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PROJECT MANAGER'S SOFT SKILLS AND PERFORMANCE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PROJECTS IN FINTECH COMPANIES IN NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Information technology (IT) projects in fintech companies have a profound impact on the economy, playing a pivotal role in driving growth, innovation, and financial inclusion (Mutua, 2019). In Kenya, many prominent Fintech companies face various issues like long fund-raising cycles, missed out targets, and increasing losses. The main objective of this study was to assess the influence of project manager's soft skills on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County. Specifically, the study sought to assess the influence of managers' team building skills on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi county and to establish the effect of managers' problem-solving skills on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi county. The study used descriptive research design. This study targeted all fintech firms with operations in Nairobi which are 56 in total (FinTech, 2023). The unit of analysis was the 56 fintech companies while the unit of observation was 336 management employees working in the fintech companies. The study's sample size was reached at using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula. Using the formula, the sample size for the study was 179 respondents. The respondents were chosen with the help of simple random sampling technique. This study also used questionnaire to collect data relevant to this study. Quantitative data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques which are frequencies, mean, standard deviation. Inferential statistics which include Pearson correlation, and the Regression Analysis Model was used to test the relationship between study variables. The significance of the model was tested at 5% level of significance. Data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The study results were presented through use of tables and figures. The study concludes that managers' team building skills have a positive and significant effect on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County. The study also concludes that managers' problem-solving skills have a positive and significant effect on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the management of fintech companies in Kenya should enhance their stakeholder management skills. Effective stakeholder management involves identifying, engaging, and maintaining positive relationships with all parties involved, including clients, team members, investors, and regulatory bodies

Key Words: Project Manager's Soft Skills, Managers' Team Building Skills, Managers' Problem-Solving Skills

Background of the Study

"FinTech" is a compound term for Financial Technology, which denotes the organisations or the representatives of the organisations that combine financial services with innovative technologies (Fosso Wamba *et al.* 2018). Over the last years, Financial Technology (FinTech) has received considerable attention from both academics and practitioners due to their potential in digitally transforming networks of supply chains in almost every business sector (Chen et al. 2019; Fosso Wamba et al. 2018). Global funding of FinTech projects has been rising rapidly from $38.1 billion for all of 2017 to $57 billion in 2018 (KPMG 2018). FinTech builds upon Information Technology (IT) to offer financial products and services within the banking industry, with more advanced risk management, trade processing, cash management and data-analysis tools deployed by the financial institutions (Gomber et al. 2018; Zavolokina et al. 2017). Hence, the FinTech sector has applied disruptive technologies (e.g. Blockchain, Data Analytics, etc.) transforming existing business models and developing new products (e.g. cashless payments, robo-advisors etc.) in the financial services industry. More importantly, FinTech offers trust, confidence, and transparency for the systems and transactions in a field where these aspects are most required (Gozman et al. 2018; Leong 2018; Papazafeiropoulou and Spanaki 2016).

Organizations often spend a lot of resources on training and skill-building courses mostly on the hard skills which are also known as the technical skills (Lewis & Boucher 2013). However, research has proven that in addition to the mastery of technical skills, project managers need soft skills. Project managers within the FinTech sector are expected to lead complex projects and are required to have hands on skills to handle the project teams and stakeholders. Lewis and Boucher (2019) further notes that project managers require other skills other than those which are purely technical to guide their team members towards delivering their projects successful. A successful project manager is one that is not only good at managing the project but also the team members (Muguchu, 2013). Several essential soft competencies are critical for project leads; the common ones and the ones used in this study include managers' communication skills, managers' team building skills, managers' stakeholder management skills and managers' problem-solving skills (PMI, 2017).

Fintech firms have a database for their customers that aid them in giving loans and other services like paying in utility bill, they also have functional departments like HR, operations and finance that strategically improves the performance of fintech firms The key customers of the fintech include individuals as well as small businesses that access funds for running the operations. Some of these fintech firms provide peer to peer lending to customers like PesaZetu (Vives, 2017). In total, there are 56 fintech firms operating in Nairobi Kenya and they regulated by different players including the Communication Authority (CA) as well as other firms like the CBK. The sources of funds for the fintechs include angel investors, venture capital, crowd funding, bank loan, personal investment and business incubators among others.

