



Role of Soft Skills in Project Implementation of Non-Governmental Organizations in Rwanda: A Case of World Vision International, Rwanda

Patrick Mugisha & Gitahi Njenga

Mount Kenya University

Email: patrickmugisha603@gmail.com

Abstract: *This study explores the role of soft skills in project implementation within non-governmental organizations in Rwanda, focusing on World Vision International Rwanda (WVIR). The research aimed to determine how project leadership influences project performance. Guided by Contingency Theory, the study employed a descriptive research design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The population included 142 staff members from WVIR, and universal sampling was used to select respondents. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using SPSS software, version 25. The findings reveal a strong positive correlation between effective leadership and successful project outcomes, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.788. Leadership skills accounted for approximately 71.9% of the variance in project implementation, indicated by an R Square value of 0.719 from multiple regression analysis. For every one-unit increase in leadership skills, project implementation is expected to increase by 0.237 units. This significant relationship underscores the essential role that effective leadership plays in enhancing project performance. The study highlights the critical importance of soft skills in project implementation at WVIR. The strong correlations and high R-square value suggest that investing in leadership development significantly improves project outcomes. The study recommends that WVIR implement targeted leadership programs focused on enhancing project managers' abilities in strategic planning, effective communication, and proactive risk management skills.*

Keywords: *Soft skills, project implementation, leadership skills, non-governmental organisation*

How to cite this work (APA):

Mugisha, P. & Njenga, G. (2024). Role of soft skills in project implementation of non-governmental organizations in Rwanda: A case of World Vision International, Rwanda. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 8(4), 160 – 171. <https://doi.org/10.59765/peuvf76re5>.

1. Introduction

Globally, project management practices tend to emphasize technical skills, often at the expense of soft skills. Organizations invest heavily in training programs focused on hard skills such as scheduling, budgeting, and risk assessment. However, recent research indicates that soft skills—such as leadership, communication, and conflict resolution—are equally vital for effective project

management (Lewis & Boucher, 2020). This realization is particularly relevant in complex environments like NGOs, where project managers must engage diverse stakeholders and navigate intricate team dynamics. The success of community projects worldwide is increasingly linked to the ability of project managers to employ these soft skills alongside their technical expertise (Muguchu, 2018).

In developed countries, the project management landscape is well-defined, with established frameworks and

methodologies such as Agile and PRINCE2. While these frameworks provide robust tools for managing projects, much of the literature has focused on private sector initiatives, leaving a significant gap in understanding how these skills translate to the public sector (Hayes, 2020). Public projects often face unique challenges that require not only technical acumen but also a nuanced understanding of stakeholder needs and collaboration. This gap in research underscores the need for a balanced skill set among project managers, one that includes both hard and soft competencies to navigate the complexities of public project management effectively (Belzer, 2024).

In Africa, the challenges of project execution are often compounded by inadequate managerial capacity and operational hurdles. Many projects fail due to factors such as insufficient planning, funding shortages, and mismanagement (Frimpong, 2023). The realities of executing projects in this context require project managers to develop a comprehensive understanding of both technical and soft skills. These skills become essential for managing teams and resources effectively while also addressing the socio-economic and political complexities that characterize the African landscape (Jekale, 2017). The need for effective leadership and communication is particularly pronounced, as these attributes can help foster collaboration and build trust among diverse stakeholders (Nziva, 2018).

In Rwanda, the emphasis on soft skills in project management is particularly relevant given the country's commitment to sustainable development and social cohesion. The success of initiatives under the National Strategy Vision 2020 hinges not only on technical competencies but also on the ability of project managers to inspire and engage their teams (Peter & Randolph, 2019). The challenges faced in Rwandan projects—ranging from resource constraints to complex stakeholder dynamics—highlight the need for leaders who can foster trust, motivate team members, and effectively communicate project objectives. As Rwanda continues to navigate its development trajectory, the cultivation of soft skills among project managers will be essential for driving successful project implementation and ensuring alignment with national goals (Muguchu, 2023).

1.1. Problem statement

As all organizations conduct business-related activities, they all focus on attaining their business value and projects have emerged as good means to create this value in the form of improved business processes and by becoming crucial in the development of new products and services. Therefore, in Rwanda where projects are meant to bridge the gap between the development strategies established in various sector strategic plans and successful business value realization, the ability to effectively manage them has

become an increasingly important skill like in any other developing country.

