The Effect of Social Competencies on Project Success among Kuala Lumpur Construction Industries

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Abstract: - *There are limited studies on project success which involve construction industries in Kuala Lumpur. This study aimed to fill this gap by assessing social competencies effect on project success among Kuala Lumpur construction industries. Construction projects are associated with the project's issues and problems due to many parties' involvement in the construction project. As many parties involved in the project execution, there will be high chances of taking a proactive approach in controlling uncertainties due to project delays and budget overruns. This is why understanding social competencies is crucial to develop the individual in an organization. Therefore, this study aims to identify the effect of social competencies on project success among Kuala Lumpur construction industries. To address these issues, this research seeks 1) to determine the influence of relationship management on project success among Kuala Lumpur Malaysian construction industries, and 2) to assess the impact of social-awareness on project success among Kuala Lumpur construction industries. A cross-sectional survey of 107 questionnaires was administered to respondents from Kuala Lumpur G7 construction industries. The Smart PLS-SEM software version 3.0 was used in analyzing the data. The results show that social-awareness and relationship management are positively significant with project success among Kuala Lumpur construction industries. This implies that the study's findings provide more understanding of social competencies' effect on project success among Kuala Lumpur construction industries. It also serves as a useful reference point for further research in the area of construction project management.*

Keywords: - *Social competencies, social-awareness, relationship management, project success, construction industry, Malaysia.*

1.0 Introduction

Malaysia's construction industry plays a crucial role in the nation's economy. It has been plagued by negative attention over cost overruns, uncontrolled and unreasonable timetables, accidents, poor workmanship, the dispute between project team members, abandoned and incomplete private and public construction projects (Haron et al., 2017). Besides, the construction industry has been characterized as one of the most challenging sectors to lead people to succeed successfully. Employees from various background and professional cultures work in communities to accomplish short-term project goals in diverse operating environments (Potter et al., 2017). Furthermore, the construction industry considered as one of the most important sectors in the economy as it engages with almost

every field of human endeavors. Decision milestone is used to anticipate performance, risk assessment to avoid incidents and incremental optimization to ensure that the desired facilities are functional and projects end up without time constraints, cost overruns and compromised quality (Nguyen et al., 2004).

According to Abidin et al. (2017), building construction and infrastructure projects involve long-term investment and risks. Therefore, the project undertaken must be carefully planned and well-handed to be successful. In general, unsuccessful projects are those which did not meet the time, cost and quality specified by the client. Poor handling of project management performance is happening domestically and in other parts of the world. An empirical study by Doan et al. (2020) emphasized

that the success of the project can be measured against the short-term and long-term feasibility of the project including the viability of the project, the influence of the customers, business efficiency, and the effect on the future and the effectiveness of the teamwork. Social competence plays a vital role wherever people communicate, collaborate with the family, the organization and community in general. However, lack of social competence can be seen at different social life stages as people should mention the increase in political wars, incidents of verbal and physical violence, selfish and antagonistic behavior (Shnyrenkov and Ramona, 2015). Social competence also depends on the leadership effectiveness in a non-Western context requires to explore how social culture and organizational backgrounds, such as work characteristics and job position requirements, influence the demonstration and implementation of social competence by leaders (Wei et al., 2017).

The construction project is viewed as causing more issues and problems due to many parties' involvement in the organization. According to Zhang et al. (2013), some studies deal with competencies of project management theories. However, due to the need for advanced knowledge of project management, the research is insufficient. Relationship management may be a corporate concern that emphasizes people's importance in project management processes in contrast to project management based on planning and controlling. However, traditional approaches also contribute to construction projects, such as adversarial culture and poor performance (Ishak et al., 2020; Taofeeq et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the people involved in the implementation of the project have not been able to take a constructive path to address uncertainties. As a result, project delays and budget overruns are usually encountered due to a lack of awareness of possible risk. Insufficient information and adequate project management resulted in project cost overruns, completion delays, and termination before execution and adversely affected the credibility of the project team (Haron et al., 2017). According to

Lantel me et al. (2017), a gap in research between engineering education and the predicted profile of potential engineers suggests that construction managers' abilities are not adequately researched. According to The Corsini Encyclopedia of Psychology (2010), there are fewer studies on social competence dimensions concerning the cultural value and group norms. Each culture has its value, such as social interactions and the measurement of social competence is inadequate due to the understanding of what socially responsible behavior is and how well the persons behave. Hence, this study tackled the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the influence of relationship management on project success among Kuala Lumpur Malaysian construction industries?

