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Factors Contributing to the Failure of Development Projects in Cameroon

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Abstract:
Governments and organizations, in developing countries, have witnessed project failures in their project implementation, although there might be some differences in the causes, effects and consequences of such failures among governments. This study aims at investigating factors contributing to the failure of development projects in Cameroon and more specifically, the internal factors and the external factors, as well as the strategies that can be employed by the stakeholders to anticipate those projects' failure. This study employs a cross-sectional survey research design and more specifically a sequential exploratory mixed-method approach. Data was purposively collected from a representative sample of 186 participants stratified into project management team members, community leaders and influential men and women (elites), household heads, members of projects management committees. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire while a focus group discussion was organized with community leaders and members of project management committees. The necessary methodological technical requirements were followed to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Standard version, Release 21.0 for the structured questionnaire and following the process of thematic analysis for the group discussion. It then appears that corruption, poor governance, embezzlement of projects funds and the lack of competence of the projects managers are the most prominent internal factors leading to the failure of development projects in Cameroon. On the other hand, the major concern raised by the community leaders and members of management committees is that the political environment is the most prominent external factor leading to project failure in Cameroon, followed by the technological environment and the economic environment factors. The study recommended amongst others strategies to ensure development projects success in Cameroon, to improve on procurement procedure by reducing bureaucracy delay at all levels, and unfair practices like corruption and favoritism, to improving on communication to make sure that all the stakeholders are kept abreast of the progress of the project and the challenges faced such that concerted solutions can be provided, to practice good leadership that makes sure the objectives are met while mitigating corruption and embezzlement of funds.

Keywords: Factors, Projects' failure, Development projects, Cameroon.

INTRODUCTION

The high rate of project failures in Cameroon is a course of concerned (Zipporah, 2009; ANTIC / NAICT, 2017; Amin, 2019; Bisong, 2021), given the negative impacts on the welfare of the population. The common usage of projects in all fields explains the importance of project development and implementation in the development process. This has made project management a major subject and competence in all developmental sectors. Considering the direct relationship between reaching projects' objectives and the long-term development of a country or an organization, aspects regarding projects' success and the success factors of projects are topics of great interest in our world faced with challenging economic and social conditions. Reaching projects' objectives in compliance with constraints of cost, time and performance is

usually challenging, relying on the adequate consideration of several factors of different level of complexity and in integration (Irfan, 2021).

Projects, as the main way of creating and dealing with change (Cleland and Gareis, 2006), are used to implement strategies. Meskendahl (2010) refers to projects as the central building block used in implementing strategies, therefore business and development success are determined by the success of projects from conception to implementation. According to PMI (2013), aligning projects with strategic objectives brings value to an organization or a country at large. Implementing successful projects generates positive effects on the welfare of people, influencing not just short and medium, but also long-term development.

In their efforts to strengthen the debates on project failure, Ahonen and Savolianen (2010) opine that a failed project is one that does not meet stakeholders' expectations. These expectations are related to time, quality, cost, and benefits to all stakeholders. Davis (2014) admits that these factors are perceived differently by project stakeholders due to different professional and educational backgrounds, which influence their assessment of project failure.

It was earlier argued that the factors that cause project to be perceived as a failure may be quite different from those that contribute to R&D project failure (Baker, Green, Bean, Blank & Tadisina, 1983; Pinto and Prescott, 1988). This was supported by Jeffrey & Samuel (1990) who stressed that while there are similarities R&D projects, differences predominate. Jeffrey & Samuel (1990) argued that unforeseen economic downturns or changes in governmental regulations can precipitate the failure of a prospectively successful project. Still in the frame of external factors, client satisfaction was perceived another major indicator of project performance and so far, an external measure of effectiveness as well. Socio-cultural and political interference, poor leadership and corruption were some of the leading external factors to project failure pointed out in Nigeria (Eja & ramegowda, 2019).

Several solutions have been proposed to help mitigate failure of project as to minimize loss of resources and enhance socio-economic development. Kissflow (2023) opined that to mitigate failure deriving from weakness in management, project management tools can help you avoid project failure by keeping goals in focus, assisting with resource planning, providing visibility, and facilitating communication. Dick-Sagoe, Lee, Odoom & Otiwaa Boateng (2023) suggested that the government should adopt strategies to overcome corruption, bureaucracy, and unnecessary political influence, it should cooperate with relevant stakeholders to implement measures geared towards improving the current system for procurement, supervision, monitoring, planning, and management practices to mitigate socio-political factors and some managerial issues leading to project failure. It is in this very perspective that Eja & ramegowda (2019) depicted that the resultant consequences of project failure in developing countries were slow economic growth; sector-centric underdevelopment; loss of foreign aid/grants; tougher donor regulations; loss of elections to incumbent leadership and lack of confidence in state from financial institutions. Following this concern, it was recommended that government should overhaul their policy to revert these issues and enhance the welfare of their people.

