. The rich description was used to support the dependability criteria. Prolonged engagement was used to support credibility. For confirmability, an audit trail was used.

### 4.0 Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents the research results and analysis of qualitative data collected from a study on effective project management practices in private organizations in Tanzania.

**Table 1: Profiles of participants**

Participant No.	Current job title	Experience in projects	Organization type
Participant 1	Project manager	6	Services
Participant 2	Project manager	7	Services
Participant 3	Project manager	4	Telecommunication
Participant 4	Project manager	2	Telecommunication
Participant 5	Project manager	3	Services
Participant 6	Project manager	7	Services

Manual coding was chosen as the coding strategy, as recommended by Saldaña (2013) who recommended it for those new to qualitative research analysis. The study revealed several key findings and results, which are outlined below:

**Research Question 1:** What are the best Project Management practices for project success in private organizations in Tanzania?

This question focused on identifying the best project management practices in general, practiced by the specific private organization in Tanzania. However, it was also deemed as important to identify the project management aspects such as project monitoring from external management and internal management, for the projects about the project success in Tanzanian. The following themes emerged.

### **Business Case Definition**

This was a key best practice stated either directly or indirectly by the participants. This is a key step before embarking on any project. The following are some of the quotations.

#### ***Participant 3***

*Before the start of the project, a business case is defined to define what you're going to do and to identify the need for the project and the benefits of the project. So, we gather different information from different people or stakeholders so that we plan what we are going to work on and the goals.*

#### ***Participant 2***

*We have prepared the proposal which will provide the details on what we are going to do, what mechanics we are going to execute, and what and how we are going to create **awareness**. We prepare the project objectives, deliverables, and the expected benefits.*

The need for a business case is also stressed in the Project Management Guidelines. The business case may be used before the project initiation and may result in a go/no-go decision for the project. A business case justifies a project and includes the needs statement, risks associated, and situational analysis. The business case normally includes what are the project benefits and how and when benefits will be delivered by the project. As stated by Herman, and Siegelaub (2009), several problems can arise if the project starts without a clear business case and the value the project will deliver. Without a proper business case, the company can waste valuable resources on projects. There is no clear target and allocation of resources can be a problem.

### **Scope Definition**

The respondents illustrate the preparation of the project scope. Generally, the respondents stated that the project scope and deliverables should be defined at the outset of a project. Below are some quotations:

#### ***Participant 1***

*I think a clear project scope is important before we start. With the scope, we can see the deliverables and the requirements.*

#### ***Participant 2***

*Without a clear **scope** of the project, you cannot execute any project or study any project. Scope helps determine how many milestones and responsibilities are. “*

#### ***Participant 4***

*Scope planning is the first thing we must look for before starting any project. In the scope statement, the requirements should be clear.*

The finding in the Tanzanian context is in line with past studies and the PMBOK Guide (2021) that stated that project scope definition is important before the execution of projects. The project scope will assist in deciding whether to proceed with the project. Incomplete scope definition in the early stages of a project's life cycle is a common source of difficulty in projects (Fageha and Aibinu, 2013). The research's findings are in line with past findings that one factor that has the potential to directly impact timing and budget is project scope. Every scope modification must be carefully managed as it may have an impact on the project's timeline and budget (Marnada et al., 2021). For this reason, the scope of the project must be specified from the outset. In addition, it establishes the parameters for managing the project, defining defined duties, and measuring performance. Therefore, there is an increasing need to get a deeper grasp of scope definition in project management.

#### **Resource Management**

The participants generally agreed that the allocation and management of resources are crucial to the success of a project. This refers to the effective allocation of resources that encompass human resources, equipment, and budget, to improve project success. The following were some of the quotations:

#### ***Participant 1***

*So, resource allocation and **budgeting** were also the key things before even the implementation, but apart from budgeting we also must seek approval for the resources because you know you can budget but it must be **getting approval**.*

#### ***Participant 2***

*So, you should have adequate resources and a **budget** for the project. After preparing the resource plan and budget of the project, you send it to the client and get feedback.*

#### ***Participant 4***

*Plan for the resources and budget. This always helps to determine the resources you need, and the capital allocated to start and complete the project. So, if the project is huge and then your capital is limited, you can't accomplish, you can't and project.*

The findings are in line with past studies that stated that assessment of budget sufficiency and resource utilization for a project is critical for the success of a project (Siu et al., 2016; Sundara et al., 2021). For successful projects, there needs to be effective allocation and management of resources that include personnel, equipment, and budget. As stated by Landau (2023), resource management is a critical element in any successful project. The resource management plan must be identified during the initiation and planning phases of the project life cycle. This will enable

the estimation of costs and develop a project budget. It is also important to schedule the right resources at the right time, so your project plan is completed on time.