RQ2: What is the influence of social-awareness on project success among Kuala Lumpur Malaysian construction industries?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Malaysian Construction Industries

The Malaysian construction industry is an important productive industry because of its contribution to the nation's economy. As an example, construction performance increased by RM 7248 million, RM 7168 million and RM 7350 million, respectively, in the year 2004, 2005 and 2006 (Budget Report 2006).

The construction industry has many classifications, such as residential construction, non-residential construction, and civil or infrastructural construction in Malaysia. The Malaysian construction industry performs well in various sub-sectors of the construction industry, including civil engineering, special trades, residential and non-residential buildings. In 2017, the construction industry recorded an annual growth of 7.7% to the tune of RM34.5 billion in the third quarter of 2017. Moreover, the performance of the construction industry indicates positive growth in all sub-sectors such as Civil Engineering (18.4%), Special Trade (9.5%), Non-residential Construction (1.5%) and

Residential Construction (1.2%) based on Malaysian Statistics Department (2018).

2.2 Definitions of Relationship Indicators

2.2.1 Social Competencies

Social competencies are known as the processing of social knowledge, underlining the cognitive dimensions of social competence. Social competence relies on social interaction as it is assumed that all emotional and cognitive components are involved. Moreover, self and others are both aspects of social competence. In interpersonal interaction, social competence is an organizational operation involving persons and others, thereby operating as the basis for competency actions. Social competence in this process, for example, as organizing of behavior is self-representation and other domains. Self-domain requires success in achieving one's objectives and emotions of social interaction effectiveness and implies performance from one's perspective. The other area involves a healthy relationship with other peers who want an acceptable role in social communities and follow social expectations for good social conduct, thereby representing the interests, aspirations and experiences of interacting with others. Therefore, self and other domains are also targeted at pursuing different objectives or meeting different needs (Wei et al., 2017).

2.2.2 Social-awareness

The definition of social awareness is taking perspective and empathizing with others, including those of different cultural backgrounds. Other than that, social-awareness is the ability to recognize and respect social and ethical-morality. This requires an organization to identify, value, traditions and respond to cultural norms. Traditions, communication, educational background, contribution and styles of relationships (Gabrielsen and Clark, 2011).

2.2.3 Relationship Management

Ee and Ong (2013) studies have described that relationship management as the ability to communicate effectively and manage dispute mediation by efficiently listening to others to create and maintain bonds, work and cooperate with team members, and possess leadership skills to direct and empower others. Furthermore, relationship management can be defined as a method in which an organization maintains a constant interaction with its client. This management can take place between a business and its client or between a company and other companies. Similarly, relationship management is often aimed at creating a connection between an organization and its clients, rather than treating partnerships as merely transactional. Other than that, creating a customer relationship provides benefits for those involved. The client who feels that the business is attentive to the needs will continue to purchase the products or services (Will, 2019).

2.2.4 Project Success

According to Haron et al. (2017), the project is more complicated than ever because of large capital expenditures, a wide variety of markets, widely dispersed project participants, tighter deadlines, high-quality requirements, rising costs, environmental issues, increasing stakeholder power and ICT innovation. However, project success should be assessed based on how well the resulting products and services support corporate governance. The project manager needs to know corporate or organizational governance policies and procedures specific to the product or service issue. Therefore, the project manager must have the requisite expertise in project management to ensure its success.

2.3 Research Framework

This research has been conducted by utilizing a specific model that clearly shows interactions between independent and dependent variables in this study, representing this study's framework. Based on Figure 1, this research's dependent variable is project success while the independent variable is social competencies, which is conceptualized as social-awareness and relationship management. The framework of this research is to illustrate the connection between independent and dependent variables for this research.

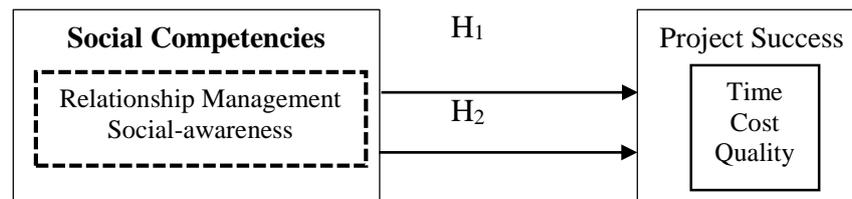Independent Variables   Dependent Variable

Figure 1: Research Framework

2.4

Relationship Management and Project Success

Project managers may use the index to analyze, monitor, and improve relationship management efficiency in construction projects. Besides, the three aspects of the quality relationship in developing a quality relationship system are teamwork, dedication and confidence that can also be done without project managers' help, which contributes to project success (Meng and Boyd, 2017; Subani et al., 2020).