After IPMA attendance of the Pan-African conference on project management in 2016 and 2018 in the capital Yaoundé, Cameroon Project Management (CAPMA) was born and formally registered in Douala in 2019. It has 50 members from different sectors including administration, private sector and universities. With the support of the *Groupement Interpatronal du Cameroun*

(GICAM) one of the large employer organizations in Cameroon, it has organized on 23.011.2019 in Douala a workshop on project management excellence, in order to raise awareness of the importance of project management as a societal challenge (Amin, 2019).

The problem of delays in the execution of public projects is a phenomenon which has far-reaching implications on both beneficiaries and the development of affected areas and it in this footing that Zipporah (2009) complains of the failure of development projects in Cameroon. According to the author, over 2018-2021, contractors abandoned 38 projects programmed in the public investment budget in Adamawa. This was revealed by Amadou Bello, the Regional Delegate to the Minister of Economy in Adamawa, during a field visit carried out by Yaouba Abdoulaye, Minister Delegate to the Minister of Finance. According to regional tri-weekly newspaper; *l'œil du Sahel*, which reports the figures, 81.5% of the projects (worth XAF1.2 billion overall) were abandoned because the contractors went bankrupt. In 5.2% of the cases, the projects were abandoned because the public treasury failed to pay the invoices issued by contractors, we also learned. The authorities hammered that by abandoning those projects, contractors indirectly hinder infrastructural development in Adamawa, which is officially one of the four poorest regions; the three other is being the North, the Far-North, and the East. The ANTIC / NAICT (National Agency for Information and Communication Technology) (2017) reported that government poised to reverse high failure rate of ICT projects in Cameroon. The ICT sector in Cameroon has been identified by government as one of the key pillars in propelling the nation to an emerging economy by the 2035 threshold. But the high failure rate in the execution of ICT projects initiated by various public institutions in the country signals an inconsistency in the impetus needed from this sector to streamline public service delivery, trigger growth, wealth and job creation. According to a survey conducted by ANTIC in 2016 to evaluate the execution rate of ICT related projects in government ministries, over 75 percent of ICT projects initiated during the last five years failed and these statistics are obviously alarming. Olusola (2021) questioned himself why International Development projects fail in Africa thus supporting Bisong (2021) who concluded that it is no longer amazing to Cameroonians seeing incomplete projects or abandoned ones in their country. Eja & Ramegowda (2019) in the same perspective concluded that governments and organizations, especially governments in developing countries, have witnessed project failures in their project implementation, although there might be some differences in the causes, effects and consequences of such failures among governments. According to Business in Cameroon (2023), the Public Investment Budget (BIP) in Cameroon was executed at 74.99% in 2021, according to the National Committee for Monitoring the Physical and Financial Execution of Public Investment. Compared to 2020, when the rate was 92.36%, this makes a decline of 17.4%. This means that even during the coronavirus pandemic (2020), which would have slowed the progress of many projects across the country, more projects were implemented compared to 2021. The same institution reported that the execution rate of public investments projects in Cameroon rose 5.2% year-on-year to 56.10% at the end of September 2022 from 50.90%. But with a failure rate of average 46.5%, the situation is really of high concern. High rate of project failure in developing countries and especially in Cameroon is therefore established with very unpleasant statistics factoring the context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The challenges faced by human all over the world in making life better for himself has led to the development of several theories to guide scholars and development actors in conceptualizing conducive development mode and guidelines for the adequate implementation of projects that can help achieve development. This research is meant to contribute to the on-going search for

new and better adapted strategies to mitigate project failure in Cameroon, which commands a brief study of the theories under-pinning the subject matter. This research focuses on four theoretical explanations; the Realist Thinking of Hobbes, Lorenz and Hans Morgenthau (1970); the Human Needs Theory of John Burton, Abraham Maslow, Marshall Rosenberg (1990); the four theories of development, namely modernization, dependency, word-system and globalization (2001) as well as the competence theory of to Lawson (1999).

From the end of World War II until the late 1970s, general theories of existential dynamism were dominated by two streams of realist philosophical thoughts, neither of which, in John Burton's view, was adequate to explain either the persistence of "irrational" social misbehaviors or the real opportunities for their resolution.

Liberal situationalist theories on the other hand emphasized the potency of social determinants rather than the intractability of individual instincts. They suggested that conflict behaviors might be changed by altering the external situation. Strict behaviorism (Skinner, 1965), relegated instincts and other internally generated mechanisms to a metaphorical "black box", postulating that, given a certain environment or situation, people would behave in predictable ways. Social learning theories presented humans as cognizing creatures whose ideas and attitudes were largely determined by social conditioning (Bandura, 1976) while much post-Freudian psycho-analytical theory moved analogously from the primacy of instinct to family or culture based-situational determinism (Mitchell and Banks, 1996). This apparent personalist-situationalist dichotomy masked an underlying similarity. Taken at their word, the personalists held that the individual was unchangeably aggressive and the situationalists found that he was infinitely malleable. But these "inwardly driven" and "outwardly determined" models of behavior actually function as the polar extremes of a continuum. Thus, while personalists accepted "social engineering" by suggesting that aggressive instincts could be externally controlled or counter-balanced, the situationalists were unable or unwilling to reconstruct social environments to the extent necessary to eliminate anti-social behavior. In the face of social misbehavior therefore both schools of thought tended to respond as if objectionable behavior could be modified by applying the right combination of threats and rewards. Both philosophies were essentially utilitarian with conservatives emphasizing control of behavior via the administration of pain (deterrence) and the liberals via administration of pleasure (positive reinforcement). These philosophies were essentially elitist as the governing class assumed it could pacify unruly subjects through a combination of pain and pleasure to produce "consensual behavior". In practice, both tended to emphasize the 'stick' more than the 'carrot', on the ground that force must be used as the persuader of last resort. The forces of conservative and liberal utilitarianism clearly converged on the terrain of "political realism".