However, many projects fail not only because they lack qualified managers who understand and Apply the knowledge, Tools, and techniques that are recognized as good practices but because these practices alone are not sufficient where in addition to any area-specific skills and general management proficiencies required for the project, effective project management requires also a proper employment of soft skills that are largely intangible and not associated with the creation of concrete output.

In his research, Sampson (2017) points out that the skills required for project management are often divided 50/50 into traditional hard skills, such as risk management and scheduling, and soft, people-oriented skills such as interpersonal communication. Also, since the dawn of 21st century, researchers like Kirsch (2020) have strongly advocated requirement of both hard and soft skills as key project management arsenal. Kirsch (2020), not undermining the traditional project management methodologies, tools and techniques, has drawn world's attention towards project manager's leadership skills, which he refers to as human side or soft skills of any manager. Contemporary writers have also recognized these soft skills as cardinal aspects of implementation in any project (Shi & Chen, 2019). Hence, this study needs to discover the significant role that interpersonal or soft skills possess in project management and how productive they are on implementation of projects in Rwanda.

The following specific objective guided the study:

To examine which leadership skills, affect project implementation of World Vision International Rwanda

2. Literature review

This section explores the definitions and significance of project soft skills, followed by an examination of essential project leadership skills, highlighting their impact on project success and the unique challenges faced in various contexts, including research and development (R&D) environments. Through this review, we aim to underscore the need for a balanced skill set among project managers that encompasses both hard and soft competencies.

2.1.1. Project Soft Skills

Soft skills are essential for project managers as they encompass a range of personality traits, actions, and social attitudes that facilitate effective interaction, collaboration, and conflict resolution (Heckman & Kautz, 2022). Individuals with strong soft skills demonstrate situational awareness and emotional intelligence, enabling them to navigate challenging work situations while achieving

positive outcomes. In leadership roles, effective management is more about guiding people and aligning their efforts toward common goals than merely applying technical expertise. This shift in focus recognizes that soft skills play a critical role in fostering team cohesion and achieving project objectives (Shi & Chen, 2016; Mascia, 2022).

The increasing recognition of soft skills as vital to project implementation has led to a significant change in how project management competencies are viewed. Previously, the emphasis was predominantly on hard skills, but contemporary studies highlight the importance of soft skills in mobilizing teams, delegating authority, and maintaining high self-esteem among team members (Byrd & Turner, 2021; Klaus, 2020). Research indicates that these soft skills are not just ancillary but are fundamental to project success, with studies attributing their importance to improved project outcomes (Watts & Watts, 2020). Key project management skills now include staff mobilization, managing difficult situations, and exhibiting sensitivity, emphasizing that effective project management requires a blend of technical knowledge and interpersonal abilities (El-Sabaa, 2021; Low & Christopher, 2020).

2.1.2. Project Leadership Skills

Project leadership skills encompass a range of abilities and qualities that enable individuals to effectively guide and manage teams toward successful project completion. These skills are crucial for overseeing project objectives, coordinating team efforts, resolving conflicts, and ensuring projects are completed on time and within budget (Oliver, 2020). Effective strategic planning, as highlighted by Allen (2023), is strongly correlated with successful project implementation. Leaders who articulate a clear vision and strategic plan provide direction and alignment for their teams, significantly increasing the likelihood of achieving project objectives.

The quality of a project leader is essential for successful management. Their responsibilities include organizing tasks, gathering and distributing information, leading, and moderating the project team (Burghardt, 2022). Despite extensive literature on measuring success in R&D projects, defining project success remains elusive, as it can vary widely among stakeholders (Baccarini, 2019). Most project managers tend to prioritize compliance with timelines and budgets over a holistic assessment of success (Dave et al., 2020). While a wealth of research exists on leadership styles, particularly in R&D contexts, there is still a notable gap in understanding how these leadership dynamics specifically apply to various industries, including biotechnology (Elkins & Keller, 2023; Hirst & Mann, 2024).

2.2. Empirical Literature

This section examines and offers a comprehensive appraisal of previous studies on project leadership. It also seeks to highlight the existing gaps in relation to the objectives.

2.2.1 Project Leadership and project implementation

Different studies have stressed on the importance of project leadership as being key in project performance. (Kariuki, 2019) have all documented and emphasized on how leadership plays a critical role in the execution and implementation of projects successfully. Kariuki (2019) studied project characteristics, teamwork and project managers' leadership style and their impact on how water projects performed in Kenya. Primary data was collected from project managers using a cross-sectional descriptive research design while secondary data was collected from project files. The study concluded that project performance is to a large extent impacted by the kind of leadership style exhibited by the project lead and the integration of team management. However, data was collected from project managers long after the projects were completed, some respondents could not recall all the details. Qualitative measure was also not considered in this study; this could have given different results; only time and cost were taken into account.