Relationship management is about guiding other people's emotions. This includes encouraging others, influencing others' beliefs and opinions, building others' capabilities, managing changes, establishing strong personal connections, promoting collaboration, and leading for instance. These practices include the ability to communicate and convincingly persuade others effectively. A leader with good relationship skills can influence others to share their vision and actively enlarge the people's network and achieve help where support us required (Lunenburg, 2011; Samsudin et al., 2020). Thus, the hypothesis between relationship management and project success is:

Hypothesis 1: Relationship management will significantly influence project success

2.5 Relationship between Social-awareness and Project Success

Social-awareness refers to understanding and sensitivity of the emotions, thoughts and circumstances of others. It is including the awareness of another person's condition, the experience of another person's feelings, and the recognition of other expressed desires, even though they are undetermined. Socially responsible leaders have gone beyond reading emotions by demonstrating that they care. Socially aware leaders especially can understand the politics of office and social networks. Leaders are outstanding at understanding the strengths, accomplishments and development of people (Lunenburg, 2011).

According to Proposition 37, Understanding and Developing Emotional Intelligence (2017), most organizations' work has improved significantly over the past 20 years. There are fewer less autocratic management levels and management styles. Moreover, there has also been a significant change in information and team-based knowledge. As a modern organization, always aim to improve the performance, the organization understands that measurable benefits can be gained from high levels of emotional intelligence. Generally, the perception of success at work frequently change. Therefore, it suffices to hypothesize thus:

Hypothesis 2: Social-awareness will significantly influence project success

3.0 Methodology

This study is a cross-sectional research design conducted among Kuala Lumpur construction industries. The quantitative research approach was used in this research, with 107 sets of questionnaires distributed as the sample size for this research is 107.

3.1 Instrument Design

The quantitative research design method has been used in this study as it is more suitable for this research than the qualitative research design of data collection. The data was then collected using questionnaire as indicated above. This is because the analysis of data from the respondents is considered to be more comfortable. In analyzing the data, SPSS software version 26.0 was used for respondents'

demographic characteristics such as gender, position, years of working experience, company's area of specialization, type of company ownership, number of years for company existence, and number of full-time workers in the company. To assess the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable,

Smart PLS 3.3.2 software was deployed. Five-point Likert scale was used to evaluate the independent and dependent variables with a range from (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree (Azman and Adeleke, 2018).

Table 1: Summary of the survey instrument in the questionnaires

Section	Description	Variable	No. of item
1	Demographic	-	8
2	Social-awareness	IV	10
3	Relationship Management	IV	10
4	Project Success	DV	10
		Total	38

4.0 Results and Discussions

4.1 Data Collection and Sample

In this study, G-Power was deployed to obtain an adequate sample size (Faul et al., 2009; Omer and Adeleke, 2019). A sample size of 107 was gotten from the outcome of G-Power statistics which is in line with the recommendation of Sekaran & Bougie,

(2016), that the ideal sample should be between 30 and 500. One hundred and seven (107) questionnaires mailed were returned and completed and were all found appropriate for analysis. Summary of the demographic characteristics of respondents for this study is presented, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Demographic Scales of Respondents

Profile items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Female	30	28.04
Male	77	71.96
Job Position		
Architect	8	7.48
Construction Assistant	13	12.15
Contractor	28	26.17
Engineer	21	19.63
Executive Officer	5	4.67
Officer	14	13.08
Project Manager	2	1.87
Quantity Surveyor	5	4.67
Safety Manager	8	7.48
Site Manager	2	1.87
Others	1	0.93
Working Experience Range		
>10 years	15	14.02

1-3 years	25	23.36
4-6 years	32	29.91
7-9 years	35	32.71
Type of Project		
Others	1	0.93
Bridges	6	5.61
Building	79	73.83
Roads	21	19.63
Company Ownership		
Local	99	92.52
National	8	7.48
Company Location		
Across Malaysia	11	10.28
International markets	6	5.61
Local market areas	58	54.21
Within few States Regional	32	29.91
Company Existence Range		
>10 years	65	60.75
1-3 years	1	0.93
4-6 years	9	8.41
7-9 years	32	29.91
No. of Employees		
>201 employees	67	62.62
0-50 employees	4	3.74
101-150 employees	7	6.54
151-200 employees	23	21.50
51-100 employees	6	5.61