There are several challenges that the fintech firms do encounter as they seek to operate and penetrate in the market. The level of competition that these firms are exposed to is alarming, due to other financial firms like commercial banks and microfinance as well as the savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs) (Kiilu, 2018). This level of competition has necessitated and created pressure among these firms to embrace technology in their operations aimed at enhancing efficiency.

Statement of the Problem

Information technology (IT) projects in fintech companies have a profound impact on the economy, playing a pivotal role in driving growth, innovation, and financial inclusion (Mutua, 2019). In Kenya, many prominent Fintech companies face various issues like long fund-raising cycles, missed out targets, and increasing losses. Data security has become one of the major concerns in the Internet world – be it mobile banking, payment apps, or Fintech in general (Tahir (2020).

The failure of projects is linked to project teams not being able to employ their expertise effectively during the execution of a project. Alshammari (2020) notes that having a project manager as well as project team members who are well skilled and well-trained is key for successful projects. A study of construction projects in Saudi Arabia, concluded that only 30% were on schedule (Assaf &Al-Heiii, 2019). In their research on causes of delays in projects dealing with construction, Owolabi, *et al* (2018), note that in Nigeria, about 70% of projects have experienced delayed execution. Up to 60% of projects in India are lagging when it comes to cost and time overruns (Shanmugapriya and Subramanian, 2019)

Various studies have been conducted on project manager's soft skills and project performance. For instance, Kahaso (2022) researched on project manager's soft skills and performance of projects in non-governmental organizations in Nairobi County.Mutua (2018) conducted a study on the influence of soft leadership skills of a project manager on project performance: Evidence from Kenya National Youth Development & Training Projects. Tahir (2020) research on the effect of project manager's soft skills on success of project in the construction industry. Nevertheless, none of these studies showed the influence of project manager's soft skills on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County. To fill the highlighted gaps, the current study sought to assess the influence of project manager's soft skills on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County

General Objective of Study

The main objective of this study was to assess the influence of project manager's soft skills on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County.

Specific Objectives of Study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives.

i). To assess the influence of managers' team building skills on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County.

ii). To establish the effect of managers' problem-solving skills on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County.

Theoretical Review

Human Capital Theory

The origin of human capital goes back to emergence of classical economics in (1776) and thereafter developed a scientific theory. After the manifestation of that concept as a theory, Schultz (1961) recognized the human capital as one of the crucial factors of national economic growth in the modern economy (Dae-bong, 2019). The theory is rooted from the field of macroeconomic development theory Schultz (1993). Becker's (1993) classic book, Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis with special reference to education, illustrated this domain. Becker argues that there are various kinds of capitals that include schooling, computer training course and expenditures on medical care (Marimuthu et al., 2019). The theory argues that a person's formal education determines his or her earning power.

The idea of human capital originates from the observation that schooling develops certain qualities in people and that these qualities enhance economic productivity and economic growth (Severine and Lila, 2019). Gary Becker's classic work, human capital (1964), elaborates on the notion of human capital in the context of neoclassical economics. It registers that investment in human could be viewed as like investment in other means of production, like factories or mines. In developing Becker's work further, another economist, Theodore Schultz, set out to map how rates of return from education could be calculated in countries with diverse levels of income, different attitudes to forgoing earnings to develop human capital (Severine and Lila, 2019). Human capital theory holds that it is the key competences, skills, knowledge, and abilities of the workforce that contributes to

organizations competitive advantage. It focuses attention on resourcing, human resource development, and reward strategies and practices.

