



SELINUS UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCES AND LITERATURE

Consulting Projects in Ethiopia: What Really Matters

The Factors That Influence the Success of Management Consulting Projects in Ethiopian Context

By Birhanu Rodas Girma

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of
International Business Management
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**CONSULTING PROJECTS in ETHIOPIA: WHAT
REALLY MATTERS**

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MANAGEMENT CONSULTING PROJECTS IN
ETHIOPIAN CONTEXT

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BIRHANU RODAS GIRMA (UNISE3109IT)

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In

International Business Management

To

FACULTY OF BUSINESS & MEDIA



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The undersigned certify that they have read the following dissertation, examined the defines, are satisfied with the overall exam performance, and recommend the dissertation to the Faculty of Business & Media for acceptance:

Dissertation Title: Consulting Projects in Ethiopia: What Really Matters-The Factors that influence the Success of Management Consulting Projects in Ethiopian Context

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation delves into the dynamics of management consulting projects in Ethiopia, focusing on what truly determines their success. The management consulting industry has seen rapid growth, particularly as markets become more dynamic due to emerging economies and economic challenges. Clients continually seek consultants for a variety of strategic and operational issues, yet many projects fail to meet expectations. This raises questions about the factors contributing to project success, including the roles of clients, consultants, project context, and their relationships.

Objectives

The primary purpose of this research is to address the ongoing debate within the consultancy domain regarding the factors influencing success and how success itself is defined. Specifically, the objectives are:

- *To identify the key factors that influence the success of management consulting projects in Ethiopia.*
- *To understand the roles of clients, consultants, and the project context in achieving successful outcomes.*
- *To provide empirical evidence on the relationships between these factors and project success.*
- *To offer practical recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of management consulting projects in Ethiopia.*

Methodology

This study employs a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys and interviews with 392 respondents across 140 consulting projects. A comprehensive multilevel analysis is conducted to examine various independent variables such as top management support, client readiness, team diversity, and mutual trust, and their impact on key success factors such as approach and equal contribution.

Findings

Key findings from the study indicate that:

- *The perceived success of consulting projects hinges on client and consultant satisfaction, the realization of project improvements within client organizations, and the fulfillment of pre-agreed project terms.*
- *Factors such as personal benefits for clients, consultant skills, project priority, quality standards, client readiness, and mutual trust play significant roles in project outcomes.*
- *The timing of consulting projects significantly affects the approach factor, while no significant predictors were identified for the equal contribution factor.*
- *Contextual variables at the project level account for substantial variance in consulting project success.*
- *Certain factors indirectly influence success through their impact on other variables.*

Conclusions

This research sheds light on the complex interplay of factors driving success in management consulting projects within the Ethiopian context, offering practical guidance for improving project outcomes and advancing knowledge in the consultancy domain. The study explores critical factors influencing the success of management consulting projects within the Ethiopian context. Despite the growing significance of consulting projects in Ethiopia's dynamic business environment, there is limited research focusing on the determinants of their success. Using a comprehensive multilevel analysis, this study examines various independent variables including top management support, client readiness, team diversity, and mutual trust, among others, to understand their impact on key success factors such as approach and equal contribution. The findings reveal that the timing of consulting projects significantly affects the approach factor, while no significant predictors were identified for the equal contribution factor.

The study concludes that the success of management consulting projects in Ethiopia is a multifaceted issue influenced by a range of factors involving both clients and consultants. The timing of consulting projects, quality standards, and mutual trust are particularly critical.

Additionally, the interplay of these factors is complex, with indirect effects playing a significant role in determining project outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study offers several recommendations:

- ***Enhance Client and Consultant Satisfaction:*** *Ensure clear communication and alignment of expectations between clients and consultants from the outset.*
- ***Prioritize Project Timing:*** *Consider the optimal timing for project initiation to maximize its impact and success.*
- ***Focus on Quality Standards:*** *Maintain high-quality standards throughout the project lifecycle to meet pre-agreed terms.*
- ***Build Mutual Trust:*** *Foster a culture of mutual trust and collaboration between clients and consultants.*
- ***Develop Consultant Skills:*** *Invest in continuous training and development of consultants to enhance their skills and effectiveness.*
- ***Improve Client Readiness:*** *Assess and improve client readiness before project initiation to ensure smoother execution.*
- ***Emphasize Personal Benefits:*** *Recognize and address personal benefits for clients to increase their engagement and commitment.*
- ***Address Contextual Variables:*** *Consider the specific context of each project and adapt strategies accordingly.*
- ***Utilize Empirical Evidence:*** *Apply the empirical findings from this study to inform best practices and improve project management strategies.*

Contribution to Knowledge

This research contributes valuable insights for practitioners and policymakers aiming to enhance the effectiveness and outcomes of management consulting projects in Ethiopia. It adds to the scholarly literature by providing empirical evidence on the factors influencing project success and settles debates about what constitutes success in consulting projects.

Keywords

Management Consulting, Project Success, Ethiopia, Multilevel Analysis, Top Management Support, Client Readiness, Team Diversity, Personal Involvement, Mutual Trust, Consulting

Project Timing, Business Environment, Consulting Project Skills, Pre-agreement Fulfillment, Approach Factors, Equal Contribution, Consulting Effectiveness, Project Management

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Finally, I dedicate this work to the future scholars and practitioners of international business management. May this research contribute to a deeper understanding of the factors that drive the success of management consulting projects, particularly in emerging markets like Ethiopia.

Thank you all.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

The management consulting landscape in Ethiopia has experienced substantial evolution and expansion in recent years, reflecting broader global trends in the consulting industry. As Ethiopian businesses grapple with a myriad of challenges ranging from technological disruptions to market competition and regulatory changes, the role of management consultants has become increasingly vital. These consultants are tasked with providing strategic guidance, operational insights, and transformative solutions to help organizations thrive in a dynamic and competitive environment.

However, despite the growing demand for consulting services, there remains a critical need to understand what truly drives success in management consulting projects within the Ethiopian context. The factors influencing the outcomes of these projects are multifaceted, encompassing various dimensions such as client-consultant relationships, project management practices, organizational culture, and contextual nuances specific to the Ethiopian business environment.

This dissertation seeks to delve deep into the intricacies of consulting projects in Ethiopia, focusing specifically on identifying the factors that significantly impact project success. By analysing these factors comprehensively, the study aims to provide valuable insights that can inform both practitioners and academics in the field of management consulting.

1.1. Background Context:

Ethiopia, as one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa, presents a unique setting for management consulting. The country's diverse sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, services, and emerging industries, offer a rich landscape for consulting engagements. Consultants in Ethiopia often work with clients ranging from government agencies and multinational corporations to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), each facing distinct challenges and opportunities.

The success of consulting projects in Ethiopia is influenced by a multitude of factors, including but not limited to:

1. **Client Expectations:** Clients' expectations regarding project outcomes, timelines, and deliverables play a crucial role in shaping project success. Understanding and managing these expectations effectively are key to achieving positive results.
2. **Consultant Expertise:** The expertise, experience, and capabilities of consultants directly impact project outcomes. Consultants must possess a deep understanding of local dynamics, industry trends, and best practices to deliver value-added solutions.
3. **Project Management Practices:** Effective project management, including clear communication, stakeholder engagement, risk mitigation, and resource allocation, is fundamental to project success. Projects that adhere to robust project management practices are more likely to achieve desired outcomes.
4. **Organizational Context:** The organizational culture, structure, leadership style, and internal dynamics of client organizations significantly influence the success of consulting projects. Consultants must navigate these contextual factors to drive meaningful change and impact.
5. **Collaborative Partnerships:** Strong collaborative partnerships between clients and consultants, built on trust, transparency, and mutual respect, foster project success. Collaborative decision-making and shared ownership of project goals contribute to positive outcomes.

By examining these and other relevant factors in detail, this dissertation aims to shed light on the intricacies of consulting projects in Ethiopia and provide actionable insights for enhancing project success rates. Through empirical research, data analysis, and theoretical frameworks, the study endeavours to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of management consulting, particularly within the Ethiopian context.

1.2. Understanding the Consulting Profession in the Ethiopian Context

The practice of management or consultancy-like activities may have roots that stretch back for centuries. However, the formalization of management theory and the modern consulting industry are relatively recent developments. In examining the corporate landscape, it becomes evident that consultants play a ubiquitous role globally. Many organizations, particularly in

Ethiopia's dynamic and evolving business environment, seek the expertise and guidance of consultants to navigate challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

The growth of the consultancy industry, as evidenced by financial data from sources like Kennedy Consulting Research (2010), underscores its significance as both a profession and a business sector that cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, alongside this growth, the shortcomings and limitations of consultancy have also become apparent. This duality, marked by growth and identified flaws, forms the basis for the exploration conducted in this study.

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the concept of consultancy within the Ethiopian context. It begins by defining key terms such as 'consultant,' 'consulting,' 'consulting project,' and 'client.' Through this foundational definition, the chapter sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the consultancy profession.

The characteristics of the consulting profession are then examined, encompassing aspects such as the consultancy process, types of consulting interventions, variations within the profession, and an analysis of the consultancy market's growth trajectory. This exploration delves into the dynamics and complexities inherent in the consultancy profession, laying the groundwork for the motives and objectives of this dissertation.

1.3. Understanding the Terminology in Management Consulting within the Ethiopian Context

In contemporary literature, defining the roles and activities within the consultancy profession has led to a multitude of interpretations and definitions. Scholars such as Kumar, Simon & Kimberley (2000), Appelbaum & Steed (2005), Kubr (2002), De Caluwé & Reitsma (2010), and Buono (2009) have contributed diverse perspectives on management consulting and consultants. This variety of definitions underscores the complexity of defining the consultancy profession, partly due to the existence of synonyms and different types of consultants.

Kubr (2002) defines management consulting as an independent professional advisory service that aids managers and organizations in achieving their goals by solving management and business challenges, identifying opportunities, facilitating learning, and implementing

changes. However, this definition does not explicitly address the consultant-client relationship or the specific services provided by consultants. Some practitioners prefer broader terms such as business consultants or organizational consultants, reflecting a scope beyond solely advising management on specific issues.

Characteristics outlined by Kubr (2002) and expanded upon by De Caluwé & Reitsma (2010) shed light on what defines a consultant:

- Adding value through knowledge transfer.
- Providing assistance in the process, if necessary.
- Maintaining independence.
- Offering temporary services.
- Charging fees for services provided.

De Caluwé & Reitsma (2010) further add that consultants:

- Lack formal authority within the client's organization.
- Initiate engagements based on mutual voluntary relationships.
- Facilitate transformation processes distinct from outsourcing or selling standardized products.
- Deliver professional services based on specialized knowledge and skills.

Incorporating these characteristics into Kubr's (2002) definition yields a more comprehensive understanding: management consulting is an independent professional advisory service that assists managers and organizations on a voluntary basis in achieving their objectives. This includes providing independent and objective opinions to solve management and business challenges, identifying opportunities, facilitating learning, implementing changes, and guiding transformation processes without formal authority within the client's organization.

Ciampi (2009) adds that consultants offer advisory services but their advice, although independent and objective, represents an external perspective and is not an absolute truth for solving problems.

Combining these insights, the following definition is derived: "Management consulting is an independent professional advisory service assisting managers and organizations on a voluntary basis to achieve their objectives. Consultants provide independent and objective opinions to solve management and business challenges, identify opportunities, facilitate

learning, implement changes, and guide transformation processes without formal authority within the client's organization."

