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# A Study on an Assessment of Factors Which Contribute to Project Successful Implementation of a Project in Mchinji District, Malawi

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**ABSTRACT:** This study was carried out to assess the factors which contribute to project successful implementation for action for adolescent girls and teen mothers project in Mchinji district, Malawi. The goal of the study was to sought effective ways of enhancing quality project deliverables aimed at reducing the rate of project failure and maintaining competitive edge in the global marketplace. It also aimed in evaluating the project management effectiveness and project success as determined by a sample comprised of members of the project implementation team, the community members and the beneficiaries which were the adolescent girls and teen mothers. A summary of the research results and recommendations was presented.

## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper highlighted factors that promote project success, as well as experiences at one organization based upon a sampling of an actual project which is currently in progress. The case study was conducted within the Action for teen mothers and adolescent girls project which is currently being conducted in Mchinji in three Traditional Authorities namely Mkanda, Zulu and Mduwa in Mchinji District, Malawi.

The study was conducted on this project due to the reason that Malawi has one of the highest rates of early pregnancy in southern Africa (Williamson, N. E ,2012). Forty-seven percent are already married by age 18, and 29 percent of girls have already started child bearing by ages 15-19 (Arthur Phiri et al, 2022) Teenage pregnancies represent 25 percent of all pregnancies annually. Thirty-three percent of girls in Mchinji give birth before the age of 18. Without education, these girls cannot compete on the job market creating inter-generational poverty (Mchinji Social Economic Profile (SEP) 2017-2021).

### 1.1 Need of the study

The purpose of this qualitative study method was to evaluate the project management effectiveness and project success as determined by a sample comprised of members of the project implementation team, the community members and the beneficiaries which are the adolescent girls and teen mothers. In addition, the study sought effective ways of enhancing quality project deliverables aimed at reducing the rate of project failure and maintaining competitive edge in the global marketplace. To achieve this purpose, the researcher measured the internal and external variables of project management effectiveness that influence the project success among project practitioners in order to develop a framework of effective practices that clearly links project management to overall stakeholders' satisfactions.

### 1.2 Main and specific objectives of the study

To confirm factors that contribute to successful implementation of the project. Through the interventions carried out through the Adolescent girls and teen mothers project under KOICA in Mchinji, this study assessed the factors that should be considered for smooth and perfect attainment of the project goal. This study was used in confirming factors not to be over looked in all stages of a project cycle.

#### 1.2.1 Main objective

To assess factors which contribute to successful implementation of the Adolescent Girls and Teen Mothers project in Mchinji district, Malawi.

#### 1.2.2 Specific objectives

- To identify factors that contribute to successful implementation of the Adolescent girls and teen mothers project in Mchinji district, Malawi.

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- To investigate strategies/ factors that are being considered to ensure the success of the implementation of Adolescent Girls and Teen Mothers Project in Mchinji district, Malawi.
- To assess the impact of project relevance to project successful implementation.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section present literature on the issues of factors which contribute to project successful implementation, the impact of project relevance to project successful implementation in line with the action for adolescent girls and teen mother's project in Mchinji District. Pinto (2007) asserted that there is an insatiable search for general standards of excellence against which firms can compare their practices, gain important tips for improvement, and continuously measure their outcomes. Several factors are to be considered in accomplishing a successful implementation of a project.

Effectiveness is centered on doing the right thing (Zheng, et al, 2010), and doing the right thing in a project implies adopting innovative strategies that support the achievement of organizational goals and effective practices in the form of processes, standards, and technological tools that enhance product, service, or project delivery. Effectiveness also is how well the output of the process meets the input constraints of the internal stakeholders and how well the inputs from the providers meet the constraints of the process (Wysocki, 2007). Project managers occupy a central position in every project. The PMI (2004) described project managers as the chief architects and executives in charge of overseeing the day-to-day project operations. Kerzner (2008) claimed that the project managers lead the project execution plan development from gathering the necessary resources (financial, human, equipment, etc.) to ensuring deliverables across all project phases. Another important stakeholder in the project is the project team. As Pinto (2007) asserted, building high-quality teams does not happen by accident. It often needs to be encouraged by a determined, goal-orientated involvement that fosters greater self-awareness.