According to Human Capital Theory, education is an investment because it is believed that it could potentially bestow private and social benefits (Odhong et al., 2018). According to Armstrong (2018) cited in Odhong & Were (2018), Human capital theory helps to determine the impact of people on the business and their contribution to shareholder value. It demonstrates the HR practices that produce value for money in terms, for example, of return on investment. According to Dae-bong (2019), Human capital theorists believe that education and earning power are correlated, which means, theoretically, that the more education one has, the more one can earn, and that the skills, knowledge and abilities that education provides can be transferred into the work in terms of productivity. Human capital theory as one of the main underpinning theories in this study as it is related to human capital, in this study the theory supports the human capital development variable. Human Capital Theory was used to assess the influence of managers' team building skills on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County

Lewin's Change Management Theory

Kurt Lewin's Change Management Theory is a foundational model in the field of organizational change, encapsulated in a three-step process: unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. This framework emphasizes the dynamic nature of change and the need for organizations to prepare for, implement, and solidify new practices or behaviors. The first step, unfreezing, involves preparing the organization to accept that change is necessary. This often requires overcoming resistance to change, which can stem from various sources, including comfort with the status quo or fear of the unknown. Leaders must effectively communicate the reasons for change, illustrating the benefits and addressing any concerns. By creating a sense of urgency and awareness of the need for change, organizations can facilitate a mindset shift among employees, making them more receptive to the upcoming alterations.

The second step, changing, is where the actual transition occurs. This phase involves implementing new strategies, processes, or behaviors. During this time, it's crucial to provide support and resources to employees to help them adapt to the change. This could include training programs, clear communication about new roles, and opportunities for feedback. The goal is to ensure that individuals understand how to operate in the new environment and feel supported throughout the process. Successful change relies heavily on leadership, employee engagement, and an adaptive organizational culture. The final step, refreezing, aims to stabilize the organization after the change has been implemented. This phase involves solidifying the new norms and practices so that they become part of the organizational culture. It's essential to reinforce the changes through policies, rewards, and recognition systems to ensure that employees embrace the new ways of working. This step helps prevent regression to old habits, securing the gains made during the change process and promoting sustainability.

Kurt Lewin's Change Management Theory, while influential, is built on several assumptions that can be critiqued. One primary assumption is that change occurs in a linear and sequential manner, moving through the distinct stages of unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. This perspective can be overly simplistic, as many organizations experience change in a more fluid and non-linear fashion. In reality, changes may require ongoing adjustments and iterations rather than a straightforward progression. This limitation can lead to challenges in applying the model to complex, dynamic environments where multiple changes are occurring simultaneously. Another assumption is that resistance to change is primarily a psychological barrier that can be managed through communication and leadership. While addressing emotional responses is certainly important, this view may downplay other critical factors that influence resistance, such as organizational culture, structural issues, and external pressures. Employees may resist change not only due to fear or discomfort but also because of practical

concerns related to resource allocation, workload, or alignment with organizational goals. A more comprehensive understanding of resistance would enhance the effectiveness of change initiatives.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework, according to educational researcher Stratman and Roth (2017) are structured from a set of broad ideas and theories that help a researcher to properly identify the problem they are looking at, frame their questions and find suitable literature. In this study the dependent variable is performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County while independent variables are managers' team building skills and managers' problem-solving skills.