The mention of "managers" in these definitions reflects their pivotal role in engaging external consultants. However, it does not imply that consultants exclusively interact with managers throughout engagements.

Transitioning to the concept of a consulting project, it is defined as a commitment by an external consultant to provide opinions and recommendations to enable the client to identify and solve entrepreneurial problems. A consulting project is a temporary, finite activity with a defined beginning and end, involving a series of interrelated activities over time (consulting process) to achieve predetermined goals. Consultants aim to influence client behaviour towards desired outcomes, based on observations, analyses, and professional expertise.

Consulting projects can vary based on the nature of problems they address, ranging from individual and interpersonal issues to larger organizational and societal challenges. Schein's (1997) seven levels of problems provide a framework for understanding the diverse scope of consulting projects, emphasizing their multifaceted nature within client systems.

This comprehensive understanding of consulting, consultants, clients, and consulting projects lays the groundwork for discussing the phases and processes involved in a consulting project, elucidating the journey that consulting projects traverse.

1.4. Examining the Consulting Project Process in the Ethiopian Context

Understanding the intricacies of a consulting project involves examining the process from different perspectives, whether that of the client or the consultant. Kubr (2002) provides a neutral perspective on the consulting process, outlining five essential steps: entry, diagnosis, action planning, implementation, and termination. This schematic overview is a foundational framework for understanding how consulting projects unfold.

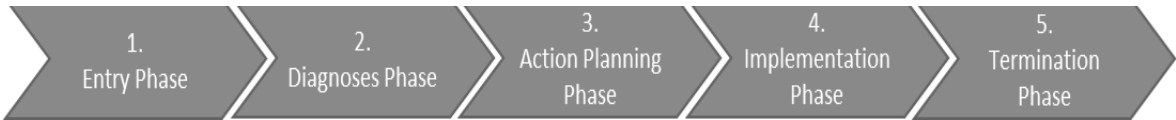


Figure 1 : Schematic overview of the consultancy process according to Kubr (2002)

Cummings & Worley (2005) offer a similar model, emphasizing the consultancy process's focus on change management. They outline phases such as entering and contracting, diagnosing, planning and implementing change, and evaluating and institutionalizing change. This emphasis on change aligns with the notion that consulting projects often lead to planned changes within client organizations. Consultants are frequently referred to as 'change-agents' due to their role in guiding and implementing organizational changes.

In Kubr's (2002) model, the consulting process commences with the entry phase, where consultants initiate contact and establish preliminary problem diagnosis. This phase sets the foundation for the engagement, outlining the scope, objectives, and initial agreements between the consultant and the client. Subsequently, the diagnostic phase involves a comprehensive analysis of the problem and purpose, leading to the formulation of action proposals to address identified issues.

The action planning phase focuses on developing solutions and alternatives, evaluating their effectiveness, and presenting proposals to the client for approval. This phase is crucial for aligning strategies and actions to achieve desired outcomes. The implementation phase, while often overlooked in traditional consulting practices, is gaining importance as clients seek assistance in actualizing proposed changes. Consultants play a vital role in supporting clients during implementation, providing training, and ensuring smooth transitions.

The final phase, termination, encompasses evaluation, report generation, and follow-up plans. Consultants and clients collaborate to assess project outcomes, address any remaining issues, and decide on future collaboration or project closure.

While Kubr's model presents a linear approach, consulting projects often follow an iterative process where phases may overlap or require revisiting. Each phase is integral to project success, and addressing gaps or shortcomings early can prevent issues in subsequent phases.

Central to a consulting project are interventions, defined as planned change activities aimed at improving organizational effectiveness (De Caluwé & Reitsma, 2010). Interventions drive the consulting process, highlighting the proactive role consultants play in facilitating organizational change and improvement. In the next section, we delve deeper into interventions within consulting projects, exploring their types and impact on project outcomes.

1.5. The Essence of Interventions in Consulting Projects

Interventions, fundamental to consulting projects, encompass a spectrum of planned change activities aimed at enhancing organizational effectiveness. De Caluwé & Reitsma's (2010) definition encapsulates the essence of interventions, emphasizing their planned nature and goal of effecting positive organizational change. Understanding interventions requires a nuanced view:

- Interventions can range from simple actions, like sending an email, to complex endeavours, such as influencing national redundancy regulations. The breadth of interventions underscores their versatility and impact potential.
- Planned interventions can be singular or part of a series, from conducting a training day to implementing a comprehensive personal development program. Each intervention is designed to steer organizations toward desired outcomes.
- The ultimate aim of interventions is to enhance organizational effectiveness, whether by creating awareness, altering behaviours, or fostering learning and growth.
- Interventions can be direct or assisting, with consultants playing a guiding role in initiating and implementing change activities.

In organizational contexts, interventions are collaborative efforts between consultants and client systems, geared towards achieving specific objectives. While consultants typically lead interventions during consulting projects, clients may also play active roles in executing interventions, such as communicating directives to employees to support consultancy initiatives.

The scope and nature of interventions vary across consulting projects, influenced by factors like internal or external orientation, content focus, and industry-specific dynamics. These variations highlight the diverse approaches and strategies employed by different consultancies and consultants.

As we delve deeper into consulting projects, we'll explore how interventions drive project outcomes, foster organizational change, and contribute to overall project success. Understanding the nuances of interventions is crucial for consultants and organizations alike,

as it forms the backbone of effective consulting practices and transformative change initiatives.

1.6. Navigating the Diverse Landscape of Consulting

The consultancy profession spans various sectors, industries, and specialized knowledge domains, necessitating a diverse range of consulting activities. This diversity gives rise to different types of consultancies, each with unique advantages and areas of expertise. At one end of the spectrum are full-service consultancies, offering comprehensive services across sectors and domains globally. These firms excel in providing end-to-end solutions, from strategy development to program implementation, leveraging in-house knowledge to deliver holistic services. On the other hand, specialized consultancies focus on specific sectors or knowledge domains, offering tailored expertise and high-quality advice in niche areas like strategy, IT, finance, HR, and operations. Examples include renowned firms like McKinsey, BCG, and Bain, known for their strategic prowess.

One key distinction in the consultancy profession is between external and internal consultants. External consultants, the focus of this study, are hired on a temporary basis from outside the client organization to execute advisory assignments. In contrast, internal consultants operate within the organization, bringing a deep understanding of internal dynamics and possessing direct knowledge about organizational intricacies. This difference in independence and organizational insight shapes their approach to consulting projects.

Block (2001) outlines another contrast between external and internal consultants, emphasizing that internal consultants may lack choice in project selection, leading to exposure to higher-risk projects. In contrast, external consultants have more discretion in project engagement, potentially avoiding projects with significant obstacles. These dynamic influences the risk profile of consulting engagements undertaken by internal and external consultants.

The evolution of the consultancy profession has witnessed a surge in demand for consulting services, leading to market expansion and increased specialization. Understanding the historical context and market dynamics is crucial to navigating the diverse landscape of consulting, characterized by a multitude of firms catering to varied client needs across sectors and domains.

1.7. The origin of the consultancy profession and the development of the consultancy market

The roots of management consultancy are a subject of ongoing debate, with differing perspectives on its origins. Some authors claim that the management consultancy profession is derived from the work of Frederick W. Taylor, a mechanical engineer in the late 19th century known for pioneering scientific management principles aimed at improving industrial efficiency. Taylor's approach, termed "Taylorism," emphasized scientific analysis and management practices to optimize organizational performance. However, others argue that Taylor's work, while influential in industrial management, does not fully encompass the breadth of modern management consultancy. They contend that true management consulting emerged later in the early 20th century through pioneers like Arthur Little, who focused on broader organizational improvement beyond technical processes.

Arthur Little's shift from technology and engineering economics to administrative advisory services marked a pivotal moment in the development of management consultancy. Subsequently, other influential figures like George Touche, William Deloitte, and Arthur Young established advisory practices, expanding the scope of consulting to include tax, finance, and strategic assistance. The emergence of Edwin Booz, James McKinsey, and Andrew Kearney further solidified management consulting as a core practice within their firms, leading to the establishment of renowned consulting names like McKinsey & Company, Booz Allen Hamilton, and A.T. Kearney.

The growth of the consultancy profession surged in the mid-20th century and continued into the 1960s to 1990s, characterized by the establishment of prominent firms like Boston Consulting Group, Bain & Company, and Monitor Group. This period saw significant market expansion, with technology giants diversifying into management consulting. However, the consultancy market faced challenges, particularly regarding regulatory oversight and quality standards, which international institutes like ICMCI and FEACO sought to address.

In the Netherlands, the consulting market evolved alongside global trends, with firms originating from diverse backgrounds such as accounting, engineering, and social sciences.

The growth of consulting services in response to economic shifts and increasing corporate demand led to the establishment of both local and foreign consulting players. The Dutch consulting market experienced rapid growth, exemplified by the rise in consultant numbers from the 1960s to the early 21st century. Major consulting firms like Deloitte, KPMG, PwC, and Ernst & Young played significant roles, with some restructuring and acquisitions reshaping the industry landscape.

The history of management consultancy reflects a dynamic and evolving profession, shaped by economic, technological, and organizational changes, both globally and within specific markets like the Netherlands.

1.8. Statement of the Problem:

Management consulting plays a crucial role in organizational development, strategic planning, and overall business success globally. In Ethiopia, a country experiencing rapid economic growth and structural transformation, the potential impact of effective management consulting is particularly significant. However, despite the growing demand for consulting services, there is a notable variability in the success rates of consulting projects across different sectors and organizations in the Ethiopian context. This inconsistency raises critical questions about the specific factors that influence the success of these consulting engagements.

Current literature on management consulting success factors is predominantly derived from studies conducted in developed economies, where market dynamics, regulatory frameworks, and business cultures differ markedly from those in Ethiopia. As a result, the applicability of these findings to the Ethiopian context remains uncertain. Factors such as client-consultant relationships, cultural and socio-economic influences, local market conditions, regulatory environments, and organizational readiness might play distinct roles in Ethiopia. Yet, there is a paucity of empirical research that systematically examines these factors within the Ethiopian context.

Despite the widespread use of consulting services by companies, the consultancy profession and market are fraught with notable pitfalls and challenges. These issues have spurred this research effort, seeking to identify and address the core problems within the consulting industry. The key problems that this study aims to explore include:

1. **Lack of Standardization:** The absence of globally accepted standards and institutionalized requirements for management consultants leads to inconsistencies in service quality and competency levels across consulting firms.
2. **Inadequate Regulation:** Unlike other industries such as banking and insurance, the consultancy market lacks sufficient regulatory frameworks, resulting in minimal boundaries for consulting activities and potential quality variations.
3. **Client-Consultant Dynamics:** Challenges arise in managing the relationships between clients and consultants, including issues related to trust, communication, and expectations management, which can impact project outcomes.
4. **Implementation Gap:** Despite sound consulting recommendations, there is often a gap in translating these insights into successful organizational implementation, leading to unrealized benefits and client dissatisfaction.
5. **Market Dynamics:** The dynamic nature of the consultancy market, characterized by rapid growth, evolving client needs, and technological disruptions, presents ongoing challenges for consultants to stay relevant and competitive.