According to Kiihoh (2018), a project manager ought to have some good leadership skills as he/she is required to lead a diverse set of team members while holding little direct control. Kiihoh (2018) notes that good project performance is the result of the way different stakeholders are led. Project leadership is considered to be very crucial for successful execution of projects. An investigation by Nziva (2018) on project leadership and how it impacts the execution of projects run by Compassion International in Kitui County, outlined four aspects of project leadership. Descriptive design with a population of 180 respondents and 115 sample size was used. Nziva found leadership aspects to have a positive influence on project performance. Nziva (2018) argues that the project size usually dictates the role being played by the leadership; the smaller the project, the lesser the importance of leadership style and vice versa. There is therefore a greater need for a project manager to have great leadership skills rather than management skills. This study was however based on a single NGO therefore limiting the generalizability of the findings.

Another study by Ahmed (2018) on leadership competencies affecting projects in organisations in the

United Kingdom, the researcher used secondary data where different published articles and journals were reviewed. The findings were that there is a link between transformational leadership and levels of satisfaction of the team members in the project. This researcher only used secondary data sources; primary data would give first-hand experience and applicability. The context where this study was carried out is also very different from the context in the current study hence making it difficult to generalize the findings. Even though the results of all these studies were consistent, there are issues of researchers studying a single organisation as well as project managers assessing their own leadership styles thus excluding the project team views. The results do not give a holistic view of the link between project performance and leadership. Moreover, there are contextual as well as methodological differences which create gaps that necessitated the current study to be undertaken.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

This point is made of theory of project implementation that is supposed to be very important in explaining this study. The following are theories which guided this study such as Contingency theory and Communication Accommodation theory.

2.4.1 Contingency Theory

Fred Fielder founded the Contingency theory in 1958. Contingency theory holds that organisational effectiveness depends on the ability of an organisation to adapt or constantly adjust to its surroundings. The theory believes that there is no one best technique or approach to lead an organisation; several factors and constraints come into play and can change the ways of leading an organisation (Rodriguez, 2023). In this model, certain leadership traits can assist in times of crisis therefore project managers should adapt their tactics given changing circumstances. Fiedler further notes that the leadership style of a project manager to a more extent impacts the team's performance. Different studies have concurred with the fact that the traits of a leader and the overall implementation of the projects are directly correlated.

Looking at this theory, project managers need to understand a project's unique characteristics because not all projects are alike and be alert to the idea that different projects can be managed in different ways. The need for different leadership skills and styles is based on different factors and can function better in different situations (Fiedler, 2018). This theory claims that good leadership is often dependent on the kind of leadership style displayed

by a leader in different circumstances. According to Fiedler theory, there is need for a good relationship between project leaders and project team members, lack of this could results to poor project performance.

Different scholars have pointed out some ambiguities in the contingency theory, making it difficult to validate its basis. While leadership styles and project leadership as a whole are seen as being critical elements in project performance, other studies by Gowan and Mathieu (2015) indicate insufficient proof on the relationship between leadership skills and the overall performance of projects. Looking at the findings from previous studies, no consensus exists on particularly which leadership skills or styles would guarantee the highest extent of project implementation (Yang, et al., 2019). With some scholars differing on which leadership style impact project performance positively, there is need for more studies to be carried out on the importance of project leadership which constitutes one of the independent variables being studied.

Applying this theory to the current research; it explains the relationship between different project leadership styles as contingency factors that impact project performance. For a project manager to register good project performance, they must establish good leadership styles, values and character (Wadongo & Abdel-Kader, 2019). Leadership styles are constantly evolving given different context project leaders face. In fact, what makes a project leader effective depends more on the context around him (Charkrabarti, 2018). Which is why research on project leadership in specific context in this case in NGO projects is still needed. Therefore, the applicability of this theory in determining the kind of leadership styles suitable for a successful project performance requires project managers to be agile and not only rely on tradition, policies, rules and regulations as the only guiding principles for their choice of leadership styles.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to explore the perceptions and experiences of project managers regarding the importance of soft skills and leadership skills in project management. This design was chosen for its effectiveness in capturing a comprehensive snapshot of participants' views, enabling a detailed analysis of the relationships between various skill sets and project outcomes.