## III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research design

The research design refers to the overall strategy that researcher choose to integrate the different components of the study in a coherent and logical way, thereby, ensuring effectively and address the research problem (Kumar, 2011). Creswell (2009) countered that, a research design is a plan and the procedure for research that span the decision from broad assumptions to the detailed methods of data collection and analysis. Yin (2004) has further elaborated that research design is the logic that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions) to be drawn to the initial questions of a study. Research Design serves the purpose of avoiding the situation in which the evidence does not address the initial research questions (Yin, 2004).

### 3.2 Research approach

This study took a qualitative research approach method because this is allowed for the capture of subjective views of factors which contribute to project successful implementation on adolescent girls and teen mothers' project and this helped the researcher to broad the understanding of the matter in a holistic manner (Rubin, & Babbie, 2008). Rubin and Babbie, (2008). Berg (2001) defined qualitative research method as the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and description of things. Essentially, qualitative research method helps a researcher to understand and develop explanations of factors and why things are the way they are (Cresswell, 2008).

### 3.4 Population study

The population that was sampled comprised of Mentors (30), male champions (30), SASA facilitators (15), teen mothers (30), Chiefs (9), Youth (30), focal person (6) making a total of 150 participants. The participants were chosen through purposive sampling method. Government departments and NGOs, which are the service providers, were also part of the participants of the study. The departments were Youth, Health, Social Welfare and Community Development. Gender department was left out to avoid biasness since the researcher is working in the same department. The NGOs which were involved were YONECO, MAGGA and FIPAM.

### 3.5 Sample procedure

#### 3.5.1 Sample size

Qualitative researchers typically make sampling choices that enable them to deepen understanding of whatever phenomenon it is that they are studying. The researcher in this study used nonprobability sampling to match with the qualitative method used. This refers to sampling techniques for which a person's (or event's or researcher's focus's) likelihood of being selected for membership in the sample is unknown. This is so

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because we don't know the likelihood of selection, we don't know with nonprobability samples whether a sample represents a larger population or not. But that's fine, because representing the population is not the goal with nonprobability samples. That said, the fact that nonprobability samples do not represent a larger population does not mean that they are drawn arbitrarily or without any specific purpose in mind. The four nonprobability sampling types used during the study were purpose sampling, snowball sampling, quota sampling and convenience sampling.

**Types of Nonprobability Samples**

| *SAMPLE TYPE* | *DESCRIPTION* |
|---|---|
| ***Purposive*** | Researcher seeks out elements that meet specific criteria. |
| ***Snowball*** | Researcher relies on participant referrals to recruit new participants. |
| ***Quota*** | Researcher selects cases from within several different subgroups. |
| ***Convenience*** | Researcher gathers data from whatever cases happen to be convenient. |

The table 1. above shows the four types of nonprobability sampling used during the study.

**3.6 Sources of data collections**

According to Family and health international (2013), a research Instrument is a tool used to collect, measure, and analyze data related to your research interests. The FGDs, Key informant interviews and the questionnaire were the primary research instruments in this study. Five focus group discussions were conducted, one with Mentors, the other one with male champions, third with SASA committees, the chiefs and lastly with teen mothers in each Traditional Authority of Mkanda, Mduwa and Zulu. FGDs are beneficial because they helped the researcher to have an in-depth understanding of the participants (Kumar, 2011). This enable the researcher to uncover personal attitudes and beliefs that other research methods cannot replicate which, in turn, means more insightful results were obtained Kumar, (2011). However, FGDs are more expensive to execute and participants cannot voice their opinion freely if not organized and conducted properly, making it hard to get honest opinions for sensitive topics henceforth the results are biased and might not be a true representation of target group. This challenge was resolved by using open ended questions and probing skills. Open-ended questions encouraged the participants in the study to give longer and elaborative answers that helped the researcher to build a wider range of responses (Kumar, (2011). The FGD guide was used (see the appendix).

Three key informant Interviews were administered in each Traditional Authority. The participants were Chiefs. The tool helped the researcher to have time for checking assumptions and capturing impressions, attitudes, and reasons for behavior. A questionnaire was also administered. The first one was for the focal persons and youth in the three Traditional Authorities Mkanda, Mduwa and Zulu. The second one was administered to the Government departments officials and lastly to the Non-Governmental Organizations.