This research aims to delve into these critical problems within the consulting profession and market, seeking to understand their root causes, impacts, and potential solutions. By addressing these challenges effectively, the goal is to enhance the overall quality, integrity, and effectiveness of consulting services for both clients and consultants alike.

1.9. Significant

The significance of this study lies in its potential to address and mitigate key challenges within the consulting profession and market, offering substantial benefits to various stakeholders:

1. **Improving Service Quality:** By identifying and understanding the pitfalls and challenges faced in consulting projects, this study can contribute to enhancing the overall quality of consulting services. This improvement is vital for clients seeking reliable and effective guidance to achieve their organizational objectives.
2. **Enhancing Client Satisfaction:** A better understanding of client-consultant dynamics and challenges can lead to improved client satisfaction. By addressing issues such as

communication gaps, trust-building, and managing expectations, consultants can foster stronger and more productive relationships with their clients.

3. **Minimizing Risk and Uncertainty:** The study can help consultants and consulting firms navigate risks and uncertainties inherent in the consultancy market. This includes addressing regulatory gaps, ethical considerations, and implementing best practices to minimize potential pitfalls during consulting engagements.
4. **Optimizing Project Outcomes:** Through insights gained from the research, consultants can improve their project management processes, intervention strategies, and implementation approaches. This optimization can lead to better outcomes for clients, such as increased efficiency, cost savings, and strategic alignment with organizational goals.
5. **Informing Industry Standards:** The study's findings and recommendations can contribute to the development of industry standards and best practices in management consulting. This can lead to a more standardized and regulated consultancy market, benefitting both clients and consultants by promoting transparency, accountability, and professionalism.
6. **Supporting Professional Development:** The research can serve as a valuable resource for consultants, aspiring consultants, and consulting firms by providing insights into industry trends, challenges, and opportunities. This information can guide professional development efforts, skill-building initiatives, and strategic decision-making within the consulting profession.
7. **Promoting Sustainable Growth:** By addressing critical issues and promoting best practices, the study can contribute to the long-term sustainability and growth of the consultancy market. This includes fostering innovation, adapting to market dynamics, and enhancing the reputation and credibility of the consulting profession.

The significance of this study extends beyond academic inquiry, aiming to make tangible contributions to the consulting industry by improving service quality, client satisfaction, and industry standards while promoting sustainable growth and professional development.

1.10. Aim of Study

The aim of this study is to investigate and analyze the key pitfalls and challenges faced within the consulting profession and market, with the goal of providing valuable insights and recommendations to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and overall quality of consulting services. Specifically, the study aims to:

- 1) **Identify Common Pitfalls:** Explore and identify the most prevalent challenges encountered by consultants and consulting firms across different sectors and industries.
- 2) **Analyze Root Causes:** Investigate the underlying factors contributing to these pitfalls, including client-consultant dynamics, project management practices, and industry trends.
- 3) **Evaluate Impact on Project Outcomes:** Assess the impact of these challenges on the success, efficiency, and overall outcomes of consulting projects, both from the perspective of consultants and clients.
- 4) **Propose Solutions and Best Practices:** Develop practical recommendations, strategies, and best practices to address and mitigate the identified pitfalls, aiming to improve client satisfaction, project performance, and overall industry standards.
- 5) **Inform Professional Development:** Provide valuable insights and knowledge that can inform the professional development efforts of consultants, consulting firms, and aspiring professionals in the field, helping them navigate challenges and excel in their roles.
- 6) **Contribute to Industry Knowledge:** Contribute new knowledge and understanding to the broader consulting community, academia, and industry stakeholders, enriching discussions, debates, and initiatives aimed at advancing the consulting profession and market.

Furthermore, anecdotal evidence suggests that challenges such as misalignment of expectations, inadequate project scoping, limited stakeholder engagement, and insufficient follow-through on recommendations are prevalent in Ethiopian consulting projects. These challenges not only hinder the immediate success of individual projects but also affect the broader perception and value of management consulting in Ethiopia.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to investigate and identify the determinants of successful management consulting projects in Ethiopia. Understanding these factors is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of consulting interventions, optimizing resource allocation, and ensuring that organizations derive maximum benefit from their investments in consulting services. This research seeks to fill this gap by exploring the key success factors, challenges, and contextual peculiarities that influence the outcomes of management consulting projects in Ethiopia.

The proposed study aims to address the following core questions:

- 1) What are the critical factors that contribute to the success of management consulting projects in Ethiopia?
- 2) How do local market conditions, cultural factors, and regulatory environments impact the effectiveness of consulting engagements?
- 3) What challenges do consulting firms face in executing projects within the Ethiopian context, and how can these challenges be mitigated?
- 4) What best practices can be identified to improve the success rates of consulting projects in Ethiopia?

By systematically investigating these questions, this research will provide valuable insights and practical recommendations for consulting firms, client organizations, policymakers, and other stakeholders involved in the Ethiopian consulting industry. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the development of a more robust and contextually relevant framework for successful management consulting in Ethiopia, fostering greater organizational growth and economic development in the region. By achieving these aims, the study seeks to make a meaningful contribution to the ongoing development and improvement of the consulting industry, fostering excellence, innovation, and sustainability in consultancy practices.

1.11. Research Objectives:

- 1) To identify the key factors those, contribute to the success of management consulting projects in Ethiopia.

- 2) To analyze the challenges and opportunities faced by consulting firms operating in Ethiopia.
- 3) To assess the impact of consulting projects on organizational performance and strategic outcomes.
- 4) To provide actionable recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of consulting engagements in the Ethiopian context.

1.12. Overview of Dissertation Structure

This dissertation follows a structured approach to comprehensively explore the research theme. The subsequent chapters are organized as follows:

- **Chapter 1:** This chapter elaborates on the research problem, objectives, research questions, and the relevance of the study.
- **Chapter 2:** A review of the relevant literature is presented, describing key theories and concepts and analysing their similarities and differences. This chapter also specifies the dependent, independent, and intervening variables and presents the hypotheses. It concludes with a depiction of the conceptual model.
- **Chapter 3:** This chapter outlines the data and research methodology employed, presenting the research design and explaining the methods for data collection and analysis of the dependent and independent variables.
- **Chapter 4:** This chapter presents the content and results of the analyses of the collected data.
- **Chapter 5:** The discussion chapter answers the research questions and draws conclusions based on the study's hypotheses.
- **Chapter 6:** This chapter provides the overall conclusions of the dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Motive for This Dissertation

Management consultancy has experienced rapid growth over the past century. According to Gross & Poor (2008), the market for management consultancy is expected to become more dynamic due to emerging markets such as India and China. Additionally, economic contingencies like crises add further dynamics to the consultancy market. Micklethwait & Wooldridge (1996) assert that the management consultancy industry will grow at twice the rate of the world economy. This growth is driven by companies increasingly relying on consultants for assistance with corporate strategy, human resource management, logistics, marketing, project planning, and more.

This chapter delves into the motivations behind this dissertation. It begins by exploring the reasons for the persistent and growing reliance on management consultants by companies across various sectors. Following this, the downsides and challenges associated with the consulting profession are elaborated upon, highlighting the pitfalls that have inspired this research. The discussion then transitions to the specific research subject and presents the primary question that this dissertation aims to answer.

The chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of the dissertation, providing a roadmap for the subsequent chapters and the progression of the research.

2.2. Why Clients Keep Employing Consultants

A review of past consultancy literature reveals numerous instances where external consultants have significantly contributed to corporate success, bolstering the profession's reputation. As Nippa & Petzold (2002) succinctly state, “Consultants are known for being secretive, high-priced, ambitious, hardworking, and consistently successful. Hardly any other profession is simultaneously more prestigious, more envied, more trusted, and more disliked at the same time” (p. 209). This quotation underscores that while consultants are highly regarded, they are

also often disliked, particularly when they fail to meet client expectations or justify their high fees. Despite such criticisms, organizations continue to employ consultants.

Semadeni (2001) identifies three primary factors driving the continued reliance on consultants: uncertainty, time compression, and legitimacy and reputation. Firstly, uncertainty refers to clients' doubts about their ability to manage complex organizational challenges independently. Consultants provide expertise that helps bring clarity and coherence to these uncertainties. Secondly, time compression pertains to clients lacking the necessary resources, such as managerial or technical skills, or the time to develop these resources internally. Consultants fill these gaps efficiently. Thirdly, legitimacy and reputation imply that hiring prestigious consulting firms enhances a client's social capital and stakeholder support for initiatives like reorganizations or mergers.

Werr & Linnarsson (2002) categorize the reasons for hiring consultants into three main areas: seeing the 'big picture,' providing unique expertise and objective insights, and increasing organizational energy and speed. Consultants offer an external perspective, cutting through internal biases and political barriers to establish a true picture of organizational issues. Their expertise and neutral stance enable them to propose effective solutions. Additionally, consultants' dynamic approaches and networks help energize client organizations, facilitating smoother and faster change processes.

- Bäcklund & Werr (2004) further outline client shortcomings that lead to the employment of consultants:
- Clients lack state-of-the-art expertise.
- Clients struggle to translate knowledge into practical solutions.
- Clients lack rigorous methodological approaches.
- Clients lack objectivity.
- Clients lack analytical skills and creativity.

These reasons underscore the value consultants bring by filling critical gaps within client organizations. For further insights, O'Mahoney (2010) and Fiona Czerniawska's blogs from 'Source for Consulting' provide additional perspectives on the consulting profession.

2.3. The Downside of the Consultancy Profession

Despite the growth and dynamic nature of the consulting industry, not all consulting projects succeed. Warren (2004) reports that only about 30 percent of consulting projects achieve their objectives. This low success rate contributes to clients' critical attitudes towards consultants, leading to demands for lower fees and performance-based compensation (Buono, 2004). The global economic crisis, particularly evident in the Dutch market, has exacerbated these dynamics (Piersma & Kakebeeke, 2013). Many consulting firms have faced overcapacity and price pressures, leading to a 'shakeout' in the industry where only the most adaptive firms survive.

Consultants often face criticism for being perceived as arrogant, inexperienced, and disconnected from clients' realities (Czerniawska, 2003; Williams & Rattray, 2004). Clients who experience project failures tend to blame consultants, further tarnishing the profession's reputation. Consequently, extensive literature focuses on the capabilities and characteristics consultants must possess to succeed. However, much of this literature is theoretical, lacking empirical support (McLachlin, 1999; Jang & Lee, 1998).

Additionally, there is no consensus on what constitutes 'success' in consulting projects, making it challenging to measure outcomes effectively (Van Aken, 1996). The impact of consulting projects is often subjective and difficult to quantify (Wright & Kitay, 2002; Appelbaum & Steed, 2005). Comprehensive evaluations of consulting projects are rare, as both consultants and clients often avoid them due to their complexity and cost (Davidson et al., 2009). This highlights a need for more disciplined and rigorous evaluations to accurately measure consulting success.

2.4. The Crux of This Research and Its Relevance

This dissertation addresses key issues in consulting projects and seeks to fill gaps in current research. The following issues will be explored:

- 1) The need to examine both the consultant and client roles, as both parties share responsibility for project success (Venard, 2001).
- 2) The scarcity of empirical, quantitative research on factors influencing consulting project success.

3) The lack of clear definitions and measures of consulting project success.