The population involved in this study was staff from World Vision International Rwanda, Headquarters. The study targeted 142 staff. The following table gives details of the different categories of population that was targeted:

Table 1. Table representing Target Population

Category	Total population
Top-level staff (Senior Managers)	10
Middle-level staff (Manager)	28
Low-level staff (Other staff)	104
Total	142

Source: World Vision International Rwanda, 2023

Table 1 presents the target population for the study at World Vision International Rwanda, categorizing a total of 142 individuals by staff levels. It includes 10 top-level staff (senior managers), who provide insights into high-level project management practices and leadership skills; 28 middle-level staff (managers), responsible for overseeing specific projects or teams, whose perspectives are crucial for understanding the application of soft skills in daily operations; and 104 low-level staff (other staff), whose roles in project support offer valuable context regarding the implementation of project management competencies at various operational levels. This diverse composition reflects the organizational hierarchy and aims to capture a comprehensive understanding of project management skills from multiple viewpoints.

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to explore the role of soft skills in project implementation at World Vision International Rwanda (WVIR). This methodology is essential for collecting detailed data from a defined population, ensuring that the findings can be generalized to a broader context. By selecting WVIR as a case study, the research focuses on the specific dynamics within an NGO setting, emphasizing the importance of both hard and soft skills in project management.

The sample design outlines the strategy for selecting a subset of individuals from the larger population. In this study, the entire population of 142 staff members at WVIR was included due to its manageable size, allowing for comprehensive insights. As such, the sample consisted of various staff levels, including top-level, middle-level, and low-level employees, to gather diverse perspectives on the role of soft skills in project execution.

Sample size, as defined by Smith (2013), refers to the number of respondents selected for statistical analysis. Given the small population of 142 individuals at WVIR, the study included all respondents, thereby maximizing the potential for significant findings regarding soft skills and their impact on project implementation.

The researcher utilized a universal sampling technique, which involves selecting respondents from all levels of staff without equal probability of selection. This approach

allows for capturing valuable information from diverse levels of management, ensuring a holistic understanding of soft skills' roles in project outcomes at WVIR.

Data collection involved administering questionnaires and conducting interviews. The structured questionnaires targeted middle and lower-level employees to gather quantitative data, while unstructured interviews with top-level management provided qualitative insights. Data were analyzed using SPSS software 25, enabling a thorough examination of trends and relationships between soft skills and project implementation. The study also incorporated piloting, validity, and reliability measures to refine the instruments and ensure robust findings.

At every stage of analysis, data cleaning, computations, coding and analyses were done by the use of statistical methods. The data from questionnaire was analyzed in order to get information on quantitative data and was focused mostly on the role of soft skills on project implementation at WVIR. It is during the quantitative data analysis that the researcher inevitably attempted to test the research objective which was formulated for the researcher study. This was done by the first defining them and setting the parameters for the study. The researcher selected an appropriate test based on the variables defined in the study and on whether the distribution was normal or not. Multiple regression and inferential statistics were required for relationship measurement and demonstration.

$$Y = a + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$$

Whereby Y = Project implementation

a= Constant

X₁ = Leadership skills

ε = error term

β₁, β₂, and β₃ represent regression coefficients. These helped in the generalization of the findings on the relationship between organizational culture and employee performance. Multiple regression analysis was computed to establish whether the research questions was statistically supported or not at a 95% confidence level.

4. Results and Discussion

In this section, the findings of the study are analyzed and interpreted in relation to the research hypothesis. The data collected from the respondents at World Vision International Rwanda (WVIR) are presented, highlighting key insights on the role of soft skills in project implementation. The analysis includes both quantitative

results from the administered questionnaires and qualitative insights from interviews with senior management.

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Response rate

The study targeted a sample size of 142 respondents. A total of 132 respondents completed the questionnaires, while 10 senior staff members were interviewed. Out of the 132 questionnaires administered, 112 were returned, resulting in a response rate of approximately 84.8%. Therefore, the final sample size for this study included 112 respondents from the questionnaire and 10 interviewed staff members, leading to a total of 122 participants who contributed to the research. The research finally came up with the response rate of 122 (100%) respondents who participated in this study.

Table 2: Response Rate Source

Response Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaires given	112	91.8%
Questionnaires not returned	10	8.2%
Total	122	100%

Source: Primary data, 2024

Table 2 reveals that out of the 132 questionnaires distributed, 112 were completed and returned, yielding a high response rate of 91.80%. This strong participation rate indicates that the majority of respondents were engaged and willing to contribute their input, which enhances the reliability and validity of the study's findings. Such a high return rate is beneficial for obtaining comprehensive and accurate data, suggesting effective data collection efforts and respondent engagement.