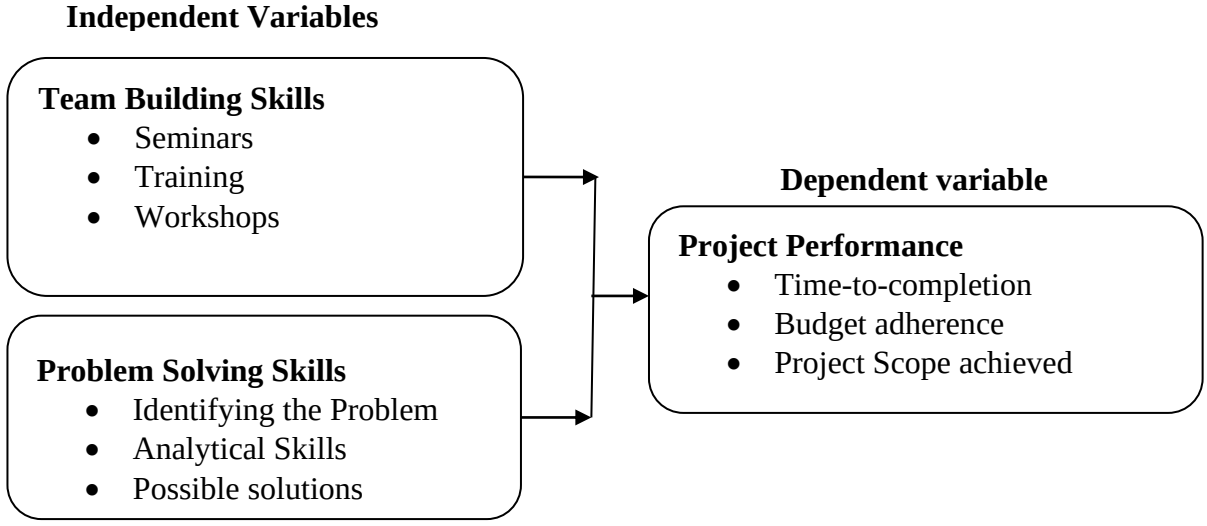

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework

Managers' Team Building Skills

Managers' team building skills refer to their ability to foster cohesion, collaboration, and synergy among team members to achieve common goals and objectives effectively (Nawaz, Ghafoor & Munir, 2019). These skills involve various interpersonal, leadership, and organizational competencies aimed at creating a supportive and productive team environment. Effective team building requires strong leadership skills, including the ability to inspire, motivate, and guide team members toward shared objectives. Managers should provide direction, set clear goals, and lead by example to cultivate a sense of purpose and direction within the team (Phina, *et, al*, 2018).

Clear and open communication is essential for building trust and facilitating collaboration within teams. Managers should communicate expectations, objectives, and feedback transparently, ensuring that all team members are informed and engaged in the decision-making process. Empathetic managers can understand and appreciate the perspectives, needs, and emotions of their team members. By demonstrating empathy, managers can build rapport, foster a supportive team culture, and address individual concerns or challenges effectively (Agarwal & Adjirackor, 2019).

Conflict is inevitable within teams, but effective managers possess the skills to address and resolve conflicts constructively (Janes, 2019). They facilitate open dialogue, encourage active listening, and help team members find mutually acceptable solutions to disagreements, fostering a harmonious and cohesive team environment (Njoki & Nyang'au, 2022). Mentoring is a professional relationship in which an experienced and knowledgeable individual (the mentor) provides guidance, support, and advice to a less experienced or skilled individual (the mentee) to help them develop their skills, knowledge, and abilities. Mentoring typically involves a more experienced individual sharing their expertise, insights,

and experiences with the mentee, offering encouragement, feedback, and direction to support their personal and professional growth (Janes, 2019).

Managers' Problem-Solving Skills

Managers' problem-solving skills refer to their ability to identify, analyze, and effectively resolve complex issues and challenges encountered within their organizational context (Elmezain, Baduruzzaman & Khoiry, 2021). These skills encompass a range of cognitive, analytical, and interpersonal abilities that enable managers to navigate uncertainties, make informed decisions, and implement effective solutions to address organizational problems. Effective problem-solving begins with the ability to analyze and understand the root causes of a problem. Managers must be able to gather relevant information, break down complex issues into manageable components, and identify patterns or trends that may contribute to the problem's occurrence (Attakora-Amaniampong, Salakpi & Bonye, 2019.

Critical thinking involves evaluating information, arguments, and evidence objectively and logically to make sound judgments and decisions. Managers must assess the validity and reliability of information, consider alternative perspectives, and anticipate potential implications of different courses of action (Ntaganda, Mulyungi & Muchelule, 2018). Managers should possess creativity and innovative thinking skills to generate novel ideas, approaches, and solutions to address organizational challenges. This involves thinking outside the box, exploring unconventional methods, and leveraging diverse perspectives to develop innovative solutions that drive organizational success (Okoye, Ngwu & Ugochukwu, 2018).