By solely anchoring social misconduct on the inherent aggressiveness of human nature, Realist theories perceived social misconduct as natural occurrences reducing the achievement of development projects to the use of controlling and reprimanding agencies for monitoring objectionable behavior. The analysis of realist theories is meant to demonstrate how realist doctrine, albeit their incompatibility with the dictates of good governance, continue to influence the administration (principal actor) in the success of development projects in Cameroon.

This quasi-alienation of the benefitting population from active participation in the implementation of development projects in their locality explains their passive and so far, poor participation or control, as to make sure that, what was intended to serve their welfare is really

given out to them, thus making them to believe that the fate of development projects in their communities is determined by the administration or political elites.

Also, Human needs theory was found adequate in the frame of this research. In facts, these are a powerful source of explanation of human behavior and social interaction. All individuals have needs that they strive to satisfy either by using the system, acting on the fringes or acting as a reformist or revolutionary. Given this condition, social systems must be responsive to individual needs or be subject to instability and forced change (possibly through violence or conflict)" (Coate & Rosati, 1988).

The renowned psychologist Abraham Maslow, the conflict scholars John Burton, Marshall Rosenberg and the Chilean economist Manfred Max-Neef are the principal forerunners of the human need's theory. The theory argues that, one of the primary causes of protracted social misconduct is people's unyielding drive to meet their unmet needs at the individual, group and societal levels (Marker, 2003; Burton, 1990, a, 1990, b; Coate and Rosati, 1998). It thus offers insights into a range of peace building processes that are involved in the "reduction of both direct and structural violence". According to this theory, in order to live and attain well-being, humans need essentials called human needs or basic human needs. Violence occurs when individuals and groups do not see any other way to meet their needs or when they need understanding, respect and consideration for their needs. Marshall Rosenberg supports this reasoning by stating that; "*Violence is a tragic expression of unmet human needs".* If we are able to connect with our needs and those of others', violence and destruction will be avoided.

Though Maslow posits that the potency of human needs is hierarchical in nature, he agrees with Burton (in Maker, 2003) that, these essentials go beyond just food, water and shelter. They include both physical and non-physical elements needed for human growth and development, as well as all those things' humans are innately driven to attain. This postulate can lead to mismanagement or corrupted practices which can cause project failure. In the other side, this can lead to discontent to the beneficiary people leading to social unrests.

Added to these, Reyes (2001) presented four main theories of development namely modernization, dependency, world-systems and globalization. These four theories according to the authors sufficiently explain the dynamism of development efforts and contingences that can lead to the sustainable welfare of people.

Development is understood as a social condition within a nation, in which the authentic needs of its population are satisfied by the rational and sustainable use of natural resources and systems. This utilization of natural resources is based on a technology, which respects the cultural features of the population of a given country. This general definition of development includes the specification that social groups have access to organizations, basic services such as education, housing, health services, and nutrition, and above all else, that their cultures and traditions are respected within the social framework of a particular country. In economic terms, the aforementioned definition indicates that for the population of a country, there are employment opportunities, satisfaction at least of basic needs, and the achievement of a positive rate of distribution and redistribution of national wealth. In a political sense this definition emphasizes that governmental systems have legitimacy not only in terms of the law, but also in terms of providing social benefits for the majority of the population (Pico *et al.*, 1995).

Literally, sustainability means a capacity to maintain some entity, outcome or process over time. However, in development literature, most academics, researchers and practitioners (Gray, 2010; Milne, 2013; Tjarve & Zemīte, 2016) apply the concept to connote improving and sustaining a healthy economic, ecological and social system for human development. Stoddart et al. (2011) defines sustainability as the efficient and equitable distribution of resources intra-generationally and inter-generationally with the operation of socio-economic activities within the confines of a finite ecosystem. Ben-Eli (2015), on the other hand, sees sustainability as a dynamic equilibrium in the process of interaction between the population and the carrying capacity of its environment such that the population develops to express its full potential without producing irreversible adverse effects on the carrying capacity of the environment upon which it depends. What is striking is the emphasis on the relationships among the environment, economy and society, which today are by principal part and parcel of development projects and are materialized by the environmental impact assessment that normally shall precede the implementation of development projects. Environmental impact assessment with public participation lays emphasis on four pillars characteristic of sustainable development, namely "economic sustainability", "social sustainability", "political sustainability" and "environmental sustainability". These pillars set the pace for the definition of sustainable development goals which relate to the principle of meeting human development goals while at the same time sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services upon which the economy and society depend (Cerin, 2006).