4.1.2 Descriptive Statistics on leadership

This section presents the descriptive statistics on leadership skills and their perceived impact on project implementation at World Vision International Rwanda (WVIR). By

analyzing respondents' perceptions regarding leadership effectiveness, the study aims to evaluate how leadership skills contribute to successful project outcomes.

Effect of leadership skills on project implementation of WVIR

The table 4.4 presented the perceptions of respondents related to the first research objective by assessing how leadership skills affect the project implementation of World Vision International Rwanda (WVIR) projects. A scale of 1-5, was used to express the opinion of respondents where 5 = Strongly Agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Neutral(N), 2 = Disagree (D) 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD). The following table gives details.

Table 3. Level of agreement of leadership skills on project implementation

Views of respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
A project manager directs as well as guides his team in designing appropriate standards during the project design phase	112	4.5763	.59062
Project leaders assist in planning, organizing, delegating and task allocation within the project team	112	4.1186	.32475
Project leader ensures that there is a contingency plan for managing risks that may occur during the project life cycle	112	4.1102	.74860
Project leader monitors the entire project cycle as well as putting in place an action plan to the project team which leads to better project performance.	112	4.237	.4272
Project leaders build and sustain effective communication among different stakeholders	112	4.5678	.63352
Valid N (listwise)	112		

Source : Primary Data, 2024-**Key :** M=Mean ; SD=Standard Deviation

Table 3 above indicates the significant insights regarding leadership skills and their impact on project implementation at World Vision International Rwanda (WVIR). The highest mean score of 4.5763 pertains to the role of the project manager in directing and guiding the team during the project design phase. This indicates a strong agreement among respondents on the necessity of effective leadership in establishing appropriate standards, with a standard deviation of 0.59062. The relatively low standard deviation suggests a consistent belief in the importance of this leadership function across the sample. Another significant area is the emphasis on communication, with a mean score of 4.5678 for the statement about project leadership sustaining effective communication among stakeholders. This high mean reflects the respondents' recognition of the critical role that clear and open communication plays in ensuring project success. The standard deviation of 0.63352 indicates a moderate level of consensus, suggesting that while there is strong agreement, there are slight variations in individual perceptions.

Respondents also rated the importance of planning and organizing highly, with a mean score of 4.1186 for project

leadership's role in these areas. The standard deviation of 0.32475 indicates a high level of agreement among participants regarding the necessity of these skills in delegating tasks effectively. Similarly, the mean score of 4.1102 for ensuring contingency plans for managing risks demonstrates that respondents view proactive risk management as an essential leadership quality. The standard deviation of 0.74860 indicates some variability in responses, reflecting differing opinions on the extent to which this is prioritized in practice.

Finally, the mean score of 4.237 for the statement regarding monitoring the project cycle and implementing action plans highlights the perceived importance of ongoing oversight in achieving better project performance. The standard deviation of 0.4272 suggests a reasonable consensus on this aspect, reinforcing the idea that active leadership is crucial for navigating the complexities of project implementation.

4.1.3. Correlation Analysis

The findings of the correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variables are summarized and presented in Table 4

Table 4: Correlation between independent variable and dependent variable

		Leadership skills	Project implementation
Leadership skills	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	112	
Project implementation	Pearson Correlation	.788**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	112	112

Source: Primary data, 2024

Table 4 presents the correlation between leadership skills and project implementation, highlighting the relationship

between these two variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient for leadership skills is 1, indicating a perfect

positive correlation with itself, as expected. The correlation coefficient for project implementation in relation to leadership skills is 0.788, suggesting a strong positive relationship; as leadership skills increase, project implementation effectiveness also improves. The significance level (p-value) of 0.000 indicates that this correlation is statistically significant, meaning the likelihood of this result occurring by chance is extremely low.

The findings from the correlation analysis have significant implications for project management within organizations like World Vision International Rwanda (WIVR). The strong positive correlation between leadership skills and project implementation highlights the essential role effective leadership plays in achieving successful project outcomes. This suggests that organizations should prioritize leadership development programs focused on

enhancing soft skills such as communication, conflict resolution, and team management. Additionally, improving leadership skills could directly enhance project performance, prompting organizations to invest in training initiatives for project managers and team leaders.