### **Setting Up a Project Management Unit.**

The participants stated that for large and special projects, the setting up of a special unit or department that reports to the executive team will add to the success of projects.

#### ***Participant 2***

*Some of the employees were recruited because of this project, and we needed an extra resource to pay attention to the project. So, this led to the creation of a new department which was special projects. The staffing includes the relevant skills to deliver the project.*

#### ***Participant 3***

*It's not only us but also, we're including other people who have the skills—this kind of professionalism. A special team is required.*

#### ***Participant 5***

*The key important for the project is to set up a team of skilled people, people with experience on a project. Another thing is good supervision of the project. You involve people who are committed to the project, who are focused, who know their project.*

The Project Management Unit is set up to focus on the project and ensure systematic coordination and supervision of the implementation of the project activities. The project unit normally referred to as the Project Management Office (PMO) is an organizational structure that is set up to improve project management practices, by adopting the right methodologies to achieve success (Monteiro et al., 2016). The results of the study by Monteiro et al. (2016) revealed that the structures, roles, functions, and descriptions of PMOs vary considerably. The PMO is thus a unit or department, in organizations that is entrusted to develop methodologies and institutionalize good project management practices (Kerzner, 2018). The PMO also undertakes to customize and sustain the practices, methods, techniques, and tools in organizations (Desouza & Evaristo, 2006).

### **Team Collaboration and Dynamics**

The participants stated that for a successful project, there is a need to foster a collaborative and positive team environment, encourage communication, and address conflicts promptly to ensure a productive and cohesive team. The following are some of the quotations.

#### ***Participant 1***

*We did a lot of team building and training in the implementation and I can say that it has reached an end because the team worked together.*

#### ***Participant 3***

*We are going to start giving people an education and conducting training.*

This is in line with some findings from other studies (Bond-Barnard et al., 2018). The results of a study by Bond-Barnard et al. (2018) also revealed that the success of projects is higher if the level of team collaboration is higher. This will lead to an increase in trust between team members, which

is essential in any project. In a project, cross-functional teams are dependent on the level of trust between them to engage in collaborative interactions (Buvik and Rolfsen, 2015). In a project but is also an essential part of teamwork and project success (Wong et al., 2023; Buvik and Tvedt, 2017).

**Research Question Two:** What are the common challenges faced by project managers when implementing projects in private organizations in Tanzania?

The question explores challenges faced by project managers in Tanzanian private organizations, focusing on time, budget, stakeholders, and scope, with varying impacts based on participants' responses. The following are the key themes.

### **Technology Uncertainty**

In the current time of uncertainty, volatility, complexity, and ambiguity, there are unpredictable changes in the tools and technologies used. The participants stated their concern about the technological changes that affect their projects. Some of the quotations are as follows:

*Participant 5: We need to use the latest technologies to increase the efficiency and success of projects. The tools we use become obsolete and no longer supported.*

*Participant 6: We may not be aware of the technological changes that are taking shape and used in projects.*

This theme is in line with some other studies (Jilke, 2021). Unpredictable change is a norm in today's times of increased competition and globalization and project success is becoming more critical to business performance. The results of a study by Jilke (2021) revealed the negative impact of technological uncertainty on information processing capability by organizations. Technological uncertainty is one of the key environmental factors that affect organizations in today's environment (Vickery et al., 2016). Technology uncertainty can lead to an increased risk faced by projects. The higher the technological uncertainty, the more information must be processed to close the gap between the current information and the information that is necessary to complete a task. Challenges are imposed by technological uncertainty for people to develop an understanding of a technology (Pesch et al., 2016).

### **Resource Constraints**

The participants suggest that there was a shortage of managers with the necessary expertise to oversee project activity. The limited availability of resources is putting more strain on projects. The following are some of the quotations:

#### **Participant 1**

*Our resources were not enough.....You know, having one for the manager, moving all around, trying to deliver formation, deliver training, delivering the project purpose, that's not healthy. We are working with limited budgets.*

#### **Participant 2**



*The quality of the project team is important. It is also challenging to retail good resources. So, managing the people who don't know what they are going to do is difficult.*

#### ***Participant 4***

*It is difficult in the project supervision. You must spend wise time during project implementation to supervise and train people on the project.*

Limited availability of resources, including personnel, budget, and time, can hinder project progress and success. In line with Radujković and Klepo (2021), project managers are not satisfied with how well project management practices meet their demands. They are not confident in their ability to manage projects utilizing tools. Project managers must be aware of the constraints and restrictions to complete a project successfully on time and within budget. As stated in the report by Indeed (2021), the resources allocated to a project must be managed well. Project managers need to understand the constraints that they have access to so they can increase their chances of delivering successful projects.