This theory is relevant in the sense that development is a prerequisite for life on earth and for the welfare of people. Development is highly determined by human actions, thus the importance of socio-cultural and political factors in shaping and sustaining the development of people and their living environment for a good and sustainable life, and which highly depends on the successful implementation of development projects at different levels.

The study finally adopted the competence theory by which we are now in a position to address several misconceptions and confusions concerning the nature of system competences that have arisen in response to earlier attempts to frame such ideas within a competence perspective (especially those arising in response to Lawson 1999).

The main point to make is that most commentators have read this earlier work as making a primarily substantive contribution. For example, it was read as defending the importance of localized network relations in general or making a case for the regional level being the most important for explaining competitive advantage (Helmsing, 2001; Kloosterman and Musterd, 2001; Oinas, 2002); arguing that production is increasingly associated with vertical integration (Freel, 2002); pointing out that competences span corporations (Juniper, 2001); or that 'thick' regional competences can compensate for 'thin' firm competences (Malecki, 1999). However, it should be clear from the above, that the main contribution of this account is not really substantive at all. Whether or not there happens to be such coherence at the regional level, or whether clusters are a viable form of competition simply does not follow from a focus on competences. It does seem to be the case that such substantive issues would need to be addressed using something like a competence approach, but there is little else that can be said at this level of generality. Instead, the point of the above is to highlight the fact that the powers and mechanisms that underlie or generate the social outcomes observed, are not likely to be open to the kind of positivistic modeling, of a deductive sort, that is so predominant in current economic research. Any sort of approach which relies on constancy or endurance at the level of events is not only

likely to be unsuccessful, if the above is correct, but is also in stark opposition to the kind of competence approach defended here. Case study and ethnographic research, which are primarily reproductive and explanatory, are likely to be indispensable.

A series of further, more specific, points also follow from the above. First, some accounts have, at least implicitly, adopted the position that only firms and individuals have competences and regional competences are simply an extension of 'industrial strategies to the environment' (Danson, 2000; Torre and Gilly, 2000). It should be clear that, whatever the merits of these accounts, they are not about regional competence; rather, they tend to mix up individual and system powers. Elsewhere, regional competences have been viewed as some kind of meta competence; a different kind of thing operating at some different level than other competences (Malecki, 2002; Foss, 1996). However, it follows from the above account that regional competences are neither over and above other competences nor are they simple extensions of firm competences. Instead, both firm and regional competences refer to the same kind of network of interdependent rules, relations, practices, etc., viewed from or under different aspects.

Competence is highlighted as one of the main characteristics of project manager and stakeholders at all levels of responsibility. If competence is not assured, development projects are bound to fail.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The study draws on other researches undertaken in the field of project management but adopts the project success parameters set by Ambe (2001), including; time, scope, cost, quality and deliverables. On the other hand, the factors contributing to projects failure in Cameroon included both internal (project management style, project procedure, procurement method, communication system, personnel competence and motivation, control mechanism, project governance) and external (social, political, physical, technological, environmental) factors. The study used a cross-sectional survey research design and more specifically a sequential exploratory mixed-method approach. In this perspective, a qualitative baseline study was conducted to gather data on factors that lead to the failure of the community projects in Cameroon. Following thematic analysis, the concepts or umbrella terms that emerged were added to those gotten from the literature to design a structured questionnaire, used in gathering data from a representative sample of the population. The study purposively selected 186 respondents over the country, including 2 project teams members from Councils in Cameroon, 2 project Personnel from MINEPAT, 10 Community leaders and elites160 Household heads (projects beneficiaries), 2Executing company's management team and10 Executing company's workers. The sampling was purposive whereby only those permanently resident in the communities in the 10 regions of the country town were involved in the study. The reason of this technique was to identify cases, individuals, best suited to help answer the research question. The sample was then stratified as to make sure that both male and female were included, community leaders separately from their subjects were considered, then some executive from the local government and funding bodies. As for the community members, they were sampled conveniently, that is according to how the researcher was opportune to come across them and their willingness to participate in the study. Concerning the community leaders involved in the group discussion, all of them were targeted in the city town, notably the council office and members of the management committees. Information was gathered using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed

borrowing from the baseline study whereby a meeting / focus-group discussion was held with the community leaders and members of management committees.