Geurts et al. (2006) proposed a model including variables such as the consultant, client, context, interventions, and outcome effectiveness. However, their model is theoretical and requires empirical validation. This study aims to empirically test and refine their model by defining 'success' and excluding the 'interventions' variable due to its complexity and situation-dependent nature.

Additionally, this study includes the client-consultant relationship as a critical variable, recognizing its significant impact on consulting success (Maister, Green & Galford, 2002). By investigating these factors across various consulting projects, this research seeks to explain why certain projects succeed more than others under similar circumstances.

The main research question is: "Why are certain consulting projects more successful than others under the same circumstances?"

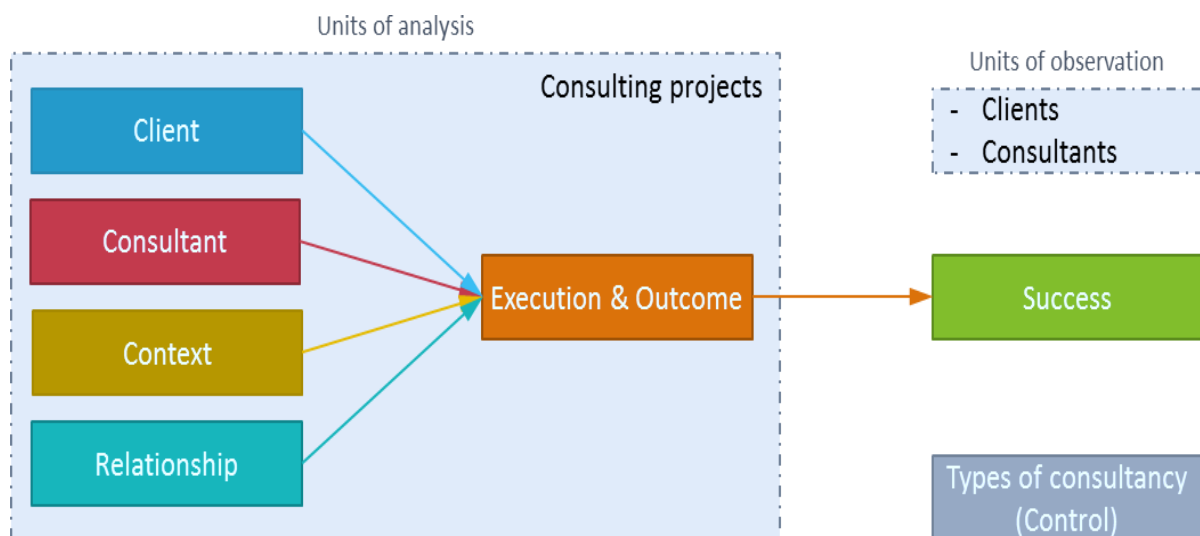


Figure 2 : The Crux of this Research and its Relevance

Sub-questions include:

- a) What constitutes consulting success?
- b) To what extent do process and outcome, client, consultant, context, and client-consultant relationship influence success?
- c) To what extent do clients influence consulting projects?
- d) To what extent do consultants influence consulting projects?

- e) To what extent does the context influence consulting project?
- f) To what extent does the client-consultant relationship influence consulting projects?

2.5. Theoretical framework

2.5.1. Defining the Success of a Consulting Project

A thorough scan of the available literature reveals that measuring the success of a consulting project is challenging, primarily due to difficulties in constructing a clear definition of 'success' and identifying appropriate criteria for its measurement. Van Aken's (1996) dissertation emphasizes that no author provides a definitive, operational definition for project success despite extensive searches across 1,111 articles. Most literature focuses on failure criteria rather than success, highlighting the difficulty in defining success concretely.

To address this, this study relies on Van Aken's work, despite its original focus on project management rather than consulting. A management project is defined as a set of activities with a beginning and an end, aimed at achieving goals using limited resources and manpower, usually executed once and overseen by an explicit principal (Van Aken, 2009). Consulting projects share these characteristics but involve external consultants and often have more abstract, flexible outcomes. The similarities justify the application of Van Aken's definition to consulting projects.

Van Aken (1996) defines project success as the level of satisfaction perceived by the involved actors as a result of the project outcomes. This satisfaction-based definition includes all individuals, groups, or organizations connected to the project outcomes, which can be tangible results like reports or advice. Van Aken argues against using time, money, and revenue as criteria for success due to their variability and context-dependent nature. Satisfaction, however, encompasses diverse criteria relevant to different actors, making it a more robust measure of success.

McLachlin (2000) provides a similar definition specific to consulting, stating that a consulting engagement is successful if the client is satisfied that the consultant has met expectations by improving performance, capabilities, and/or organizational culture without worsening any category. Additionally, the consultant must feel that their reputation has been enhanced, with future revenue potential, regardless of immediate income.

Patterson, Johnson, and Spreng (1997) reinforce this definition, finding that satisfaction results from meeting expectations and is crucial for repeat business, a key success measure for consultants. Consulting firms often gauge success by client willingness to recommend services, indicating satisfaction and potential for future business.

Both Van Aken and McLachlin underscore satisfaction as the core of measuring project success. Satisfaction covers diverse individual criteria, making it unnecessary to list all possible criteria. Including various actors in measuring success ensures a comprehensive view of criteria considered important by different stakeholders.

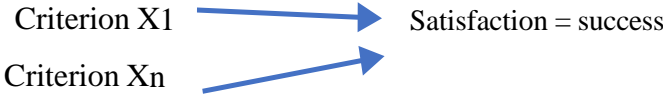


Figure 3 : Conceptual essence of McLachlin and Van Aken.

While Van Aken (1996) and McLachlin (2000) emphasize satisfaction as the core of measuring the success of a consulting project, other scholars argue that satisfaction should be considered one of several criteria rather than the sole measure of success. Authors such as Gable (1996), Kumar & Simon (2001), De Caluwé & Stoppelenburg (2004), and Philips (2000) suggest a broader framework for evaluating success.

Table 1 : Philips' (2000) Six Criteria for Measuring Success

Criterion	Description
1. Reaction and Planned Action	Measures participants' initial reactions to the consulting engagement and their intentions to apply what they have learned.
2. Learning	Assesses the extent to which participants have acquired the intended knowledge, skills, and attitudes from the consulting engagement.
3. Application and Implementation	Evaluates the degree to which participants apply the acquired knowledge and skills in their work environment.
1. Business Impact	Measures the effect of the consulting engagement on business performance indicators such as productivity, quality, and customer satisfaction.
5. Return on Investment (ROI)	Calculates the financial return on the consulting investment by comparing the monetary benefits to the costs of the engagement.
6. Client Satisfaction	Assesses the overall satisfaction of the client with the consulting engagement, including the perceived value and effectiveness of the

	consultant's work.
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One major argument against satisfaction being the core measure is that satisfaction is inherently subjective. It can vary significantly among different actors and over time, making it susceptible to individual biases. As such, relying solely on satisfaction to label a project as successful can be problematic. These authors often use terms like effectiveness or quality interchangeably with success, aiming to develop a comprehensive framework that provides a more objective evaluation of a consulting project.

To illustrate the opposition to satisfaction being the primary measure of success, consider the following conceptual scheme:

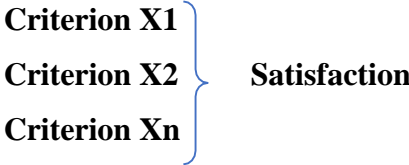


Figure 4 : Conceptual Essence of Alternative Success Measures

Here, satisfaction is one of several criteria used to determine the overall success of a consulting project. This multi-criteria approach provides a more balanced and less biased assessment of project success.

Philips' (2000) Six Criteria for Measuring Success

Philips (2000) proposes a more comprehensive framework consisting of six criteria to evaluate the success of consulting projects. This approach addresses the need for a mix of subjective and objective measures to provide a holistic view of project outcomes. The table below outlines these six criteria:

By incorporating these criteria, Philips' framework ensures a more nuanced and comprehensive evaluation of consulting project success. This multi-criteria approach aligns with the perspectives of Gable, Kumar & Simon, and De Caluwé & Stoppelenburg, who advocate for a balanced assessment that goes beyond subjective satisfaction.

The literature presents divergent views on how to define and measure the success of consulting projects. While some scholars emphasize satisfaction as the core measure, others argue for a multi-criteria approach that includes both subjective and objective indicators. This study acknowledges the validity of both perspectives and aims to integrate these approaches

to provide a more robust evaluation framework. By combining satisfaction with other criteria such as learning, application, business impact, and ROI, this study seeks to offer a comprehensive method for assessing the success of consulting projects.

Assessment Factors about the Execution and Outcome of Consulting Projects that Influence Success in the Ethiopian Context

Understanding the factors that influence the success of consulting projects in Ethiopia is essential for both local and international practitioners and researchers. These factors can be broadly categorized into those related to the execution of the project and those related to the outcomes. Both sets of factors play a significant role in determining the overall success of a consulting engagement in Ethiopia. This section explores these assessment factors in detail.

Factors Related to the Execution of Consulting Projects

1. Client-Consultant Relationship

- **Trust and Communication:** Trust between the client and the consultant is fundamental. In Ethiopia, where relationships are often built on personal trust and strong communication, ensuring open and transparent communication channels is vital for aligning expectations and addressing issues promptly.
- **Engagement and Collaboration:** Active involvement of both parties fosters a collaborative environment. Ethiopian clients' commitment to implementing recommendations is as critical as the consultant's expertise.

2. Project Planning and Management

- **Clear Objectives and Scope:** Defining clear objectives and a well-articulated scope at the outset helps in setting realistic expectations and provides a roadmap for the project. This is particularly important in Ethiopia, where project environments can be complex and dynamic.
- **Resource Allocation:** Adequate allocation of resources, including time, budget, and personnel, is essential for the successful execution of the project. In Ethiopia, where resources can sometimes be constrained, efficient management and utilization are critical.

3. Methodology and Tools

- **Appropriate Methodological Approach:** Utilizing suitable methodologies and tools that fit the project's needs can significantly enhance the effectiveness of the consulting engagement. Adaptation to local contexts and conditions in Ethiopia is crucial.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** The ability to adapt methodologies and approaches in response to emerging challenges or changing client needs is crucial for project success. Ethiopian projects often require flexibility to navigate local challenges.

4. Performance Monitoring and Feedback

- **Regular Progress Reviews:** Conducting regular reviews and providing feedback ensures that the project stays on track and allows for timely adjustments. In Ethiopia, this can help manage the uncertainties and changes in the project environment.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Emphasizing continuous improvement throughout the project lifecycle can lead to better outcomes and higher client satisfaction. This aligns with Ethiopia's development goals and the drive for sustainable growth.

Factors Related to the Outcomes of Consulting Projects

1. Achievement of Project Goals

- **Alignment with Client's Strategic Objectives:** Ensuring that the project outcomes align with the client's strategic goals is a key determinant of success. In Ethiopia, this means aligning with national development plans and sector-specific strategies.
- **Measurable Results:** Delivering tangible and measurable results, such as improved performance metrics or successful implementation of recommendations, is essential. This is particularly important in demonstrating the value of consulting projects in Ethiopia.

2. Satisfaction of Stakeholders

- **Client Satisfaction:** Client satisfaction is a critical measure of success. It encompasses meeting or exceeding client expectations regarding project outcomes. In Ethiopia, where client expectations may vary widely, understanding and managing these expectations is crucial.