#### **Team Conflict**

The participants highlighted those issues related to team dynamics, such as conflicts, can impact project success. The following are some of the quotations.

#### ***Participant 1***

*The onboarding process brought a lot of conflicts between the project team and the operation team. This caused great, great, great damage to the project's success.*

#### ***Participant 2***

*Understanding the scope of the project between the client and the team and supplier sometimes results in conflict. Different people from different backgrounds can lead to conflict.*

Team conflict is normally evident in new projects. The results are similar to the study by Lee et al. (2015) which suggested that individual differences cause conflict. There can be task-related conflicts, process conflicts, and relationship conflicts. To overcome the conflicts, the project manager's skills and social skills are important. In multicultural teams, cultural differences can affect teamwork (Brett et al., 2020). Therefore, project managers need social skills to resolve conflicts in projects.

#### **Scope Creep**

The remarks made by the participants suggest that scope adjustments occurred midway through the project's execution because of the failure to consider risk related to project scope during the project's planning phase. The following was quoted by the participants.

#### ***Participant 2***

*Changing the scope during the execution is risky. Also, it can be a challenge because you must make your team change plan as per the scope. So, this can be very challenging because it cannot be easily changed within a short time.*

#### ***Participant 3***

*In collecting data problems are that some people do not provide you with actual data and some people are hiding.*

***Participant 4***

*Failure to consider some risks in the project during planning means that we can't consider from the beginning the risk from the beginning of the project.*

The findings are in line with the study by Komal et al. (2020). Studies have shown that amendments and additions to the project scope can result in increased costs, delays, and potential conflicts. One of the most frequent reasons why projects fail (Komal et al., 2020). Therefore, Project managers need to control scope creep by controlling change requests. Scope creep is a common project management risk as it affects cost, budget, schedule, and resource allocation, and affects project milestones (Ajmal et al., 2022).

**Inadequate Planning**

It was highlighted by the participants that poorly developed project plans can lead to project failures or suboptimal outcomes. The following are some of the quotations:

***Participant 1***

*Poor planning led us to slow down and so many hours and days. The project plan was not clearly understood.*

***Participant 2***

*There were very big challenges during the project executions attributed to poor planning.*

**Participant**

**3**

*Sometimes delaying some people is a big challenge for us. You know, we are different in the vision.*

The results of this study are like other studies that have revealed that poorly developed project plans, that encompass scheduling, resource allocation, and risk management, can lead to project failures. As stated by Heagney (2016), project planning must define clearly what must be done, by whom, for how much, and when. It was also stated by Heagney, (2016) that one of the key causes of project failure is inadequate or poor planning. Project managers sometimes see planning as a waste of time. However, without a plan, there can be no control of the project.

**5.0 Implications**

This study has several practical implications for stakeholders of projects in Tanzania. This was one of the studies that delved deep into the challenges faced and best practices adopted by projects in Tanzania. The best practices in the context of Tanzania were revealed in this study. The study also highlighted some of the key challenges faced in Tanzanian projects. The challenges include technology uncertainty, team conflict, resource constraints, and inadequate planning. The key implication is on the project team and stakeholders. Based on the results, training programs specially tailored for project teams must be implemented. The training programs should place more focus on improving business case development, scope definition, resource management, and team collaboration and dynamics. To be efficient, the adoption of the latest project management tools and software is necessary to streamline project management. The latest tools can facilitate planning, resource allocation, collaboration, and scope management throughout the project

lifecycle. The findings also emphasized the need for better communication and collaboration among project teams, stakeholders, and management. This can be achieved through feedback, project meetings, and the use of collaboration tools. Lastly, project and organizational leaders should have the skills to recruit, develop, and retain the project team. Leadership competency and support are important for driving the project and creating a project management mindset across the organization. Leaders and project owners should manage conflict and create an environment of collaboration and trust between team members. This can lead to higher levels of productivity and project success.

There are also some theoretical implications of this study. To the knowledge of the researcher, this was the first study of its kind in Tanzania. There were some new insights such as technology uncertainty in today's environment. The results emanating from this study will add to the existing knowledge of the best practices and challenges faced by projects. This will facilitate future researchers to concentrate on understanding the challenges and best practices for projects in Tanzania.

### **5.1 Limitations, Conclusion, and Recommendations for Future Studies**

This research had certain limitations, just like other earlier ones. The study did not look at the various stakeholders, to start. Both external and internal stakeholders can be found in a project. Additional data from various stakeholders should be considered in future research. This can highlight the various viewpoints held by project stakeholders. To begin with, the project life cycle was not considered (in this research). Throughout their existence, projects go through various stages. Consequently, it is advised that future research take the project life cycle into account to achieve project success throughout the project life cycle. This will give a broader understanding of the intricacy of projects at various stages.

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