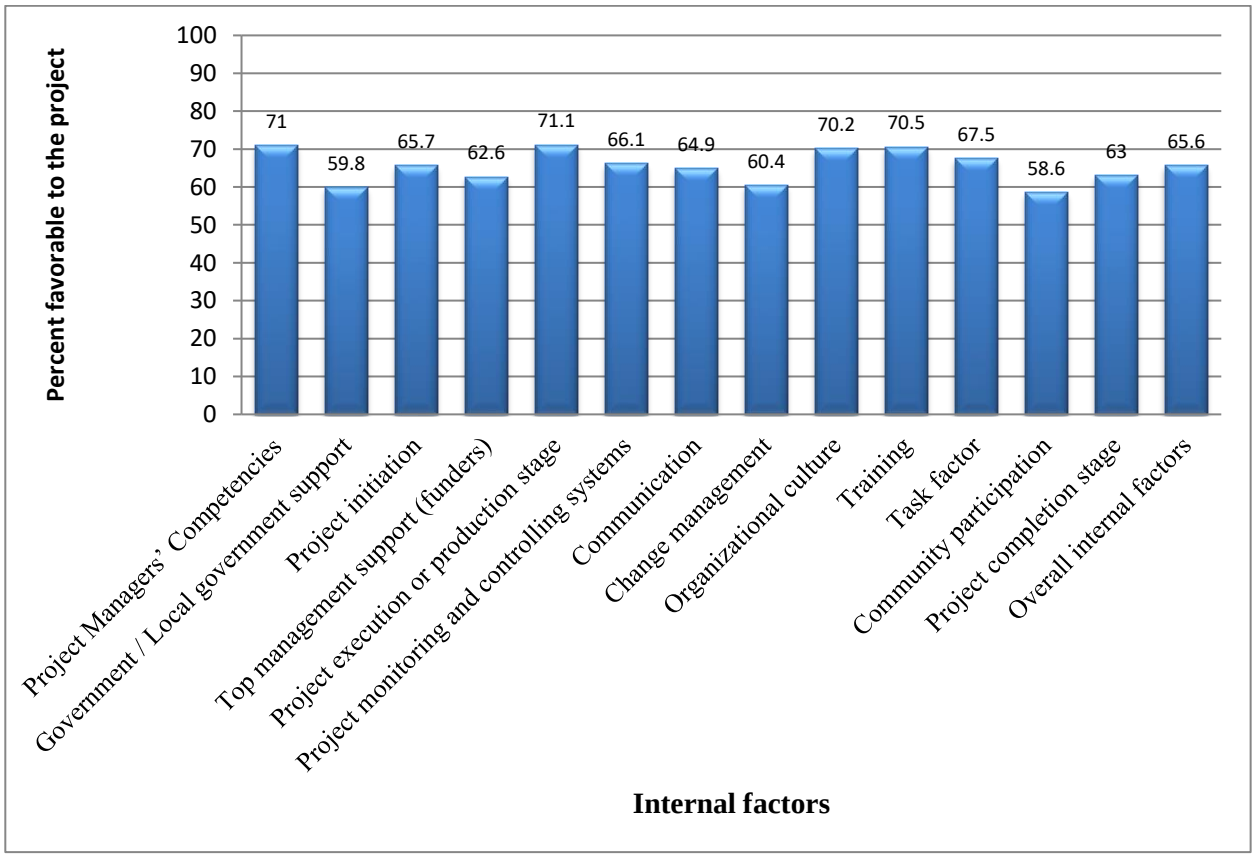
Data was also collected elsewhere with the purpose of solving the problem at hand. In this research, information from the internet, newspapers, journals, reports, text books and international publications were used. The information gathered definitely supplemented the data for better analysis. Other external sources of information were from the government archives, like the official map. Three validation procedures were used to ensure that the data collection instrument is adequate for this study notably; Content Validity, Missing Value Analysis and Reliability Analysis. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 21.0 to generate both descriptive and inferential statistics, also, the ethical issues related to this study focusing on the research participants, the researcher and sources of secondary data were taken into consideration.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

This section presents the findings based on the respective research objectives. The perceptions of the participants were used to rank the factors contributing to the failure of projects in Cameroon. The findings are summarized in graphs.

Internal Factors Contributing to Project Failure

Internal factors leading to project failure in Cameroon are summarized in the graph below and they are ranked from the most prominent one to the less.