- **Consultant Satisfaction:** The consultant's satisfaction, in terms of professional fulfilment and enhanced reputation, also plays a role in defining project success. This is important for building long-term relationships and future business opportunities in Ethiopia.

3. Impact on Organizational Performance

- **Operational Improvements:** Positive changes in the client's operational efficiency, productivity, and quality of work are indicators of a successful consulting engagement. In Ethiopia, these improvements are often needed to enhance competitiveness and growth.
- **Financial Performance:** Improvements in financial performance metrics, such as cost savings or revenue growth, are often used to assess the impact of consulting projects. This is crucial in demonstrating the economic benefits of consulting in Ethiopia.

4. Sustainability of Results

- **Long-term Benefits:** Ensuring that the benefits of the consulting project are sustainable over the long term is crucial. In Ethiopia, this includes alignment with sustainable development goals and ensuring that improvements are maintained beyond the project's duration.
- **Capability Building:** Enhancing the client's capabilities, such as skills development and knowledge transfer, ensures that the organization can independently sustain improvements. This is particularly important in Ethiopia, where building local capacity is a national priority.

The success of consulting projects in Ethiopia is influenced by a multitude of factors related to both the execution and the outcomes of the project. By considering a comprehensive set of criteria—including client-consultant relationship, project planning and management, methodology, performance monitoring, achievement of goals, stakeholder satisfaction, impact on organizational performance, and sustainability of results—this study aims to provide a robust framework for assessing consulting project success. The integration of both subjective measures, like satisfaction, and objective measures, like financial performance and operational improvements, offers a balanced approach to evaluation in the Ethiopian context.

2.6. Consultant Influences in the Ethiopian Context

As discussed in the first chapter, much has been written about consultants and the consulting processes. Authors such as McLachlin (1999) and Jang & Lee (1998) highlighted the contributively factors of consultants and the process of a consulting project. Gable (1996) and Appelbaum & Steed (2005) demonstrated that a significant portion of the variation in ‘success’ might be explained by the contributively factors from the consultant. This study, therefore, must consider these contributively factors within the context of consulting projects in Ethiopia. Given the extensive literature on consultants and their competencies, this section focuses on the aspects most relevant to this study.

2.6.1. Consultant Competence Framework

According to Maister (2003), a competent consultant develops along three major pillars: the commercial pillar, the managerial pillar, and the professional pillar. De Caluwé & Vermaak (2006) describe this as the “triple ladder” concept, where consultants grow in a variety of competencies through these pillars. This framework is applicable in the Ethiopian context to understand how consultants can enhance the success of their projects.

1. Commercial Pillar:

- **Sales and Acquisition:** This involves not only the ability to acquire new clients but also maintaining strong social interactions with existing clients. In Ethiopia, this means building trust and maintaining long-term relationships, which are crucial for sustained business success.
- **Social Aspect:** The social competence of a consultant, including their ability to network and build relationships, is vital. This is particularly important in Ethiopia, where business is often conducted based on personal relationships and trust.

2. Managerial Pillar:

- **Project and Program Management:** Effective project management skills are crucial. This includes planning, execution, monitoring, and controlling projects to ensure they meet their objectives within time and budget constraints.
- **Efficiency and Effectiveness:** Consultants must apply their knowledge in a way that enhances the client’s operational efficiency and effectiveness. In Ethiopia, where resources can be limited, efficient management is particularly critical.

3. Professional Pillar:

- **Content Expertise:** Consultants must have deep knowledge and expertise in specific markets, organizations, and methods. This includes understanding local market dynamics, regulations, and industry-specific challenges in Ethiopia.
- **Technical Skills:** Mastery of specific technical skills and methodologies, such as strategic analysis and business process optimization, is essential. This is akin to the professional pillar in Maister's framework and the technical pillar in Block's model.

Block's Competence Model

Block (2001) presents a similar model with three pillars: technical competences, interpersonal competences, and consulting competences.

- 1) **Technical Competences:** Similar to Maister's professional pillar, this involves having the necessary technical knowledge and skills relevant to the client's industry and the consulting task.
- 2) **Interpersonal Competences:** This includes communication, relationship-building, and the ability to work effectively with clients and team members. In the Ethiopian context, strong interpersonal skills are essential due to the cultural emphasis on personal relationships.
- 3) **Consulting Competences:** These are specific to the consulting profession and involve guiding clients through the consulting process, from problem definition to solution implementation.

2.7. Integrating Competence Models

Both Maister and Block's models highlight the importance of knowledge (content) and skills (process). In the Ethiopian context, consultants must balance technical expertise with strong interpersonal and consulting skills to navigate the local business environment effectively.

2.8. Hypothesis Development

Based on these frameworks, the hypothesis for this study is:

H2: The execution and outcome of consulting projects are positively influenced by the knowledge possessed and applied by consultants.

This hypothesis posits that the more relevant knowledge and skills a consultant brings to a project, the better the execution and outcomes. In Ethiopia, this includes understanding local market conditions, regulatory environments, and cultural nuances, as well as possessing strong project management and interpersonal skills.

In the Ethiopian context, the success of consulting projects is heavily influenced by the competencies of the consultants. By developing along the commercial, managerial, and professional pillars, and by integrating technical, interpersonal, and consulting competences, consultants can enhance their effectiveness and contribute more significantly to the success of their projects. This competency development not only aids in the execution of consulting projects but also ensures that the outcomes align with the client's strategic goals and operational needs.

The Process Aspect

The process aspect refers to the competencies consultants possess to properly execute a consulting project. De Caluwé & Reitsma (2010) define competence broadly as "something that an individual can do very well," which captures the essence of various definitions of competencies. In their extensive study, they identified six basic domains of competencies necessary for successfully executing a consulting project, regardless of the specific approach or intervention.

Six Basic Domains and Corresponding Competencies

1. Showing Resilience (Flexibility)

- **Definition:** The ability to adapt one's style or approach when new opportunities or problems arise.
- **Importance:** Consultants must adjust their behaviour to achieve goals when unexpected issues or chances occur during the engagement.
- **Examples:** Changing strategies in response to client feedback, adapting to new market conditions, or incorporating new information into the project plan.

2. Analysing (Analytical Skills, Conceptual Thinking, Learning Orientation, and Creativity)

- **Analytical Skills:** Systematically investigating and dissecting problems, questions, and relevant information.
- **Conceptual Thinking:** Placing problems or situations in a broader context to gain deeper insights.
- **Learning Orientation:** Paying attention to and effectively utilizing new information.
- **Creativity:** Coming up with innovative solutions or methods.
- **Importance:** These skills are crucial for understanding the root causes of issues and devising effective solutions.
- **Examples:** Conducting detailed data analysis, developing new frameworks for understanding client issues, or learning new methodologies relevant to the project.

3. Considering (Balanced Judgment, Awareness of External Environment, and Generating Vision)

- **Balanced Judgment:** Making realistic and sound decisions based on relevant criteria.
- **Awareness of External Environment:** Staying informed about social, political, and other developments that may affect the project.
- **Generating Vision:** Formulating long-term goals and strategies for the client or project.
- **Importance:** These competencies help consultants make informed decisions and develop strategic directions that align with the client's broader context.
- **Examples:** Evaluating the impact of regulatory changes on the client's business, developing a vision for the client's future growth, or integrating external trends into project planning.

4. Facilitating (Listening and Sensitivity)

- **Listening:** Understanding the essence of verbal communication and asking insightful questions.
- **Sensitivity:** Noticing and interpreting clients' emotions, body language, attitude, and motivations.
- **Importance:** Effective facilitation ensures that consultants fully grasp client needs and respond appropriately, fostering a collaborative environment.
- **Examples:** Conducting effective stakeholder interviews, responding empathetically to client concerns, or facilitating productive client meetings.

5. Influencing (Communication, Presentation, and Persuasion)

- **Communication:** Clearly and correctly conveying messages so that the client understands the essence.
- **Presentation:** Presenting ideas, opinions, and plans convincingly.
- **Persuasion:** Convincing the client to agree with plans or overcome resistance.
- **Importance:** Strong influencing skills help consultants gain client buy-in and drive project progress.
- **Examples:** Delivering compelling presentations, writing persuasive reports, or negotiating project terms with clients.

6. Inspiring Confidence (Creating a Favorable Atmosphere, Integrity, Reliability, and Loyalty)

- **Creating a Favorable Atmosphere:** Using friendliness and helpfulness to put the client at ease.
- **Integrity:** Upholding ethical standards and professionalism.
- **Reliability:** Following through on agreements and mitigating any negative consequences of unmet commitments.
- **Loyalty:** Aligning with the client's policy and interests, supporting them even in the face of opposing interests.
- **Importance:** Building trust and credibility with clients is essential for long-term success.
- **Examples:** Consistently delivering on promises, demonstrating ethical behaviour, and showing unwavering support for the client's goals.

These six domains and corresponding competencies are recognized by the Dutch board 'Orde van Organisatiekundigen en -Adviseurs' (Ooa) and included in the 'Body of Knowledge and Skills' (BoKS) principle (Orde van organisatiekundigen en –adviseurs, 2010). They are essential for ensuring positive outcomes in consulting projects. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: The execution and outcome of consulting projects are positively influenced by the basic competencies of consultants.

Client Influences

Jang & Lee (1998) developed a theoretical model identifying independent factors influencing the success of consulting projects. These factors are divided into three major clusters: (1) capabilities of the client organization, (2) competence of consultants, and (3) the consultation mode. Jang & Lee's focus on the client system is notable, highlighting four critical client-related factors: (1) top management support, (2) presence of a client leader/sponsor, (3) commitment of client team members, and (4) functional diversity of client team members. Additionally, McLachlin (1999) introduced a fifth factor: client readiness for change. These factors, essential for achieving successful consulting outcomes, will be explored in detail, leading to the formulation of relevant hypotheses.

Top Management Support

Top management support (TMS) is extensively researched across various domains, though its specific impact on consulting projects remains underexplored. According to Jang & Lee (1998), TMS is "the willingness of top management to provide necessary resources, authority, and power for consulting success" (p. 70). This definition is reinforced by Holt, Armenakis, Field, & Harris (2007), who define TMS as "the extent to which an organization's leadership and management are committed to and support the implementation of prospective change" (p. 239). These definitions elucidate the mechanisms behind TMS's importance in consulting projects.

Jang & Lee (1998) argue that committed top management will support consultants and mobilize required resources, fostering a positive client attitude towards the project. Holt et al. (2007) suggests that top management support influences employee beliefs, aiding in boundary-crossing and activity restructuring, benefiting the consulting project. Young & Jordan (2008), through case studies, identified TMS as the most critical success factor, facilitating effective decision-making and resource allocation, and intervening when necessary. Ifinedo (2008) further emphasizes the need for top management to provide essential resources, such as information, software, and workspace, for project success.

Given the significant role of TMS, this study adopts the definition by Jang & Lee (1998), viewing top management behaviour as reflective of their commitment to project success. Thus, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H4: The more the top management supports the consulting project, the better the execution and outcome of consulting projects.

Presence of a Client Sponsor

Consulting advice is often accompanied by changes or implementation of the advice, necessitating organizational change. Jang & Lee (1998) argue that during a consulting process, the client sponsor or client team leader is the pivotal figure responsible for the entire consulting project and its deliverables, driving performance to ensure project success. McLachlin (1999) supports the notion that a client team leader should feel responsible for the consulting engagement, maintaining business responsibility.