4.1.4. Regression analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the impact of independent variables leadership skills, communication skills, and team building on the dependent variable, project implementation. This statistical method allows us to assess the relative contribution of each independent variable while controlling for the effects of the others. The multiple regression analysis was performed with all the assumptions complied with. The results of the multiple regression are presented in Table 5 to Table 7.

Table 5. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.848 ^a	.719	.708	.48113

a. Predictors: (Constant), Project implementation

The regression analysis presented in Table 5 provides valuable insights into the relationship between leadership skills and project implementation. The model shows a strong correlation, indicated by an R value of 0.848, suggesting that leadership skills significantly contribute to project implementation outcomes. The R Square value of 0.719 implies that approximately 71.9% of the variance in project implementation can be explained by leadership skills. The adjusted R Square value of 0.708 further supports this finding, indicating that the model effectively accounts for the data while considering the number of predictors. The standard error of the estimate, 0.48113, reflects the model's precision in predicting project implementation outcomes, underscoring the importance of leadership in achieving successful project results.

These findings highlight the significant relationship between leadership skills and project implementation at World Vision International Rwanda (WIVR). The strong correlation observed suggests that effective leadership is pivotal in enhancing project outcomes, indicating that leaders who possess strong interpersonal and strategic abilities can drive their teams towards greater success. The regression analysis further supports this assertion, revealing that leadership skills account for a substantial portion of the variance in project implementation success. This highlights the need for organizations to prioritize leadership development as a means to improve overall project effectiveness, emphasizing that investing in soft skills training for leaders can yield positive results in project execution and organizational goals.

Table 6. Summary of ANOVA results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	63.222	4	15.805	68.277	.000 ^b
	Residual	24.769	107	.231		
	Total	87.991	111			

a. Dependent Variable: Leadership skills

b. Predictors: (Constant), project implementation

Table 6 presents the ANOVA results, which assess the overall significance of the regression model predicting project implementation based on leadership skills. The

model shows a sum of squares for regression of 63.222 with 4 degrees of freedom, yielding a mean square of 15.805. This leads to an F-value of 68.277, which is

significant at the 0.000 level. The significance level indicates that the predictors leadership skills collectively have a statistically significant effect on project implementation. The low p-value suggests strong evidence against the null hypothesis, implying that at least one of the independent variables significantly contributes to explaining the variance in project implementation. The

residual sum of squares (24.769) with 107 degrees of freedom and a mean square of 0.231 further underscores the effectiveness of the model. These results collectively affirm the relevance of enhancing leadership, communication, and team-building skills within the organization to optimize project outcomes.

Table 7. Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.479	.313		4.732	.000
	Leadership skills	.237	.063	.200	3.747	.000

a. Dependent Variable: project implementation

Table 7 displays the regression coefficients for the model examining the relationship between leadership skills and project implementation. The constant (intercept) value is 1.479, which indicates the baseline level of project implementation when leadership skills are at zero. The coefficient for leadership skills is 0.237, meaning that for every one-unit increase in leadership skills, project implementation is expected to increase by 0.237 units, holding all other factors constant. The standard error for this coefficient is 0.063, suggesting a relatively precise estimate. The standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.200 reflects a moderate effect size, indicating the influence of leadership skills on project implementation. The t-value of 3.747 and the significance level ($p = 0.000$) demonstrate that the relationship is statistically significant, highlighting the critical role of leadership skills in enhancing project outcomes.

The findings from the regression analysis suggest that leadership skills play a significant role in project implementation, with a notable positive impact on outcomes. The statistically significant coefficient indicates that improving leadership capabilities among project managers could enhance project performance, making it essential for organizations, particularly NGOs like World Vision International Rwanda, to invest in leadership development programs. This insight emphasizes the need for targeted training and support for leaders to foster effective communication, decision-making, and team collaboration, ultimately contributing to the success of projects. Additionally, these results reinforce the importance of integrating leadership skills into project management practices, aligning strategic objectives with the development of soft skills to better navigate the complexities of project implementation

4.2. Discussion of Findings

This section presents a comprehensive discussion of the findings related to the role of leadership skills in project

implementation. The strong correlation observed between leadership skills and project outcomes underscores the critical influence that effective leadership has on successful project execution.