Empirical Review

Managers' Team Building Skills and Project Performance

Nawaz, Ghafoor and Munir (2019) investigated on the impact of project leadership and team work on project success. The study used purposive sampling technique. The target population was three hundred. The study found that Project manager's leadership was positively correlated to project success and teamwork also has positive relationship with project success. The study concluded that project success is decisive crew progression, not including which; exertion squads may well not be capable to happen this basic expectancy.

Phina, *et, al* (2018) conducted a study on the effect of teamwork on employee performance: a study of medium scale industries in Anambra state. Descriptive survey was used in the study. The target population was Anambra State. The study found that the coefficients of the individual predictors of employee performance-team members‟ abilities, team esprit de corps, team trust, recognition and reward and their t-values showed varying degrees of positive relationship with the dependent variable. The study concluded that no team could achieve its performance potential without developing all three types of skills mentioned.

Agarwal and Adjirackor (2019) researched on the impact of teamwork on organizational productivity in some selected basic schools in the Accra metropolitan assembly. Sampling technique was adopted for the research. The total population of the study is 242 staff members. The study found that a strong positive significant relationship between teamwork, esprit de corps, team trust, recognition & rewards and employee performance. The study concluded that teamwork which brings benefits in terms of higher productivity, better organizational performance, competitive advantage and increased product quality and quantity highly contributes to organizational productivity compared to other factors.

Njoki and Nyang'au (2022) conducted a study on the project team management practices and performance of rural electrification projects in northeastern, Kenya. The study adopted descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. The target population was the rural electrification projects in Northern Eastern. The study found that team identification, team building, had a positive and significant influence on performance of rural electrification project. The study also concluded that there are clear communication channels that enhance team communication which led to improved project performance.

Managers' Problem-Solving Skills and Project Performance

Elmezain, Baduruzzaman and Khoiry (2021) conducted a study on the impact of project manager's skills and age on project success. The target population was Egyptian project managers working in Cairo or Giza in construction industry. The study employed a quantitative research method. The study found that project managers maintain a competitive level of technical, conceptual, political and human skills, and emphasize on specific aspects of cost, schedule, and quality dimensions of project success. The study concluded that all technical, conceptual, political, and political skills are significantly related to project success, while project manager's age had no association with project success.

Attakora-Amaniampong, Salakpi and Bonye (2019) researched on the total quality management and its impact on the level of customer focus within construction project management in Ghana. The study used both inferential and descriptive survey. The target population was top managers of construction firms located in the Greater Accra region. The study found that there is no impact of TQM on customer focus and employee focus among these companies. The study concluded that both constructions firms with or without a recognized TQM policy are both customer and employee focused.

Okoye, Ngwu and Ugochukwu (2018) investigated on the evaluation of management challenges facing construction practice in Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research method. The target population was construction practitioners in the construction industry. The study found that time scheduling management, quality management, cost management and safety management were the top management challenges facing construction practice in Nigeria. The study concluded that a statistically significance strong positive correlation exists between the rankings of the contractors and professionals.

Jerotich and Nyang'au (2023) researched on the project managers' soft skills and implementation of donor funded infrastructure projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. The study adopted cross-sectional research design. The target population was 42 project managers and 2,300 direct project beneficiaries of the 12 donor funded infrastructure projects in Kiambu County distributed in its six municipalities. The study found that project managers' leadership skills and project managers' problem-solving skills have a direct effect on implementation of donor funded infrastructure projects. The study concluded that leadership skills positively affect the implementation of donor funded projects and problem-solving skills significantly affect the implementation of donor funded infrastructure projects in the County.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study used descriptive research design. Descriptive cross-sectional survey research design was proposed for this study because it involves measuring different variables in the population of interest at a single point in time. Mugenda and Mugenda, (2019) indicates that descriptive research design is a type of research methodology that focuses on providing a detailed and comprehensive account of a phenomenon, event, group, or situation. Descriptive research design is often used when researchers want to gain a deeper understanding of a topic or when they need to present factual information about a particular subject.