Graph1: Characterization of internal factors

Source: Research Findings

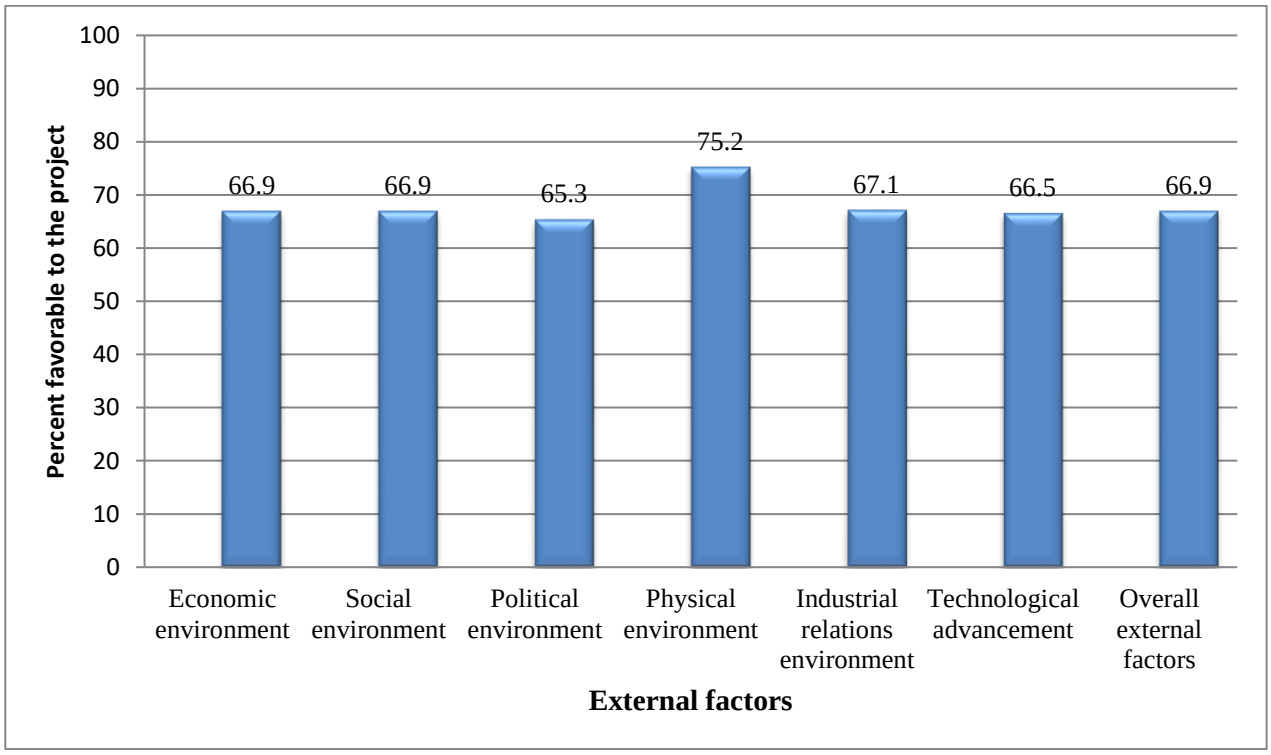
Globally, majority weight (65.6%) of the respondents' opinions aligned to the fact that internal factors do contribute to the failure of projects in Cameroon and some individual indicators really appeared as setbacks.

Embezzlement of project funds during execution was perceived the most prominent factor with 71.1%, followed by incompetency of project managers (71.0%), due to lack of appropriate skills and training (70.5%), a strong organizational culture (70.2%), good task factor (67.5). Also, poor project monitoring and controlling system (66.1%) was raised among the factors, same like scope creep including a poor project initiation (65.7%), poor communication (64.9%), overrun in project completion stage (63.0%), insufficient support of top management/funders (62.6%), poor change management (60.4%), insufficient government/local government support (59.8%) then lack of community participation (58.6%), being the least contributing factor.

It then appears that corruption, poor governance, embezzlement of projects funds and the lack of competence of the projects managers were the most prominent factors leading to the failure of development projects in Cameroon as per the explanations of the community leaders and the members of management committees.

External Factors Contributing to Project Failure

External factors contributing to project failure in Cameroon are summarized in the graph below and they are ranked from the most prominent one to the less.



Graph 2: Characterization of external factors

Source: Research findings.

In overall, majority weight (66.9%) of the respondents' opinions aligned to the fact that external factors do contribute to the failure of development projects in Cameroon, though some of the factors are most prominent.

Physical environment was perceived the most favorable with proportion of 75.2%, followed by industrial relations environment (67.1%), the economic environment and the social environment with the same weight of 66.9%, the technological environment (66.5%), having almost the same weight with the political environment 65.3%.

The indicator 'end-user involvement in the project' had the lowest proportion of those that perceived it as it could contribute to the failure of development projects (53.3%). This is quite in contradiction with one of the major concerns raised by the community leaders and members of management committees who indicated that, the political environment is the most important factor leading to project failure in Cameroon, followed by the technological environment and the economic environment. This is a glaring expression of communication gap between project manager and community.

The physical environment as indicated by the statistical trend is quite favorable but is hindered by poor town planning and encroachment in the buffer zone as explained by community leaders and members of management committee.