4.2 Statistical Analysis

To establish the construct's convergent validity, three criteria were adopted, which are Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Factor Loadings (FL). The constructs' Cronbach Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability values were all greater than 0.7, and the values of Average Variance Extracted exceeded the threshold value of 0.5. Therefore, these latent variables achieved convergent validity (Table 3). (Hair et al., 2010).
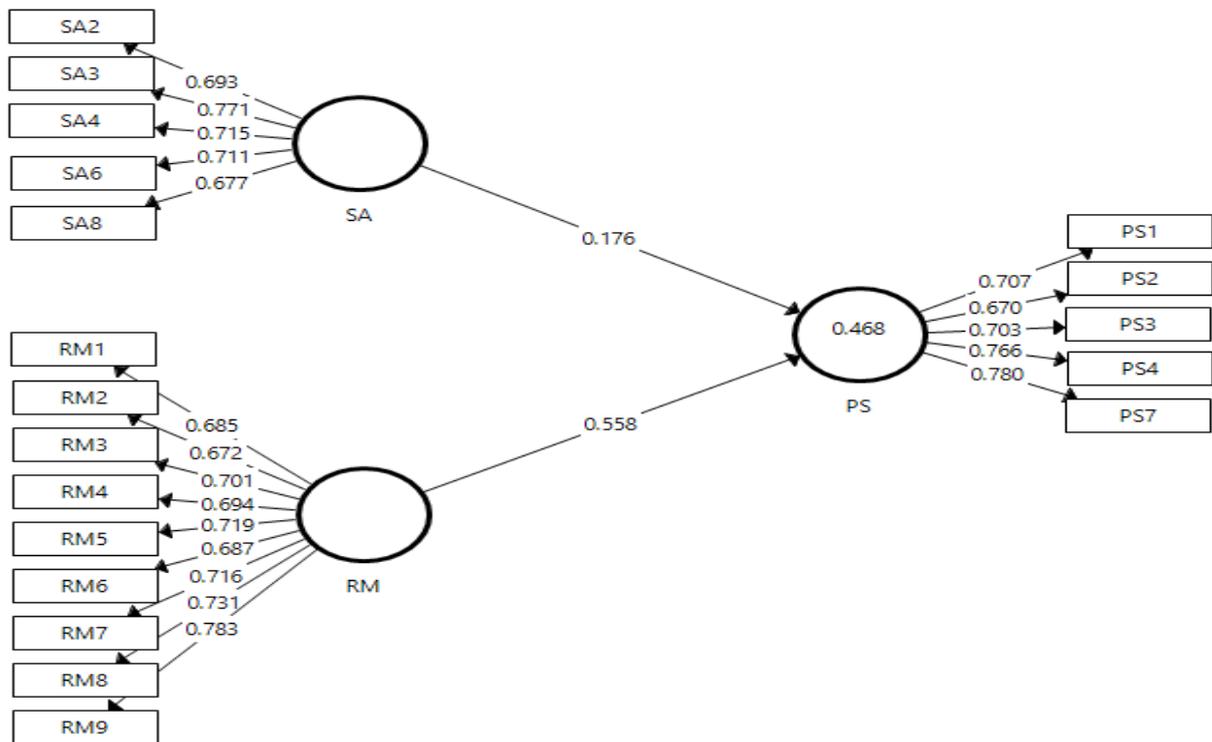
Figure 2: Measurement model

It is recommended that items' loading between 0.5 and 0.7 should be kept if AVE and CR meet their necessary thresholds level and keeping them does not hinder the integrity of the model (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 3: Convergent Validity Analysis

Construct Dimensions	Item Code	Outer Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Project Success	PS1	0.707	0.528	0.848	0.776
	PS2	0.670			
	PS3	0.703			
	PS4	0.766			
	PS7	0.780			
Relationship Management	RM1	0.685	0.505	0.901	0.878
	RM2	0.672			
	RM3	0.701			
	RM4	0.694			
	RM5	0.719			
	RM6	0.687			
	RM7	0.716			
	RM8	0.731			
	RM9	0.783			
Social-Awareness	SA2	0.693	0.510	0.839	0.760
	SA3	0.771			
	SA4	0.715			
	SA6	0.711			
	SA8	0.677			

To test for discriminant validity, this study utilized heterotrait-monotrait criterion (HTMT). The result showed that HTMT values were lesser than 0.85, exhibiting evidence of discriminant validity (Henseler et al. 2015) (Table 4)

Table 4: Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio)

	PS	RM	SA
Project Success			
Relationship Management	0.793		
Social-Awareness	0.674	0.775	