Target Population

This study targeted all fintech firms with operations in Nairobi which are 56 in total (FinTech, 2023). The unit of analysis was the 56 fintech companies while the unit of observation was 336 management employees working in the fintech companies

Table 3. 1: Target Population

Category	Target Population
Top Management Employee	56
Middle Level Management	112
Lower-Level Management	168
Total	**336**

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study's sample size was reached at using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula (Russell, 2013). The formula used for arriving at the sample size was.

$$n = \frac{x^2 NP(1-P)}{\left(ME^2(N-1)\right) + \left(x^2 P(1-P)\right)}$$

Where:

n=sample size

x^2=Chi-square for the specified confidence level at 1 degree of freedom

N=Population size (336)

P = is the proportion in the target population estimated to have characteristics being studied. As the proportion was unknown, 0.5 was used.

Chuan and Penyelidikan (2016) indicate that the use of 0.5 provides the maximum sample size and hence it is the most preferable. 322.69/1.8004

ME=desired margin of Error (Expressed as a proportion)

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 336 * 0.5 * 0.5}{(0.05^2 * 336) + (1.96^2 * 0.5 * 0.5)}$$

$$n = 179$$

Therefore, using the formula, the sample size for the study was 179 respondents. The respondents were chosen with the help of simple random sampling technique.

Data Collection Instrument

Data was collected using a self-administered semi-structured questionnaire. Semi-structured questionnaires were used since they enabled the researcher collect quantitative data. Questionnaires are a good method because they provide clarifications seek by respondents and they can be collected immediately after they are completed. Structured questionnaires are easy to administer, analyze and are economical in terms of time and money. A five-point Likert scale will be used to measure all variables. The lowest rating of 1 signifies a low opinion by respondent while a high rating of 5 signifies a high rating by the respondents.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure involved getting an introduction letter from the department authorizing data collection from targeted respondents. Also, before data collection the

researcher obtained an authorization letter from the National Council for Science and Technology (NACOST). Data was collected using a self-administered structured questionnaire. A drop and pick later method was used in administering the questionnaire which gave the respondent ample time to fill in the data questionnaire based on questionnaire used in previous studies.

Pilot Study

A pilot test was conducted to determine validity and reliability of the data collection instrument. A pilot study is a small experiment designed to test logistics and gather information prior regarding a larger study, to improve the latter quality and efficiency. A pilot study can reveal deficiencies in the design of proposed experiment and procedure, and these can be addressed before time and resources are expended on large scale studies. The responses from respondents were used to adjust and refine questionnaire accordingly. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2017) the pretest sample should be between 1% and 10% depending on the sample size.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Data obtained from the field was coded, cleaned, and entered to the computer for analysis using the SPSS version 25. The data was summarized to see emerging trends and issues around specific themes, which are dependent on the variables and objectives. Presentation of data was done in form of quantitative and qualitative reports which was presented in forms of tables and essay. For the quantitative reports, the tables consisted of mean and standard deviation values that were used to make interpretation of the analysis. Percentage, mean and standard deviation were used to show the frequency of responses. Tables were used to display the rate of responses and to facilitate comparison. Qualitative reports was presented in form of essay which was discussed as per the study objectives aligned with the theories and empirical study.

Descriptive statistical included frequency, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Inferential statistical analysis to be used was multiple regression and correlation analysis. The significant of each independent variable was tested at a confidence level of 95%.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Descriptive Statistics Analysis

Managers' Team Building Skills and Project Performance

The first specific objective of the study was to assess the influence of managers' team building skills on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on managers' team building skills and performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County. The results were as shown in Table 4.1