**3.7 Conceptual frame work**

The study was guided by the Implementation Research Logic Model. The Implementation Research Logic Model (IRLM) (Smith, Li, & Rafferty, 2020) was developed to provide researchers with a means of specifying the relationships between determinants, strategies, mechanisms, and outcomes. The study used the Implementation Research Logic Model to assess the implementation of Adolescent Girls and Teen Mothers Project in Mchinji district. The model guided in identifying key factors and strategies for successful project implementation.

**3.8 Theoretical framework**

The study was guided by three theories of management which supported the conceptual framework. These theories were; -Theory of execution, Theory of planning, and Theory of controlling. This approach to management views a strong causal connection between the actions of management and outcomes of the organization. According to the Oxford English Dictionary**,** planning is 'the process of making plans for something'.

**3.8.1 Planning theory**

Planning theory, therefore, is a fundamental part of planning as a discipline and a profession, even for those who may deny its use and

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relevance. Whether it is explicitly acknowledged or implicitly embraced, a theoretical outlook is an integral part of any purposeful and considered process such as planning (Koskela and Howell 2002b).

### 3.8.2 The theory of execution

The theory of execution is about dispatching tasks to work stations. The principle governed the theory of Execution is when, according to the plan, the time has arrived to begin task execution, it is authorized to start, in speech or in writing (Koskela and Howell 2002b). The Assumption of theory of execution are;

- The inputs to the task and the resources to execute it are ready at the time of authorization.
- The task is fully understood, started and completed according to the plan once authorized (Koskela and Howell 2002b). Another theoretical framework governed this study is the theory of control.

### 3.8.3 The theory of Control

The theory of control states that there is a process to be controlled, a unit for performance measurement, a standard of performance and a controlling unit (Koskela and Howell 2002b).

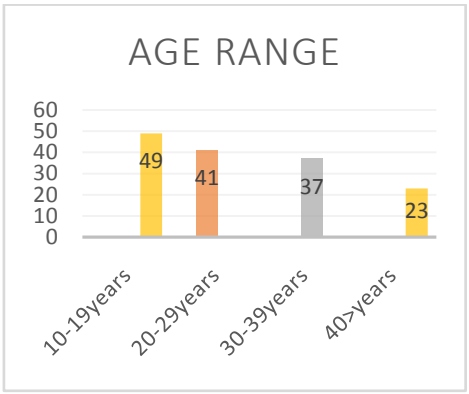
## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Respondents

There were 60 males and 90 females who participated in the research. This represented a percentage of 40% for the males and 60% for the females for the whole sample size.

### 4.2 Respondents by Age

The fig 1 below depicts the age ranges of the participants of the research.

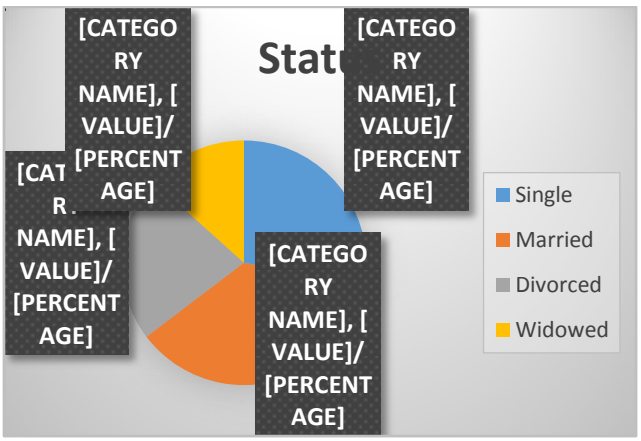



Source: Field Data 2022

The Graph above shows that 49 respondents where between the age range of 10-19and 41 respondents were between the ranges of 20-29. The age range of 30-39, there were 37 respondents and lastly respondents above 40 where 23

### 4.3 Marital Status of Respondents

The fig 2 below shows the marital status of respondents




*Source: Field Data 2022*

The number of married respondents was 55 which made up 37% of the total, they were the largest demographic The number of divorced respondents was 33 which made up 22% of the total. The single respondents were 42 which made up 28% of the total and lastly the widowed respondents were 20 which made up 13%