From the findings, the study indicated that leadership skills are fundamentally crucial for the successful implementation of projects at World Vision International Rwanda (WVIR). The strong emphasis on the role of project managers in guiding and directing teams during the design phase underscores the necessity of effective leadership in establishing clear standards and expectations. This sentiment is further reinforced by the respondents' recognition of the importance of maintaining effective communication among stakeholders, which is vital for project coherence and collaboration. The significant agreement on the necessity of planning, organizing, and risk management highlights that proactive leadership not only aids in task delegation but also ensures that potential challenges are addressed ahead of time. Additionally, the emphasis on monitoring the project cycle illustrates that continuous oversight is essential for driving project performance and adapting to changing circumstances. Collectively, these insights reflect a deep understanding among respondents of the integral role that leadership plays in navigating the complexities of project management, thereby pointing to the need for ongoing leadership development initiatives within the organization to enhance overall project effectiveness.

During an interview with a senior manager, he emphasized that effective leadership is not just about directing the team but also about fostering an environment where open communication is encouraged. He noted that when team members feel comfortable sharing their ideas and concerns, it leads to more innovative solutions and a stronger sense of ownership over the project. He further elaborated that the ability to adapt to challenges, particularly in risk management, is a critical leadership trait that has directly contributed to the success of several projects within the

organization. The manager highlighted that regular team-building exercises and clear communication channels have been instrumental in building trust among team members, ultimately enhancing project outcomes. This perspective aligns with the findings from the survey, reinforcing the importance of strong leadership and communication skills in achieving effective project implementation.

Another senior staff member from WVIR also reported that leadership is pivotal in creating a collaborative atmosphere within project teams. She stated that leaders who actively engage with their teams not only motivate them but also help in identifying potential obstacles early in the project lifecycle. This proactive approach allows the team to devise effective strategies to mitigate risks, thereby improving overall project performance. Furthermore, the staff member pointed out that regular feedback sessions are essential for ensuring that everyone is aligned with project goals and objectives. This practice not only enhances accountability but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement, where team members feel valued and heard.

From the findings, the study revealed that leadership skills play a crucial role in the successful implementation of projects at World Vision International Rwanda (WVIR). The high mean scores across various leadership competencies, particularly in guiding teams during the project design phase and sustaining effective communication among stakeholders, underscore the strong consensus among respondents regarding the necessity of these skills. Furthermore, the emphasis on planning, organizing, and proactive risk management indicates that effective leadership is not only about directing tasks but also about fostering collaboration and addressing challenges before they escalate.

Several authors have highlighted the importance of leadership skills in project implementation. For instance, Turner and Muller (2017) found that effective leadership directly influences project success by enhancing team motivation and clarity of vision. Similarly, Elkins and Keller (2023) emphasized that leaders who exhibit strong communication and emotional intelligence significantly improve team collaboration, leading to more successful project outcomes. Additionally, Dvir et al. (2023) noted that the adaptability of leadership styles to meet the specific needs of project teams is crucial, suggesting that a flexible approach can help navigate challenges more effectively. Together, these findings reinforce the idea that leadership skills are fundamental to the successful execution of projects, particularly in dynamic environments.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This section summarizes the study's key findings and offers recommendations based on the insights gained. It highlights the importance of leadership skills in enhancing project implementation, particularly within NGOs like World Vision International Rwanda. The recommendations aim to address identified gaps and support improved project outcomes through more effective project management practices.

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that leadership skills play a crucial role in the successful implementation of projects at World Vision International Rwanda (WVIR). The findings reveal a strong positive correlation between leadership skills and project outcomes, highlighted by a regression coefficient of 0.237, indicating that each one-unit increase in leadership skills corresponds to a 0.237-unit increase in project implementation effectiveness, with a statistically significant p-value of 0.000. Furthermore, the model suggests that approximately 71.9% of the variance in project implementation can be attributed to leadership skills, emphasizing their vital importance in enhancing project performance. These results underscore the need for WVIR to invest in leadership development initiatives that focus on communication, team building, and risk management. By strengthening these capabilities, the organization significantly improves project outcomes, fostering effective project management practices that align with its strategic goals and enhancing its overall impact in the communities it serves.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the study findings, this study recommends that:

1. WVIR should establish targeted training initiatives focused on enhancing leadership skills, particularly in areas such as communication, team building, and risk management. These programs can include workshops, mentorship opportunities, and simulations that foster practical application.
2. Creating an environment that encourages open dialogue among team members is essential. WVIR should facilitate regular team meetings and feedback sessions to promote transparency, collaboration, and innovation, ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.
3. Experienced leaders within WVIR should lead training sessions, sharing their insights and strategies for managing project challenges, fostering a culture of learning and collaboration.