From the results, the respondents agreed that the project manager demonstrates effective leadership in building and motivating project teams (M=3.983, SD= 0.765). In addition, the respondents agreed that the project manager fosters a collaborative and inclusive team environment where team members feel valued and respected (M=3.806, SD=0.845). Further, the respondents agreed that team members feel empowered to contribute their ideas and perspectives to the project under the leadership of the project manager (M=3.785, SD=0.688). The respondents also agreed that the project manager effectively assigns tasks and responsibilities to team members based on their strengths and capabilities (M=3.718, SD=0.788). In addition, the respondents agreed that the project manager encourages teamwork and cooperation among team members to achieve project goals and objectives (M=3.698, SD=0.686). The respondents agreed that the project manager promotes open communication and transparency within the project team, fostering trust and mutual support (M=3.662, SD=0.617). Further, the respondents agreed that the project manager effectively manages team dynamics and resolves conflicts or disagreements that may arise during the project (M=3.600, SD=0.788).

Table 4. 1: Managers' Team Building Skills and Project Performance

	Mean	Std. Dev.
The project manager demonstrates effective leadership in building and motivating project teams.	3.983	0.765
The project manager fosters a collaborative and inclusive team environment where team members feel valued and respected.	3.806	0.845
Team members feel empowered to contribute their ideas and perspectives to the project under the leadership of the project manager.	3.785	0.688
The project manager effectively assigns tasks and responsibilities to team members based on their strengths and capabilities.	3.718	0.788
The project manager encourages teamwork and cooperation among team members to achieve project goals and objectives.	3.698	0.686
The project manager promotes open communication and transparency within the project team, fostering trust and mutual support.	3.662	0.617
The project manager effectively manages team dynamics and resolves conflicts or disagreements that may arise during the project.	3.600	0.788
Aggregate	**3.750**	**0.740**

Managers' Problem-Solving Skills and Project Performance

The second specific objective of the study was to establish the effect of managers' problem-solving skills on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to managers' problem-solving skills and performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County. The results were as presented in Table 4.2.

From the results, the respondents agreed that the project manager demonstrates strong problem-solving skills in identifying and addressing challenges encountered during IT projects (M=3.955, SD= 0.895). In addition, the respondents agreed that the project manager effectively analyzes complex issues and proposes viable solutions to overcome obstacles in IT projects (M=3.946, SD=0.886). Further, the respondents agreed that team members trust the project manager to resolve problems efficiently and effectively, contributing to project success (M=3.907, SD= 0.725). The respondents also agreed that the project manager encourages a proactive approach to problem-solving within the project team, fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement (M=3.902, SD= 0.881).

The respondents agreed that the project manager collaborates with team members to brainstorm creative solutions to technical or logistical challenges in IT projects (M=3.898, SD=0.683). In addition, the respondents agreed that stakeholders perceive the project manager as resourceful and adaptive in navigating uncertainties and resolving issues that arise during IT projects (M=3.884, SD=0.796). Further, the respondents agreed that the project manager effectively prioritizes and allocates resources to address critical issues and mitigate risks in IT projects (M=3.776, SD =0.546).

Table 4. 2: Managers' Problem-Solving Skills and Project Performance

	Mean	Std. Dev.
The project manager demonstrates strong problem-solving skills in identifying and addressing challenges encountered during IT projects.	3.955	0.895
The project manager effectively analyzes complex issues and proposes viable solutions to overcome obstacles in IT projects.	3.946	0.886
Team members trust the project manager to resolve problems efficiently and effectively, contributing to project success.	3.907	0.725
The project manager encourages a proactive approach to problem-solving within the project team, fostering a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.	3.902	0.881
The project manager collaborates with team members to brainstorm creative solutions to technical or logistical challenges in IT projects.	3.898	0.683
Stakeholders perceive the project manager as resourceful and adaptive in navigating uncertainties and resolving issues that arise during IT projects.	3.884	0.796
The project manager effectively prioritizes and allocates resources to address critical issues and mitigate risks in IT projects.	3.776	0.546
Aggregate	**3.895**	**0.773**

Correlation Analysis

The present study used Pearson correlation analysis to determine the strength of association between independent variables (managers' team building skills and managers' problem-solving skills) and the dependent variable (performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County).

