Organizational project management governance mechanisms: Project Sponsor's barriers and enablers for project initiation

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INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND: SETTING THE CONTEXT

Organizational Project Governance
Project governance has recently become a prominent research subject because projects are increasingly spurring global economies (Ahola et al., 2014).

Organizational Strategy Management
- Project prioritization system
- Linking projects to internal governance

Governance Mechanisms
- Sponsor Support

The Role of Governance Mechanisms
These mechanisms are pivotal in ensuring projects align with organizational objectives and are executed efficiently (Chang, 2015; Clarke, 2004).

Project/Portfolio Management Project Sponsor
- Business case approval
- Roles and responsibilities
- Competencies
- Project Charter

The Sponsor Role
A key aspect of the study centers on the project sponsor, their critical role during project initiation, and how sponsors can effectively bridge the gap between high-level organizational strategies and specific project goals (Crawford et al., 2008a; Kloppenborg et al., 2006a).

- Guidance & Resources
- Engagement
- Success Alignment
- Decision-making

Critical Success Factors (CSFs)
Specific traits, conditions, or variables significantly influence project success when effectively sustained, managed, or maintained (Müller & Jugdev, 2012).

Operations
- Projects

- Guidance & Resources

Criticality of Project Initiation
The initiation phase sets the foundation for project success (Pinto & Slevin, 1987; Musawir et al., 2020).

Initiation Success

PROBLEM STATEMENT

To investigate and evaluate the critical organizational project management barriers and drivers that influence executive sponsor effectiveness in the project initiation phase.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Investigate how project governance mechanisms contribute to or limit the project sponsors' effectiveness in supporting the project initiation stage.
2. Develop a barrier and enabler matrix based on governance contractual agreements and interpersonal relationships for effective assessment and approval of the business case, creation of the project charter, and facilitation of project initiation processes.
3. Develop a framework that can be used in the initiation phase stage gate review to check that the desired outcomes or exit criteria for the initiation phase have been successfully achieved.

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do organizational project management governance mechanisms contribute to or limit sponsor effectiveness in supporting project initiation stages?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Project Sponsor Effectiveness
- Engagement with stakeholders
- Decision-making

Project Initiation Success

Organizational Project Management Governance Mechanisms
- Barriers
- Enablers

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Contingency Theory
Identifying critical success factors is not based on consistent reasons; there is no one-size-fits-all approach to project management, as project variables differ significantly (Hanisch & Wald, 2012; Kureshi, 2013).

Epistemological Approach
- Constructivism - reality is understood through individual experiences (Berger, 1967; Nørreklit, 2013).
- Coming to know is an adaptive process that organizes one's experiential world (Olssen, (1995).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature Review Concentration	Research Gap	Research Question
Project Governance & Key Dimensions	A weak comprehension of organizational project governance's impact on outcomes; Need for clarity in governance mechanisms at project initiation to aid sponsor success; Absence of a universal definition of project governance and its implication.	How do organizational project management governance mechanisms contribute to or limit sponsor effectiveness in supporting project initiation stages?
Critical Success Factors & Project Success	Need for a greater understanding of governance mechanisms on CSFs during project initiation and their impact on decision-making and relationships.	
The Project Sponsor Role & Project Success	A greater understanding of the sponsor's function and qualitative impact on success at initiating projects.	

PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Approach: Multiple Case Study
"The case study method "explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information..and reports a case description and case themes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97).

Investigate project sponsorship across different projects and organizations to provide in-depth contextual analysis.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Most project challenges emerge in the initial phases (Islam & Bhuiyan, 2011; Onu, 2012; Yemini et al., 2018).

These early stages are pivotal for the trajectory of a project's success hence, without the appropriate sponsorship support, projects risk failure (Crawford et al., 2008a; Kloppenborg et al., 2006a, 2014).

The domino effect could compromise the entire project if sponsors lack enabling factors or face significant barriers.

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