A client sponsor is defined as an appointed individual leading the client team who believes in the change and possesses necessary power, respect, leadership, and interpersonal skills (Jang & Lee, 1998). This role is crucial for building effective relationships, articulating vision, and removing barriers, enabling team members to perform effectively (Miles & Mangold, 2002; Sarin & McDermott, 2003). Therefore, the hypothesis is:

H5: Active presence of a client leader/sponsor has a positive influence on the execution and outcome of consulting projects.

Commitment of Client Team Members

Commitment in general is a widely studied psychological concept. Meyer, Allen & Smith (1993) categorize commitment into three components: affective, continuance, and normative commitment, which characterize the relationship an employee has with an organization. Powell, Galvin & Piccoli (2006) extended this model to team member commitment, which is more relevant for consulting projects as consultants often work closely with client teams.

Client team members must collaborate effectively with consultants, despite often being assigned to consulting projects in addition to their daily activities (Jang & Lee, 1998). Affective commitment, where team members desire to remain and work collaboratively, drives positive project outcomes (Meyer et al., 1993; Powell et al., 2006). Committed team members provide necessary information, establish positive relationships, and exhibit pro-social behaviour, enhancing team performance. Therefore, the hypothesis is:

H6: Strong commitment of client team members positively influences the execution and outcome of consulting projects.

Diversity of Client Team Members

Consulting projects are often complex and time-consuming, requiring a diverse group of client team members with different backgrounds. Functional diversity, including varied expertise and perspectives, facilitates creativity and enhances team performance (Jang & Lee, 1998). Personal backgrounds, such as gender, ethnicity, and religion, further stimulate creativity and problem-solving capacity (Thomas & Ely, 2007; Robinson & Dechant, 2007).

However, team diversity can also have negative effects, such as mistrust, complexity, and miscommunication (Curşeu & Wessel, 2007; Gordon, 2007). Effective management, common purpose, shared goals, and a common language/procedure can mitigate these disadvantages (Gordon, 2007). In consulting projects, diverse teams with a shared goal and procedure are assumed to perform better. Therefore, the hypothesis is:

H7: The more heterogeneous the client team, the better the execution and outcome of consulting projects.

Client Readiness to Change

Readiness for change is a mindset or belief towards a change process. Several definitions emphasize readiness as an attitude or cognitive state towards accepting and adopting change (Holt et al., 2007; Kwahk & Lee, 2008; McLachlin, 1999; Bouckenooghe, Devos & van den Broeck, 2009). Client readiness involves positive perceptions about the advice or change, willingness to participate, and the ability to implement changes effectively.

Client readiness must not be confused with change capacity, which is the ability to absorb the project, process, and advice given by consultants (Schaffer, 1976). Client members with positive perceptions and readiness for change are more likely to participate actively, enhancing team performance and project success. Therefore, the hypothesis is:

H8: Client readiness positively influences the execution and outcome of consulting projects.

As outlined at the end of section 3.2, the context in which a consulting project takes place is likely to influence the outcome as well. The next section discusses what and how this might influence the execution and outcome of a consulting project.

Context Influence

A consulting project takes place within a specific context that shapes how consultants and clients decide on their approaches and interventions. De Caluwé and Reitsma (2010) define context as "the situation in which the consultant does interventions or in which the changes take place" (p. 17). Context variables significantly impact consulting projects, influencing both actions and outcomes.

Otto's Contextual Framework

Otto (2000) provides a comprehensive framework to understand the contextual variables affecting consulting projects. He identifies eight critical variables:

1. **Time Pressure:** The urgency that necessitates expedited decision-making and action, potentially leading to compromises on quality.
2. **Escalation:** The level of tension or conflict between involved parties.
3. **Power Differences:** Disparities in formal and informal power that can influence behaviours and decisions.
4. **Dependencies:** The extent to which individuals rely on each other or operate independently.
5. **Rules:** The degree to which procedures and regulations govern decision-making processes.
6. **Identification with the Organization:** The extent to which individuals align with the organization's goals and values or act as detached observers.
7. **Capabilities for Reflection:** Opportunities for and actual practice of reflecting on actions and decisions.
8. **Knowledge and Skills:** The availability and adequacy of the necessary expertise to address the problem.

De Caluwé and Reitsma (2010) adopted Otto's framework in their study and highlighted two particularly crucial context variables: time pressure and client mandate.

Time Pressure

In modern consulting, time pressure is increasingly relevant due to dynamic market conditions, economic factors, and social and political pressures (Burke, 2010). Clients

demand swift action and immediate results, which can affect service quality and the accurate understanding of the problem. Under significant time pressure, both clients and consultants might cut corners, which can compromise the project's success.

Although a sense of urgency can be beneficial, excessive time pressure is generally counterproductive. This assumption leads to the following hypothesis:

H9: A high level of time pressure during consulting projects negatively influences the execution and the outcome.

Client Mandate

Client mandate refers to the authority of client team members, including the leader or sponsor, to influence the consulting project's direction and make necessary adjustments. In the absence of a clear mandate, decisions must be escalated to higher management, causing delays and impeding project progress. Hence, a strong client mandate enhances the project's execution and outcome.

This concept translates Otto's "power differences" into a more operationalized form, emphasizing the importance of decision-making authority within the client team (De Caluwé & Reitsma, 2010). Thus, the hypothesis regarding client mandate is:

H10: A high level of client mandate within the client team positively influences the execution and the outcome of consulting projects.

Understanding the context in which a consulting project takes place is crucial for its success. Context variables like time pressure and client mandate significantly influence project execution and outcomes. Balancing these factors helps consultants and clients navigate challenges and achieve desired results.

In the next section, we will explore the relationship between the client and the consultant, a critical factor in the continuity and success of consulting projects.

2.9. The Relationship between the Client and the Consultant in an Ethiopian Context

A consulting project involves a collaborative effort between the client and the consultant, where interactions and processes occur between the two parties. Schein (1999) refers to these

interactions as "process consultation," emphasizing the importance of building a relationship between the helper (consultant) and the client, group, or organization seeking assistance. According to Schein, a strong relationship can significantly benefit client-consultant collaboration. Many other authors also highlight the importance of this relationship for consulting success and the associated change processes (Buono et al., 2010).

To foster a productive relationship, clients and consultants in Ethiopia, much like elsewhere, must rely on each other in various ways to achieve success. Schein (2011) argues that trust is essential for establishing a helping relationship. Trust is widely recognized in academic literature as fundamental to successful consulting relationships (Kam, 2004; Näslund, 2009; Furusten & Werr, 2009; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). Trust can significantly enhance the effectiveness of consulting engagements, improving exchange performance and negotiation processes at both interpersonal and organizational levels (Zaheer, McEvily & Perrone, 1998).

David Maister is a leading authority on trust in client-consultant relationships. He developed a framework categorizing these relationships, advocating for consultants to aim to become "trusted advisors." Such a status allows for deeper collaboration, as clients are more willing to share crucial information, thereby enhancing the quality of consultancy services. Maister et al. (2002) identify four types of client-consultant relationships, defined by the "depth of personal relationship" and the "breadth of issues":

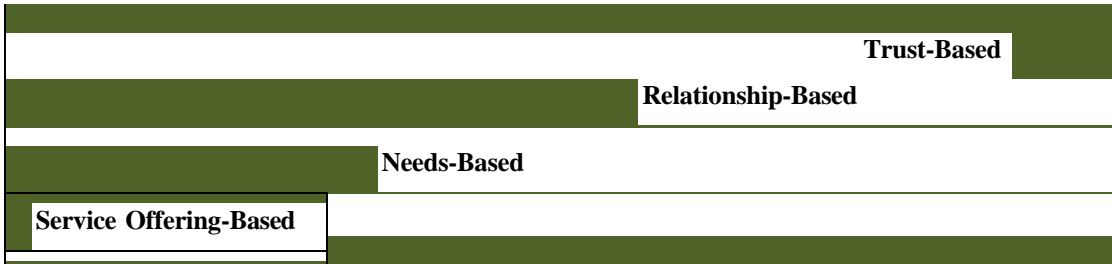


Figure 5 : The four types of relationship as formulated by Maister et al. (2002)

- 1) **Service Offering-Based:** Focuses on providing answers, expertise, and input. Success is typically measured by time and quality.
- 2) **Needs-Based:** Centers on solving business problems. Success is determined by the resolution of these problems.

- 3) **Relationship-Based:** Involves understanding the client organization as a whole, providing insights and ideas for improvement. Success is often seen in repeated business.
- 4) **Trust-Based:** Focuses on understanding the client as an individual, creating a safe space for addressing difficult issues. Success predictors are varied and correspond to assessment factors.

Each relationship type demands different approaches and assets from both the consultant and the client. The ultimate goal is to achieve a trust-based relationship, as it facilitates the most successful outcomes. Such relationships encourage repeated business and referrals, and they allow both parties to work more effectively by reducing formal barriers and fostering open communication (Maister et al., 2002).

In Ethiopia, where personal relationships and trust are deeply valued, the principles outlined by Maister resonate strongly. Building trust can lead to more successful consulting projects by ensuring that both clients and consultants feel comfortable sharing ideas, emotions, and information. This cultural emphasis on trust aligns with the hypothesis that:

H11: Strong mutual trust between the client and the consultant leads to more successful outcomes and executions of consulting projects.

Understanding and fostering these relationship dynamics can significantly impact the success of consulting engagements in the Ethiopian context, where trust and personal connections play a pivotal role.

2.10. Controlling the Different Areas of Consultancy in an Ethiopian Context

Many practitioners argue that the outcomes and execution of consulting projects can vary significantly depending on the specific area of consultancy. They suggest that different areas require distinct approaches and have unique success factors. This prompts the question: Are the differences in success among various consultancy areas really due to factors not covered in this study?

While the theory on this topic is extensive, empirical evidence is limited. Numerous attempts have been made to categorize consultancy services, but there is no universally accepted

classification. Various sources, including literature and consultancy institutions, use different dimensions for classification. Below are some examples of these classifications.

2.10.1. Different Consultancy Classifications by Management Area

Many sources categorize consultancy by 'management area'. Table 6 presents an overview of classifications from several sources using this dimension. Note that this overview is not exhaustive and more sources can be included.

Table 2 : A brief overview of the categorization of consulting services by several Sources.