Table 4. 3: Correlation Coefficients

		Project Performance	Managers' Team Building Skills	Managers' Problem-Solving Skills
Project Performance	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	159		
Managers' Team Building Skills	Pearson Correlation	.846**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		
	N	159	159	
Managers' Problem-Solving Skills	Pearson Correlation	.869**	.179	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.071	
	N	159	159	159

The results revealed that there is a very strong relationship between managers' team building skills and performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County (r = 0.846, p value =0.001). The relationship was significant since the p value 0.001 was less than 0.05 (significant level). The findings conform to the findings of Agarwal and Adjirackor (2019) that there is a very strong relationship between managers' team building skills and project performance.

The results also revealed that there was a very strong relationship between managers' problem-solving skills and performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County (r = 0.869, p value =0.000). The relationship was significant since the p value 0.000 was less than 0.05 (significant level). The findings are in line with the results of Jerotich and Nyang'au (2023) who revealed that there is a very strong relationship between managers' problem-solving skills and project performance

Regression Analysis

Multivariate regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between independent variables (managers' team building skills and managers' problem-solving skills) and the dependent variable (performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County).

Table 4. 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.973	.762	.833	.10129

a. Predictors: (Constant), managers' team building skills and managers' problem-solving skills

The model summary was used to explain the variation in the dependent variable that could be explained by the independent variables. The r-squared for the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable was 0.762. This implied that 76.2% of the variation in the dependent variable (performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County) could be explained by independent variables (managers' team building skills and managers' problem-solving skills).

Table 4. 5: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.027	2	6.014	69.93	.000[b]
	Residual	6.552	156	.043		
	Total	18.579	158			

a. Dependent Variable: performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County
b. Predictors: (Constant), managers' team building skills and managers' problem-solving skills

The ANOVA was used to determine whether the model was a good fit for the data. F calculated was 69.93 while the F critical was 2.430. The p value was 0.000. Since the F-calculated was greater than the F-critical and the p value 0.000 was less than 0.05, the model was considered as a good fit for the data. Therefore, the model can be used to predict the influence of managers' team building skills and managers' problem-solving skills on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County.

Table 4. 6: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	**(Constant)**	0.330	0.084		3.929	0.002
	managers' team building skills	0.376	0.095	0.375	3.958	0.002
	managers' problem-solving skills	0.387	0.097	0.386	3.990	0.000

a Dependent Variable: performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County

The regression model was as follows:

$$\mathbf{Y = 0.330 + 0.376X_1 + 0.387X_2 + \varepsilon}$$

The results revealed that managers' team building skills has significant effect on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County, $\beta 1=0.376$, p value= 0.002). The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.002 was less than the significant level of 0.05. The findings conform to the findings of Agarwal and Adjirackor (2019) that

there is a very strong relationship between managers' team building skills and project performance.

In addition, the results revealed that managers' problem-solving skills has significant effect on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County β1=0.387, p value= 0.000). The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.000 was less than the significant level of 0.05. The findings are in line with the results of Jerotich and Nyang'au (2023) who revealed that there is a very strong relationship between managers' problem-solving skills and project performance

Conclusions

The study concludes that managers' team building skills have a positive and significant effect on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County. Findings revealed that seminars, training and workshops influence performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County.

The study also concludes that managers' problem-solving skills have a positive and significant effect on performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County. Findings revealed that identifying the problem, analytical skills and possible solutions influence performance of IT projects in fintech companies in Nairobi County.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the management of fintech companies in Kenya should focus on developing their team-building skills. Strong team-building abilities enable managers to create cohesive, high-performing teams that work collaboratively towards common goals. This can be achieved by facilitating team-building activities that encourage trust, communication, and mutual respect among team members

In addition, the study recommends that the management of fintech companies in Kenya should strengthen their problem-solving skills. Effective problem-solving is crucial in the fast-paced and often unpredictable fintech environment, where challenges can arise unexpectedly. Managers should focus on developing a structured approach to problem-solving that includes identifying issues, analyzing data, brainstorming potential solutions, and evaluating outcomes.

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