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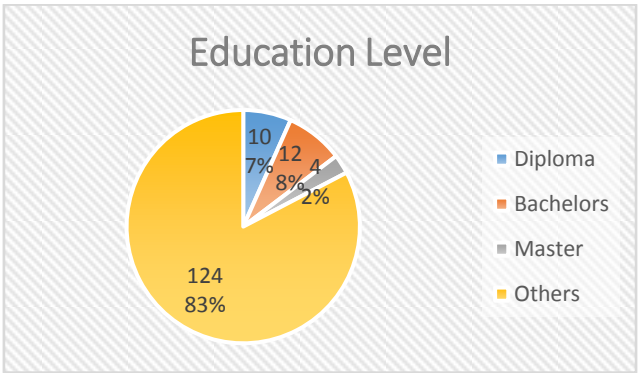
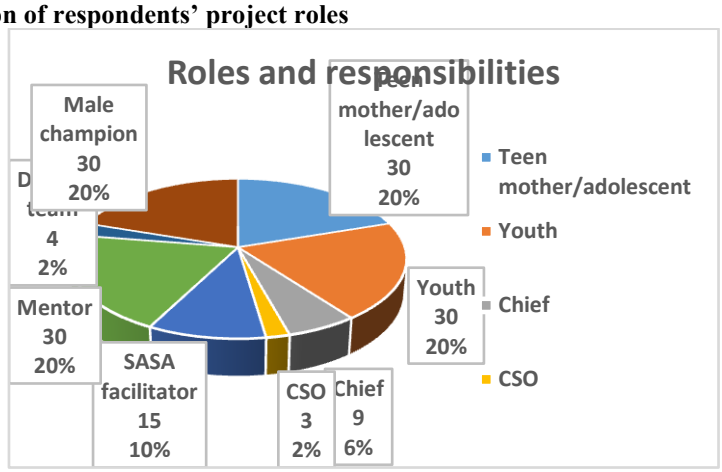
**4.4 Fig 3: Education Level**




***Source: Field data 2022***

The data above shows that 12 respondents indicated that they had a bachelor's degree as the highest form education, this made up 8% of the total. 10 respondents had a postgraduate diploma, making up 7% of the total. A further 4 respondents had a master's degree, also making up 2% of the total and lastly others for example (MSCE) Malawi School certificate of Education respondents where 124 which made up 83% making it the highest percentage. No respondent had a PhD qualification.

**4.5:Fig 4: Distribution of respondents' project roles**




***Source: Field data 2022***

The respondents of the questionnaire consist of various stakeholders ranging from district official to the beneficiary who is the adolescent girl/ teen mother. The data shows that teen mother/adolescent girl were 30 making up 20%. The youth were 30 respondents making up 20% and the male champions and mentors were also 30 respectively making up 20% each. Chiefs were 9 making up 6% and SASA facilitators were 15 making up 10%.CSO members were 3 making up 3% of the population and the District team officials were 4 making up 2%. Most of the respondents (25%) at least once performed the similar roles in previous projects, whereas, for the 75% the role in this project was their first experience.

Whereas, to the question of whether they were involved in the implementation of the project from scratch till to date, more than half of the respondents (%55,5) noted that they have been active throughout the whole project implementation phase and believe they will continue to be involved since it is now in the mid phase. On the other hand, %44,4 involved only in particular parts of the project implementation, namely in activities towards development and implementation of: Awareness meetings, trainings and reviews.

Only 2 respondents, namely the project officer and the male champion, have conducted their same project roles more than five times previously. Whereas, for the others of the respondents, the project roles, they were involved in, was their first

experience. Moreover, respondents that involved in full implementation constitute only %55,5 of the whole respondents. These findings have the implication that the answers and information provided by those who are more experienced and involved in full implementation should have more inferences than those who are less experienced and took part in the project implementation only partially.

**4.6 B Adequate stakeholder support**

The way that the project team is supported by stakeholders together with its extent is vital in determining success of implementation phase of the Action for teen mothers and adolescent girls project. The respondents of the questionnaire stated that the most consistent stakeholder support was in terms of access to technical expertise. In addition, the stakeholders were rated as being extremely eager to hold regular meetings with the project team in order to come up with solutions for problems being encountered by the project team during implementation phase, as well as, they provided the project team the trust and opportunity to take decisions for tactical issues of project implementation phase without subject to any authorization.

However, the stakeholder support in terms of extra resources and project procedures were inadequate. Particularly, hesitation of the donor to offer immediately the extra resources when needed by the project team has vital implications for the success of implementation phase. Then, 'providing access to extra resources when needed' has fundamental importance for successful implementation phase of the Action for teen mothers and adolescent girl's project. The absence of this stakeholder support, regardless of favorable conditions for other stakeholder support types mentioned above, may result in failure of implementation phase of Action for teen mothers and adolescent girl's project. Therefore, either this stakeholder support must be ensured or a contingency reservoir as the contingency plan must be allocated ahead for flow of the project implementation phase.