References

- Ahmed, H. (2018). Leadership competencies affecting projects in organizations in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Project Management*, 12(3), 45-58.
- Allen, J. (2023). Strategic planning in project management: Correlating leadership with successful implementation. *Project Management Journal*, 54(1), 12-29.
- Baccarini, D. (2019). The elusive concept of project success. *International Journal of Project Management*, 17(3), 1-7.
- Belzer, R. (2024). Bridging the gap: The role of soft skills in public project management. *Public Administration Review*, 84(2), 114-125.
- Byrd, J., & Turner, J. (2021). The changing landscape of project management competencies: A focus on soft skills. *International Journal of Project Management*, 39(4), 325-335.
- Burghardt, J. (2022). The impact of leadership on project outcomes. *Project Leadership and Society*, 5(1), 22-35.
- Charkrabarti, A. (2018). The evolving nature of leadership styles in project management. *Leadership in Project Management*, 2(2), 99-112.
- Dave, M., O'Brien, J., & Roberts, T. (2020). Defining project success: A multi-stakeholder perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 112, 423-432.
- Elkins, T., & Keller, R. (2023). Leadership styles in biotechnology projects: A systematic review. *Biotechnology Management Review*, 16(2), 78-92.
- El-Sabaa, S. (2021). The role of soft skills in project management: A comprehensive study. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 23(3), 245-261.
- Fiedler, F. E. (2018). The contingency model: A historical perspective. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 15(2), 123-145.
- Frimpong, G. (2023). Challenges in project execution in Africa: An analysis. *African Journal of Project Management*, 5(1), 1-14.
- Gowan, M., & Mathieu, J. (2015). The relationship between leadership and project success: A meta-analysis. *Leadership Quarterly*, 26(3), 453-472.
- Heckman, J. J., & Kautz, T. D. (2022). Hard evidence on soft skills. *Labour Economics*, 20(4), 669-676.
- Hayes, J. (2020). Public sector project management: Bridging the gap between technical and soft skills. *Public Management Review*, 22(5), 681-697.
- Hirst, G., & Mann, L. (2024). Leadership styles in research and development: A comparative study. *Research Policy*, 53(1), 58-72.
- Kariuki, J. (2019). Leadership styles and project performance in water projects in Kenya. *Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management*, 145(7), 1-10.
- Kirsch, L. J. (2020). The importance of soft skills in project management: A call to action. *Project Management Journal*, 51(1), 10-17.
- Klaus, P. (2020). The necessity of soft skills in project management: Emerging trends. *Project Management Review*, 42(3), 3-7.
- Low, G., & Christopher, M. (2020). Balancing hard and soft skills in project management. *International Journal of Project Management*, 38(4), 291-300.
- Mascia, D. (2022). The role of emotional intelligence in project leadership. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 43(6), 793-805.
- Muguchu, M. (2018). The significance of soft skills in project management in NGOs. *African Journal of Business Management*, 12(12), 301-309.
- Muguchu, M. (2023). Project management and the role of soft skills in Rwanda. *Rwanda Journal of Business and Management*, 5(2), 34-50.
- Nziva, J. (2018). The impact of project leadership on execution: A case study of Compassion International in Kenya. *International Journal of Project Management*, 36(5), 713-724.
- Oliver, R. (2020). Leadership skills for successful project completion. *International Journal of Project Management*, 38(6), 341-349.
- Peter, J., & Randolph, S. (2019). The importance of soft skills in Rwanda's development initiatives. *Rwanda Development Review*, 4(3), 112-128.

- Rodriguez, J. (2023). Contingency theory in modern organizations: Adaptability and effectiveness. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 44(4), 517-535.
- Sampson, T. (2017). Skills required for effective project management: A dual focus on hard and soft skills. *International Journal of Project Management*, 35(4), 735-742.
- Shi, X., & Chen, X. (2016). The human side of project management: The role of soft skills. *Project Management Journal*, 47(5), 1-8.
- Shi, X., & Chen, X. (2019). Enhancing project implementation through soft skills: A comprehensive review. *International Journal of Project Management*, 37(6), 825-835.
- Watts, R., & Watts, P. (2020). Soft skills in project management: A path to success. *International Journal of Project Management*, 38(2), 123-131.
- Wadongo, B., & Abdel-Kader, S. (2019). Leadership styles and project performance: A contingency perspective. *Project Management Journal*, 50(3), 209-222.
- Yang, Y., et al. (2019). Leadership styles in project management: A systematic review. *Project Management Journal*, 50(4), 425-438.