Strategies to Mitigate the Failure of the Development Projects in Cameroon

Table 1: Strategies to mitigate the failure of the development projects

SN	Indicators/statements	Stretched				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
	Developing a comprehensive schedule for the implementation of the project with the participation and monitoring of all the stakeholders	45.3% (73)	21.7% (35)	21.1% (34)	5.0% (8)	6.8% (11)
	Maintaining an updated project trouble-shooting mechanism with the involvement of all the stakeholders	30.4% (49)	39.1% (63)	19.3% (31)	5.0% (8)	6.2% (10)
	Employing competent staff	42.9% (69)	26.1% (42)	16.8% (27)	8.1% (13)	6.2% (10)
	Using adequate and standard materials	34.2% (55)	31.1% (50)	21.7% (35)	5.0% (8)	8.1% (13)
	Having an independent auditing and evaluation of the project with the participation of the community or beneficiary people	28.0% (45)	35.4% (57)	21.7% (35)	6.2% (10)	8.7% (14)
	Using modern digital Work Platform or project management software because while minimizing failure helps to concentrate on the successful execution of the projects	29.2% (47)	35.4% (57)	19.9% (32)	7.5% (12)	8.1% (13)
	Improving on procurement procedure by reducing bureaucracy delay at all levels, and unfair practices like corruption and favoritism	29.2% (47)	32.9% (53)	21.1% (34)	9.9% (16)	6.8% (11)
	Improving on communication to make sure that all the stakeholders are kept abreast of the progress of the project and the challenges faced such that concerted solutions can be provided	34.8% (56)	31.7% (51)	18.0% (29)	6.2% (10)	9.3% (15)
	Good leadership that makes sure the objectives are met while mitigating corruption and embezzlement of funds	34.2% (55)	31.7% (51)	13.7% (22)	8.7% (14)	11.8% (19)
	Community members should sacrifice personal interest to general interest by ensure the sustainability of the project like the requested token contribution	41.0% (66)	23.6% (38)	16.8% (27)	7.5% (12)	11.2% (18)

	Formalizing the project management committee and capacitating and empowering them to monitor and contributing in ensuring the sustainability of the project	23.6% (38)	37.3% (60)	24.2% (39)	7.5% (12)	7.5% (12)
	Transparency and fair practices by the project management committee	33.5% (54)	36.0% (58)	16.1% (26)	6.2% (10)	8.1% (13)
MRA		34.4% (720)	31.4% (658)	18.8% (393)	7.0% (146)	8.4% (176)

SN	**Indicators/statements**	**Collapsed**				
		SA & A	**N**	**D & SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
	Developing a comprehensive schedule for the implementation of the project with the participation and monitoring of all the stakeholders	67.1% (108)	21.1% (34)	11.8% (19)	3.9	1.2
	Maintaining an updated project trouble-shooting mechanism with the involvement of all the stakeholders	69.6% (112)	19.3% (31)	11.2% (18)	3.8	1.1
	Employing competent staff	68.9% (111)	16.8% (27)	14.3% (23)	3.9	1.2
	Using adequate and standard materials	65.2% (105)	21.7% (35)	13.0% (21)	3.8	1.2
	Having an independent auditing and evaluation of the project with the participation of the community or beneficiary people	63.4% (102)	21.7% (35)	14.9% (24)	3.7	1.2
	Using modern digital Work Platform or project management software because while minimizing failure helps to concentrate on the successful execution of the projects	65.6% (104)	19.9% (32)	15.5% (25)	3.7	1.2
	Improving on procurement procedure by reducing bureaucracy delay at all levels, and unfair practices like corruption and favoritism	62.1% (100)	21.1% (34)	16.8% (27)	3.7	1.2
	Improving on communication to make sure that all the stakeholders are kept abreast of the progress of the project and the challenges faced such that concerted solutions can be provided	66.5% (107)	18.0% (29)	15.5% (25)	3.8	1.3
	Good leadership that makes sure the objectives are met while mitigating corruption and embezzlement of funds	65.8% (106)	13.7% (22)	20.5% (33)	3.7	1.3
	Community members should sacrifice personal interest to general interest by ensuring the sustainability of the project like the requested token contribution	64.6% (104)	16.8% (27)	18.6% (30)	3.8	1.4
	Formalizing the project management committee and capacitating and empowering them to monitor and contributing in ensuring the sustainability of the project	60.9% (98)	24.2% (39)	14.9% (24)	3.6	1.1
	Transparency and fair practices by the project management committee	69.6% (112)	16.1% (26)	14.3% (23)	3.8	1.2
MRA		65.8% (1378)	18.8% (393)	15.4% (322)	3.8	1.0

Source: Research Findings

With respect to the proposed strategies to mitigate project failure that emerged from the baseline study and literature review in this sequential exploratory mixed-method approach, participants in their majority weight (65.8%) were of the opinion that if these strategies were effectively

implemented, they could help to reduce the rate of development projects failure in the country and foster projects' success culture.

They mostly agreed to the indicator 'maintaining an updated project trouble-shooting mechanism with the involvement of all the stakeholders' with proportion of 69.6%. This aligns with the expectations of community leaders and members of the project management committees who committed to be more vigilant in the future and to monitor the execution of their projects closely as depicted by this quotation The indicator 'Transparency and fair practices by the project management committees' had the same response-weight with the previous one 69.6%. In this perspective, community leaders equally took strong commitment as portrayed by this quotation "*Measured will be taken to make sure that project money are properly used by the contractors and that the work is properly done*".

The necessity to employ competent staff equally surfaced a major indicator 68.9%. This issue was one of the main complain of community leaders as stated "*incompetency of the contractor*". Community leaders further advocated the following "*Involving experts in the project, notably experts in their various fields*".