Source	Management Areas
Consultancy.nl (December 2011)	Management consulting (Strategy, M&A, Operations, Supply chain, Finance, Outsourcing, Change, HRM), Financial Advisory (Transaction services, corporate finance, restructuring, risk management, real estate, forensics & litigation), IT consulting (strategy, ERP, Business Intelligence, Application, systems integration, enterprise architecture)
Kubr	General & strategic, IT, Financial Management, Marketing & Distribution, E-business, Operations Management, HRM, Knowledge management, Productivity and performance, TQM, Company transformation, social role and responsibility, Small-business, Informal, Public sector
Sadler	IT, Outsourcing, Strategy and Organization development, financial administration, Project management, Production management, Marketing, HRM, Economic and environmental studies
O'Mahoney	Strategy consulting, IT consulting (strategy, Architecture, outsourcing, enterprise software, systems integration, product development, Information management), Outsourcing, Corporate strategy (incl. marketing and OD), Operations (incl. business process re-engineering, TQM, project management)
FEACO (in Sadler)	Generalist consulting (BPR, Quality improvement/Lean, Culture change/change management, HRM, operations management, programmed consultancy), Specialist consultancy (M&A, Private Equity, Compliance, Marketing & Sales, Environmental), IT, HRM

There are notable differences among these classifications, but also significant overlaps. From Table, the following classifications can be roughly distilled:

1. **Strategy Consulting:** Focuses on the long-term strategic planning of clients, addressing questions like market positioning, cost reduction, and competitive strategy. It often involves high-level corporate decisions requiring expert knowledge.
2. **IT Consulting:** Encompasses IT strategy, architecture, business intelligence, systems integration, and more. IT consultants provide tools and guidance for leveraging information technology to achieve business goals.
3. **Outsourcing/Insourcing Consulting:** Advises on outsourcing business functions to reduce costs or insourcing to bring functions back in-house, often driven by changing economic conditions and market attractiveness.
4. **Generalist Consulting:** Covers a broad range of services including BPR, quality improvement, HRM, finance, and operations management. Generalist consultants apply diverse models and techniques to various industries.
5. **Organization Development:** Focuses on implementing operational changes within an organization, including program and project management, and ensuring successful execution of these changes.

A challenge with classification by management area is that consulting assignments often span multiple areas. For example, financial consulting assignments like mergers and acquisitions may overlap with strategy, IT, and generalist consulting. Business and information planning projects often involve developing an IT strategy, translating it into architecture, and implementing changes, integrating multiple consultancy areas.

2.10.2. Consultancy Classification by Expert vs. Process Model

Schein (1999) categorizes consultancy into three models, which are used to characterize the type of consultancy:

- **The Purchase-of-Information or Expertise Model:** The consultant provides specialized knowledge or information, with minimal client involvement.
- **The Doctor-Patient Model:** The consultant performs specific tasks defined by the client, following the client's instructions.
- **The Process-Consultation Model:** The consultant collaborates with the client to improve processes, with both parties sharing responsibility for the outcome.

These models depend on the preferences and needs of both the client and the consultant, as well as the desired management style (Block, 2001). While traditionally, consultants were seen as experts, Schein's models highlight the benefits of collaborative approaches.

2.10.3. The Applied Consultancy Classification

According to De Caluwé & Stoppelenburg (2002), consulting projects can be categorized into four types:

- 1) **Expert-Consulting:** The consultant acts as a subject-matter expert, responsible for the content and quality of advice.
- 2) **Evaluation:** The consultant provides second opinions, evaluations, or judgments on specific matters.
- 3) **Expert-Consulting with Process Steps:** The consultant guides the process, involving client members to contribute to the content.
- 4) **Guidance/Facilitation:** The consultant supports the client by facilitating processes, guiding meetings, and applying methods.

This classification aligns with Schein's models, ranging from expert-consulting to process-consultation. The study assumes that differences in success within each consultancy type can be explained by the factors included in this research, independent of the project type.

In the Ethiopian context, where relationships and trust are highly valued, understanding these classifications and models is crucial for tailoring consulting approaches to client needs. By recognizing the unique demands and success factors of each consultancy area, practitioners can enhance the effectiveness and outcomes of their consulting engagements.

2.11. The Conceptual Model

In this research, the variables influencing the execution and outcome of consulting projects are divided into four groups: client variables, consultant variables, context variables, and relationship variables. The success of these projects is measured by assessment factors that indicate how both clients and consultants perceive the execution and outcome. Success is defined as the level of perceived satisfaction of both parties.

To understand whether differences in success among various types of consulting projects can be explained by the included variables, a control variable, "types of consulting projects," is added. The conceptual model integrates these variables and serves as the framework for the study.

Figure 6 illustrates the conceptual model, including references to the sections where each variable is operationalized.

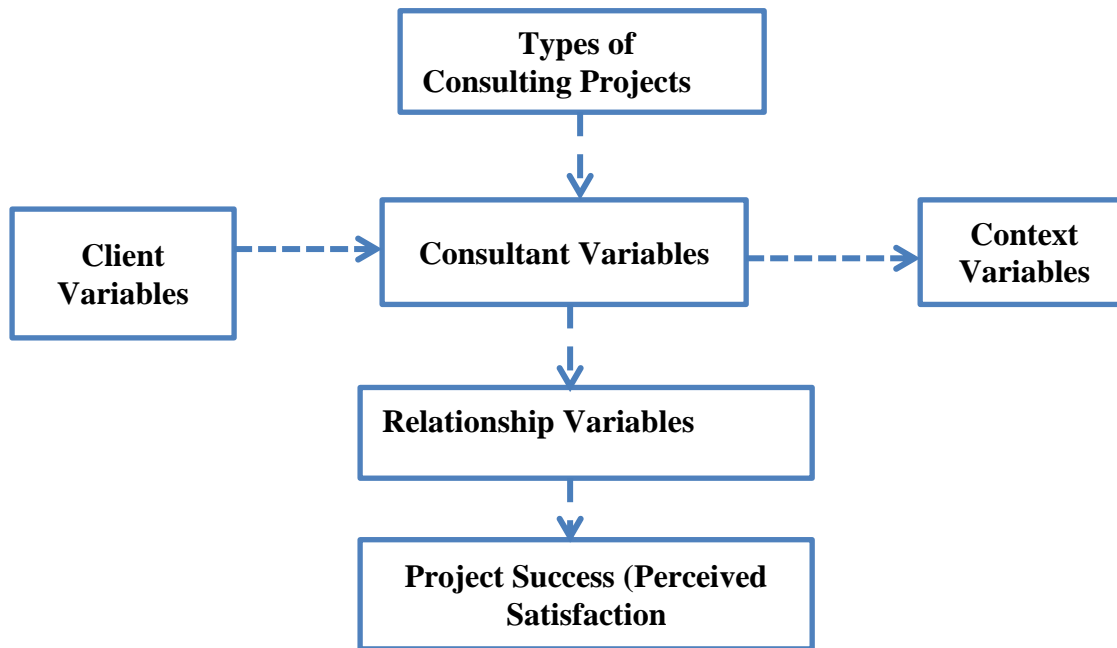


Figure 6 : Conceptual Model for Consulting Project Success

Legend:

- **Client Variables:** Factors related to the client's characteristics and behavior.
- **Consultant Variables:** Factors related to the consultant's characteristics and behavior.
- **Context Variables:** External factors influencing the project.
- **Relationship Variables:** Factors pertaining to the interaction between the client and consultant.
- **Project Success:** Measured by the level of satisfaction perceived by both the client and the consultant.
- **Types of Consulting Projects:** Control variable to assess differences in success across different consulting types.

2.11.1. Operationalization of Variables:

1. Client Variables:

- Client's readiness for change
- Client's clarity of goals
- Client's engagement and participation
- Client's prior experience with consultants

2. Consultant Variables:

- Consultant's expertise and knowledge
- Consultant's problem-solving skills
- Consultant's communication skills
- Consultant's adaptability

3. Context Variables:

- Organizational culture
- External economic conditions
- Industry-specific factors
- Regulatory environment

4. Relationship Variables:

- Trust between client and consultant
- Quality of communication
- Level of collaboration
- Alignment of expectations

5. Types of Consulting Projects:

- Strategy consulting
- IT consulting
- Outsourcing/Insourcing consulting
- Generalist consulting
- Organization development

6. Project Success:

- Client satisfaction
- Consultant satisfaction
- Achievement of project goals
- Timeliness and budget adherence

This conceptual model will be tested to determine the relative importance of each variable group and their combined effect on the perceived success of consulting projects. The model aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that drive successful consulting engagements, considering both intrinsic and extrinsic elements.

This research is relevant for both academic literature and practical application, providing empirical insights into the factors influencing consulting project success and offering guidelines for both clients and consultants to enhance project outcomes. It covers the fundamental concepts of consulting, the consulting process, interventions, and the dynamic nature of the consultancy market.

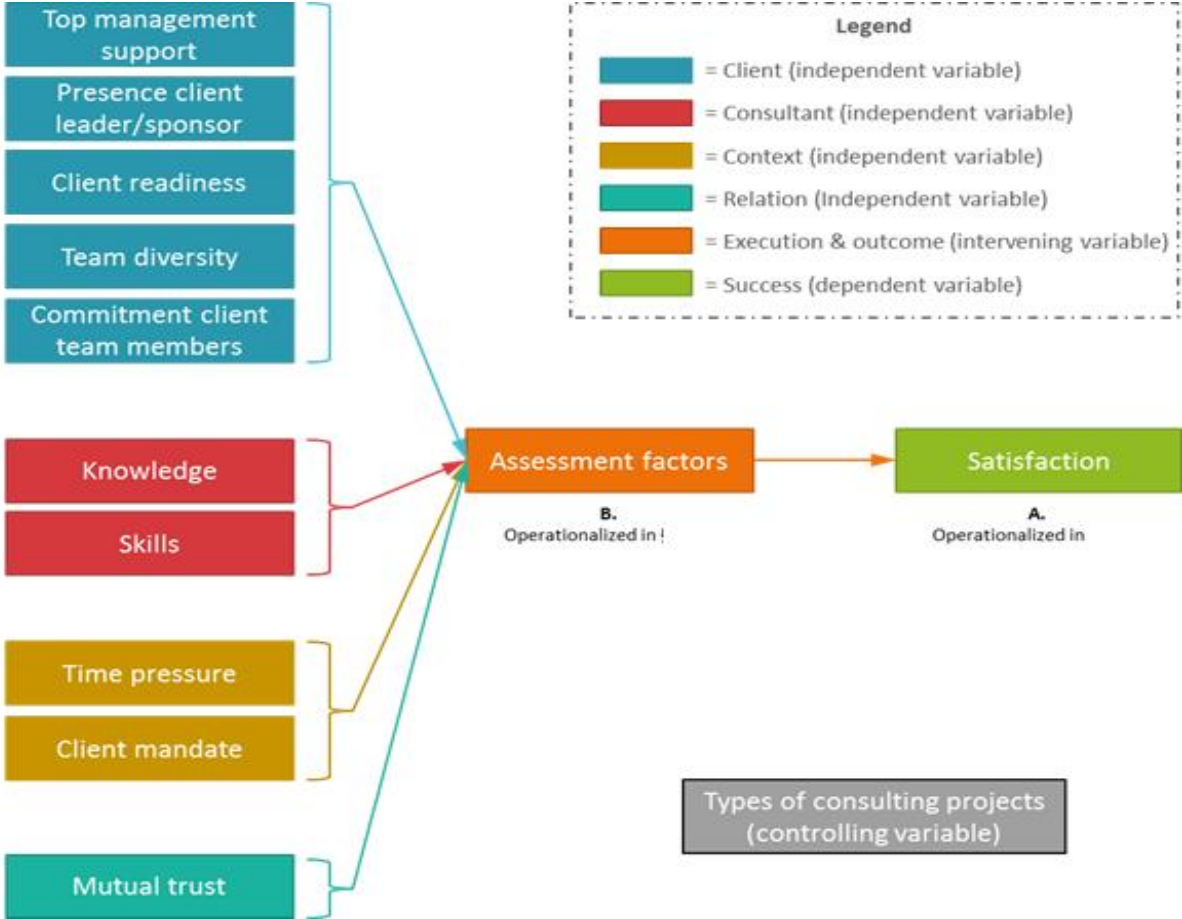


Figure 7 : Operationalization of Variables

CHAPTER THREE

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Methodological Framework

The previous chapter resulted in a framework of theories and a conceptual model with its hypotheses on how project characteristics influence the success of consulting projects. To examine whether these effects actually occurred, an empirical assessment of the conceptual model was conducted. This study provided insight into how predictors influenced success and showed which theories explained success in the context of consulting projects. This chapter describes the research design of this empirical study step-by-step.