After verifying the goodness of the outer model, the next step was to determine the relationships hypothesized in the research. PLS bootstrapping was run to evaluate the hypothesized model using Smart PLS. The path coefficient was obtained are shown in the table below. Table 5 shows the hypotheses testing. The results showed that relationship management (RM) has a significant positive relationship on project success (PS) with (β=0.558, t=0.5.038, p=0.000). The second hypothesis H_2 social-awareness (SA), also had a positive relationship on project success with (β=0.176, t=1.706, p=0.044)

Table 5: Results of the Inner Structural Model (note: $p < 0.05$)

Hypotheses	Path	Std. Beta	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P-Value	Bias	5.00%	95.00%	Decision
H_1	RM -> PS	0.558	0.111	5.038	0.000	0.007	0.337	0.705	Supported
H_2	SA -> PS	0.176	0.103	1.706	0.044	0.010	0.004	0.343	Supported

In this study, the model is analyzed based on the value of the coefficient of determination called R^2. By referring to the rule of thumb, the value of R^2 from 0.25 to 0.49 is considered weak, 0.50 to 0.74 is deemed moderate, while $0.75 - 1.0$ is deemed high. Hence, the R^2 value for this study, as shown in Table 6, is 0.468 (46.8%), which shows the total variance in project success, as explained by relationship management and social awareness. This indicated acceptable levels of R^2 values following (Chin, 1998; Falk and Miller, 1992; Ismayana and Adeleke, 2020).

Table 6: R^2 Value

	R Square
PS	0.468

As the effect size, the values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are considered small, medium, and large, respectively, according to Cohen (1988) and Chung et al., (2020). Table 7 shows that relationship management's effect size was medium, while the effect size of social-awareness was small.

Table 7: f^2 Value

	PS	RM	SA
Project Success			
Relationship Management	0.345		
Social-Awareness	0.034		

The research verified Q^2 Value is 0.242. The model's predictive validity is indicated for this research's endogenous latent variable is greater than 0 (Adeleke et al., 2020; Kanimoli et al., 2020).

Table 8: Q^2 Value

	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
Project Success	0.228

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

This study focused on the effect of social competencies on project success among Kuala Lumpur Malaysian Construction Industries. This research's findings would act as a benchmark for the future researcher who wants to perform studies on project success in the construction project. It is also essential (when construction companies register under CIDB) to ensure that contractors have sufficient expertise and skills in handling projects. In this research, a quantitative method has been used to meet the objectives of this research. The study is a cross-sectional since data has was collected over a brief period. The analysis unit was made up of individuals from G7 construction industries operating within Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The PLS-SEM was selected to analyze this research while Smart PLS version 3.0 was used to conduct the analysis.

Despite the considerable research on social competencies on project success, there is a research gap in linking this aspect of social competence awareness concerning the cultural value and group norms thereby limits the understanding of the possible reasons for project success in the construction industry. Therefore, this study intended to fill this gap by assessing social-awareness and relationship management's effects on project success among Kuala Lumpur construction industries.

The research established strong empirical evidence for the hypothesized positive effects of relationship management on project success. Hence, the construction industry must develop healthy relationship management to maintain a long-term relationship among stakeholders. As a result, project success will be achieved with relationship management development in the construction industry. In the same vein, the findings also established a positive effect of social-awareness on project success. Therefore, construction industries must develop social-awareness among workers in order to manage the relationship between workers and other stakeholders in an organization. This is because the development of social awareness in an organization could achieve project success.

6.0 Implications

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This study was carried out to investigate the effect of social competencies on project success among Kuala Lumpur construction industries. Several related studies have been undertaken in diverse sectors such as the utility sector, telecommunication, hospital industry, and government agencies. Much research has been done to show that the effectiveness of social competencies on project success provides better or valid results. This research was also extended to the construction industry to measure the reliability of the IV's and DV of this research, which would improve the stability of empirical study.

6.2 Practical Implications

Study on the effect of social competencies on project success is not only crucial to the academicians, but also to the employers in the construction industry who sees who social competency as an integral part of project success. In recent years, encouraging results to develop social competencies in the workplace has become an essential aspect of the construction industry. Furthermore, the construction industry stakeholders will also benefit from this study to develop a project success policy.

7.0 Research Limitation

This research was conducted only among construction industry in Kuala Lumpur which shows

that the outcomes may not be generalizable to other construction industries in the other parts of Malaysia or abroad due to cultural and contextual differences. To obtain more generalizable findings, future research may consider the effect of social competencies on project success across different settings, both at local and international level. Moreover, the data collected for this purpose can only measure social competencies on project success among Kuala Lumpur construction industries. They may not be used for other research concerning other aspects of emotional intelligence.

Acknowledgement

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