Then comes the indicator 'Developing a comprehensive schedule for the implementation of the project with the participation and monitoring of all the stakeholders' 67.1%. It is in this very perspective that community leaders emphasized that "*Community members will be counseled and empowered as to reinforced and sustained the participatory approach currently going on*". Inadequate schedule of activities also contributes to the failure of development projects. For instance, town planning was supposed to precede settlement and the implementation of projects, but this has not been the case in most development projects in the country, highly faced with haphazard selling of lands and completes absence of town planning.

The indicator 'improving on communication to make sure that all the stakeholders are kept abreast of the progress of the project and the challenges faced such that concerted solutions can be provided' was also paid prime consideration 66.5%, thus supporting the vision for a participatory approach advocated by community leaders and members of the project management committees. Kissflow (2023) stressed that communication in project management is the key before adding that the tools the team uses to communicate should be explained and implemented from the onset of your project. The author further clarified that to prevent communication gap, whether it is email, text messaging, a chat service, or some combination of things, one should make sure that everyone in the team understands what is expected and can use the selected technology. Communication cannot be separated from the participatory approach highly recommended since it is a major ingredient. In addition to that, people should be capacitated to be conversant with the community tools or system used in the project, and this justified while community leaders and members of project management committees were quite concerned with community education and participation.

The indicator 'good leadership that makes sure the objectives are met while mitigating corruption and embezzlement of funds' was also adopted by the majority 65.8%, as that factor happened to be a measure concern in Cameroon. It is this perspective that community leaders and members of project management committees emphasized that "*measured will be taken to make sure that project money are properly used by the contractors and that the work is properly done*".

Though perceived as quite innovative, the indicator 'using modern digital Work Platform or project management software because while minimizing failure helps to concentrate on the successful execution of the projects' with proportion of 65.6% (104) was also well adopted as community members perceived the potential to improve the management of project.

As for the indicator 'using adequate and standard materials', it is not surprising that it was adopted by the majority as well 65.2%. In fact, community leaders reported some construction and water projects issues due to low quality material. Kissflow (2023) is of the opinion that project management software can be used to offer chat, group meetings, etc. to overcome communication and management gaps.

Community members should sacrifice personal interest to general interest by ensuring the sustainability of the project like the requested token contribution 64.6%. This was major concern even at the level of community leaders and members of the project management committees.
The indicator 'having an independent auditing and evaluation of the project with the participation of the community or beneficiary people' was shared by the majority 63.4%. Though the community leaders and members of project management committees equally appreciate this aspect of the management, they however substantiated that "*Community members will be counseled and empowered as to reinforced and sustained the participatory approach currently going on*", as to empower them to properly follow up all the activities related to community project including the auditing process.

By aligning with the indicator 'improving on procurement procedure by reducing bureaucracy delay at all levels, and unfair practices like corruption and favoritism' as expressed by the majority 62.1%, community members and their leaders actually supported the need to see the funds of their community development projects properly managed.

Participants least agreed with the indicator 'formalizing the project management committees, and capacitating and empowering them to monitor and contributing in ensuring the sustainability of the project 60.9%. This aligns with the findings from the focus group discussion with community leaders and members of the project management committees who perceived that the management committees are actually established and functional, but that where they actually failed was their lack of vision to collaborate closely with the stakeholders that were implementing the project as explained earlier, before recognizing that the committees are better organized today. In fact, project management committees should be acknowledged as the pillar of community involvement and participation in development projects.

CONCLUSION

This article set out to identify, classify and rank the different factors contributing to development projects' failure in Cameroon. The survey was conducted in the 10 cities town in Cameroon with 186 respondents purposively selected from project beneficiaries, communities' leaders, project management committees and contractors. It then appears that corruption, poor governance, embezzlement of projects funds and the lack of competence of the projects managers are the most prominent internal factors leading to the failure of development projects in Cameroon. On the other hand, one of the major concerns raised by the community leaders and members of management committees who indicated that, the political environment is the most prominent factor leading to project failure in Cameroon, followed by the technological environment and the economic environment factors. The study recommended amongst others strategies to ensure

development projects success in Cameroon, to improve on procurement procedure by reducing bureaucracy delay at all levels, and unfair practices like corruption and favoritism, to improving on communication to make sure that all the stakeholders are kept abreast of the progress of the project and the challenges faced such that concerted solutions can be provided, to practice good leadership that makes sure the objectives are met while mitigating corruption and embezzlement of funds. Also, community members should sacrifice personal interest to general interest by ensuring the sustainability of the project like the requested token contribution, to formalize the project management committee, capacitate and empower them to monitor and contribute in ensuring the sustainability of the project, to ensure transparency and fair practices by the project management committee, to develop a comprehensive schedule for the implementation of the project with the participation and monitoring of all the stakeholders, to maintain an updated project trouble-shooting mechanism with the involvement of all the stakeholders, to employ competent staff, to use adequate and standard materials, to have an independent auditing and evaluation of the project with the participation of the community or beneficiary people, to use modern digital work platform or project management software because while minimizing failure helps to concentrate on the successful execution of the projects and to improve on procurement procedure by reducing bureaucracy delay at all levels, and unfair practices like corruption and favoritism.

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