**4.7 High commitment to project goals/objectives**

Lack of commitment to project together with its goals and objectives is listed as one of the major obstacles to project success. However, in order to meet commitments to project goals and objectives, the project goals and objectives must be understood by each and all of stakeholders before the implementation phase.

With regard to our study, almost two thirds (%74) of the respondents noted that each and every member of stakeholder internalized the goals and objectives of the project when the implementation period started. However, the rest of respondents disagreed and they stated that day-to-day tactics were not clearly comprehended by each stakeholder. Furthermore, even the 'activity schedule' and the 'time schedule' were counted as issues that were not clear for every stakeholder.

In our study only %59 of respondents provided a positive response to the question of whether the goals and objectives of the project were clearly communicated to stakeholders (other than team members). The findings of this section imply that project had serious deficiencies in 'communication management', which is one of nine project management function, particularly, in communication of day-to-day project management tactics and project work packages to internal project stakeholders, as well as, in communication of short-term goals and objectives to external project stakeholders.

**4.8 Competent Project Management Team**

The question exploring the extent of how well the project management team performed the project management functions, the response was as follows: As perceived by respondents 'Management of scope', as well as, 'management of quality' and the 'management of budget' were being performed better in relation to other project management functions. However, the project had problems in meeting 'management of schedule'. The 'management of schedule' was evaluated as being poorly performed based on perceptions of the respondents.

In addition to poor relationships and communication, 'project risk management' was another weakness of the project management team as perceived by respondents. Therefore, as a result of this limited project success perception, the project team overlooked some of the project management functions, namely, 'management of communication', 'management of schedule' and 'management of risk' as those being identified and discussed so far.

The question that probes if the budget allocated was adequate to deliver the project scope was answered as 'Yes' by almost %63 of the respondents. On the other hand, those who found the budget allocated as insufficient (%37), pointed out to the extra budget need for 'team building activities. The other respondents pointed out on the delay for releasing funds for activities by the donor,

UNFPA. They are in most cases given pressure to finish the activities within a short period of time hence not producing good work.

**4.9 Effective consultation with all stakeholders**

Answers from the respondents shows that consultation with the 'project team' as the most effective one. On the other hand, consultations with the 'district team' and 'community at large' were rated as being the least effective in relation to consultations with other stakeholders. Some of the district team members had concerns in the donor not communicating directly to all of them but instead choose few members like the District Youth officer and Health Officer. In most cases new information regarding the project is shared during review meetings where these two departments are invited hence creating an information gap between the officers.

## V. CONCLUSION

I believe that the results of this thesis raise some important points concerning the project. However, I also remind the reader of the limitations of the study and propose recommendations for further research. Due to time and resources constraints, the researcher was forced to analyze a couple of specific areas, that, even if they allow to obtain some reasonable common dynamics that nicely fits with the secondary data of the full portfolio of the Action for Teen Mothers and Adolescent girls project, the theoretical literature, should be seen as questions raising and not as a definitive result about the dynamics of Action for Teen Mothers and Adolescent girls project.

The study was guided by the Implementation Research Logic Model (IRLM) as well as by synthesis of other related literature and was also supported by three theories of management Namely theory of execution, Theory of planning, and Theory of controlling.This approach to management viewed a strong causal connection between the actions of management and outcomes of the organization.

## VI. Recommendations

Time restrictions affected the design of this research study drastically. Since if adequate time was available, researcher might have conducted the research in the two districts where the project of action for teen mother's project is being implemented, that is Dedza and Mchinji. This would help with variety of data collection techniques over a bigger sample size. For example, a study over a big sample with multiple case studies would have yielded more insights regarding the research subject area and lend itself for generalization.

## Acknowledgement

At the outset, from beneath of my heart, I thank the **ALMIGHTY GOD** for the blessings showered on me in all the stages in the journey of my task of completing this project work, without any obstacles. I would finally like to thank my family especially my husband Masauko and children Tatenda, Gloria, Doreen and Dumisani for their support in carrying out this project and my guide, DR **ARUMAI SAMARPANA and Dr. Arafat, HOD** for being able to successfully guide me through the entire process of carrying out the research.

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