3.2. Research Design

The research design was pivotal to ensuring that the empirical assessment was both robust and comprehensive. This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to provide a more complete understanding of the factors influencing the success of consulting projects.

- 1) **Quantitative Approach:** This involved the use of structured surveys to gather data from a large sample of consulting projects. The goal was to statistically test the hypotheses derived from the conceptual model.
- 2) **Qualitative Approach:** This included in-depth interviews and case studies to explore the nuanced and context-specific aspects of consulting project success that might not have been fully captured by quantitative methods.

3.3. Data Collection Instruments

To gather the necessary data, two main instruments were used:

3.3.1. Surveys

Surveys were designed to quantitatively measure the variables defined in the conceptual model.

- **Questionnaire Design:** The survey included sections on client variables, consultant variables, context variables, relationship variables, and project success metrics. Each section consisted of multiple items measured on Likert scales (e.g., 1-5 or 1-7 scales) to capture respondents' perceptions and satisfaction levels.

- **Sampling:** A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure that different types of consulting projects were adequately represented.
- **Distribution:** The survey was distributed electronically to a broad audience using online survey platforms to maximize reach and efficiency.

3.3.2. Interviews and Case Studies

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews and detailed case studies.

- **Interview Guide:** An interview guide was developed based on the variables in the conceptual model. The guide included open-ended questions to allow for in-depth exploration of respondents' experiences and perspectives.
- **Case Study Selection:** Case studies were selected to represent a diverse range of consulting projects, ensuring variation in project type, size, industry, and perceived success.
- **Data Collection:** Interviews were conducted either in person or via video conferencing, recorded with consent, and transcribed for detailed analysis.

3.3.3. Operationalization

Operationalization involved translating the conceptual model into specific measures used in data collection instruments.

- **Variable Measurement:** Each variable in the conceptual model was translated into measurable items. For instance, client satisfaction was measured through survey items asking about the client's perception of project outcomes, consultant performance, and overall satisfaction with the consulting engagement.
- **Pilot Testing:** The survey and interview guides were pilot tested with a small sample to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity of the items. Adjustments were made based on feedback from the pilot test.

3.4. Methods of Analysis

3.4.1 Quantitative Analysis

- 1) **Descriptive Statistics:** Used to summarize and describe the main features of the collected data.
- 2) **Inferential Statistics:** Techniques such as regression analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) were used to test the hypotheses and examine the relationships between variables.

- 3) **Control Variable Analysis:** Used to explore the impact of different types of consulting projects on success outcomes while controlling for other factors.

3.4.2 Qualitative Analysis

- 1) **Thematic Analysis:** Used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within qualitative data. This involved coding the interview transcripts and case study notes to uncover recurring themes and insights.
- 2) **Case Study Analysis:** Detailed examination of selected case studies to illustrate the dynamics between variables and provide contextual understanding of consulting project success.

3.4.3. Validity and Reliability

Validity

- **Construct Validity:** Ensured by basing survey items on established theories and conducting pilot studies.
- **Internal Validity:** Enhanced by controlling for potential confounding variables and using robust statistical techniques.
- **External Validity:** Strengthened through the use of a representative sample and diverse case studies.

Reliability

- **Survey Reliability:** Assessed using Cronbach's alpha to evaluate the internal consistency of the survey scales.
- **Interview and Case Study Reliability:** Ensured through the use of standardized procedures and thorough documentation of the data collection process.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

- **Informed Consent:** Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, and provided consent before participation.
- **Confidentiality:** Participants' identities and responses were kept confidential, with data anonymized and securely stored.
- **Data Protection:** Compliance with data protection regulations was ensured throughout the study.

3.6. Schematic Overview of the Work Process

The work process involved several key steps, which are summarized in a schematic overview:

- 1) **Designing the Study:** Developing the research design, instruments, and sampling strategy.
- 2) **Data Collection:** Administering surveys and conducting interviews and case studies.
- 3) **Data Analysis:** Performing quantitative and qualitative analysis to test hypotheses and explore themes.
- 4) **Reporting Results:** Presenting findings in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, which cover quantitative results, qualitative insights, and integrated discussions.

Each step was interconnected and built upon the previous stages, ensuring a systematic approach to investigating the success factors of consulting projects.

3.7. The Rationale of Using a Survey Design

One conclusion from the previous chapter was that the conceptual model contained variables that needed to be analyzed regarding their underlying relations, correlations, and effects. The thirteen variables characterized consulting projects. Examination of the conceptual model revealed that this research was primarily deductive, quantitative, multivariate, and complex. This complexity was not only due to the number of variables but also to the multivariate nature and the difference between the units of analysis and the units of observation. The units of analysis were the consulting projects, while the units of observation were the individuals, representing two different levels. Additionally, thirteen variables constituted an extensive number of variables compared to other studies in the consultancy literature, thus requiring the analysis of a large volume of data.

Many consulting projects were incorporated into this study, with each consulting project requiring input from several involved individuals. To achieve this, a survey design suited this study well, as it allowed for the efficient approach of a broad spectrum of projects and respondents, creating a mechanism from which quantitative data could be retrieved to perform the proper analyses. Therefore, this study was characterized as a cross-sectional research design, involving a survey of a specific sample at a single point in time. A body of retrospective data was created about several consulting projects regarding the variables mentioned in the conceptual model, which were then examined to detect any ‘patterns of

association'. The data were derived from individuals via questionnaires, asking their opinions about the variables from the completed consulting projects they participated in. Given that opinions from individuals were solicited, this study was vulnerable to a certain degree of subjectivity. However, the number of individuals that cooperated with this research eventually mitigated this vulnerability, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

An important note is that scientists and practitioners continuously seek ways to examine consulting projects more objectively and with less bias. Today's studies, such as this one, are primarily based on individuals' opinions, making the results more subjective than would ideally be the case using non-obtrusive data. For example, Rijsenbilt (2011) wrote a dissertation that excluded any form of interviewing, finding a relation between the narcissism of CEOs of S&P500 companies and their performance by investigating so-called 'objective observable indicators'. Examples of these indicators include the number of publications and the size of the personal photo in the annual report (media attention), the usage of a company plane (emoluments), and the difference between the salary of the CEO and the second best-paid member of the board (reward). Data about these indicators are fact-based and free from any form of respondent subjectivity.

In preparation for this study, an attempt was made to include these kinds of indicators, with a panel of three practitioners and one scientist. However, it quickly became apparent that this objective was not attainable in the context of this study because of several difficulties:

- 1) **Indicator Complexity:** Although some indicators were suggested, most variables in the model could not be easily captured by valid indicators that clearly and directly reflected the corresponding variables. For instance, the variable "relationship based on trust" could be indirectly signaled by the number of meetings a consultant attended outside their assignment. However, this did not fully cover the content of the variable as defined in this study. The same applied to other variables.
- 2) **Data Confidentiality:** Obtaining data for the indicators was challenging due to the confidentiality of the required information, such as proposals, hourly rates, price agreements, and formal evaluation journals. Respondents were reluctant to share these kinds of documents or information. Furthermore, some required data did not exist or were not clearly presented in independent databases.

- 3) **Resource Intensity:** Using the data to find effects between variables was time-consuming. Collecting a significant dataset required extensive document gathering from respondents and/or databases, followed by detailed analysis and processing.
- 4) **Respondent Effort:** Cooperation required considerable effort from respondents. Besides completing the questionnaire and possible participation in interviews, they would also need to collect and send relevant documents to the researcher. Given the economic recession, as explained in Chapter 1, it was assumed that most respondents would be unwilling to cooperate.

To increase inter subjectivity, it was required that, for each consulting project, at least one involved consultant and one involved client representative provided their input for the project to be included in the sample. Research showed that a single perspective on a consulting project is biased since consultants tend to have a more optimistic view than clients (De Caluwé & Stoppelenburg, 2004). It was assumed that the perceived truth of a consulting project is the combination of perspectives from the client, the consultant, and others involved in the project.

3.8. The Construction of the Questionnaire

As described in the previous section, this study operated on two levels: the individual level (level-1) and the project level (level-2). All the data required for the analyses were retrieved from individuals who participated in consulting projects, constituting level-1 data. In other words, this research dealt with 'nested' or 'hierarchical' data where individuals were nested within consulting projects. Before discussing the level-2 data, it is essential to explain how the data from the individuals were obtained.

The consultants and the client representatives, where the two primary data sources from which data were collected. A client representative, or simply 'client', is a member (or multiple members) from the client organization that contributed to and was co-responsible for the outcome of the consulting project. It was assumed that they had insight into the project's outcome and the activities carried out during the consulting project. The specific roles or individuals initially approached in this research included principals, delegated principals, project leaders, client team members, and members of advisory or similar committees. The

researcher was aware that certain questions in the questionnaire might be less applicable to some roles than to others. This consideration was kept in mind during the questionnaire's construction.

'Consultants', or a single consultant, refer to the hired external individuals assigned to co-execute the consulting project as agreed. It was assumed that they were also co-responsible for the outcome and had insight into the activities carried out during the consulting project and its results. These individuals were asked to participate because they had the proper knowledge to answer all the questions in the questionnaire and interviews. The same applied to the client representatives.

Questionnaires were used primarily because they are an efficient data collection mechanism for obtaining a large volume of data. To construct a questionnaire that could retrieve the right data, the variables in the conceptual model were systematically translated into a wide range of questions covering the content of the variables as defined in the theoretical section. This process is called 'operationalization'. To provide insight into the operationalization, all variables will be discussed to show which questions were ultimately used towards respondents. Before explaining the operationalization of all the variables, three practical points need to be addressed.

1. **Two Versions of the Questionnaire:** Two versions of the questionnaire were used in this research: a client version and a consultant version. Although the questions were the same in both questionnaires, they were formulated from either a client or a consultant point of view. This made the questionnaires more accessible for respondents to complete. The following subsections present the consultant version of the questions.
2. **Questionnaire Development and Testing:** The subsections show the questions used in the final questionnaires. Most questions were derived from other relevant studies that included questions about topics corresponding to the variables in this study, as discussed in the theoretical framework. The questionnaires were revised multiple times using several checklists (Sekaran, 2003; Remenyi, Williams, Money & Swartz, 2009; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [CBS], 2010; Bryman, 2004). Each question was checked for potential misinterpretation, familiarity of language, and redundancy. The questionnaires were also reviewed and tested by four consultants from different

backgrounds, two scholars familiar with consultancy, two clients, and an expert from CBS (Statistics Netherlands). Their feedback was used to optimize the questionnaires to prevent respondents from failing to complete them. The final version consisted of 79 questions, with seven open questions and 72 closed questions.

3. **Introductory and Concluding Questions:** The questionnaires began with some introductory open questions to gather background information about the consulting project, including the cause of the project, the actual assignment, the results, the year it ended, and the individual's role during the project. The questionnaire ended with open questions asking about the perceived positive and negative factors that influenced the project. These questions allowed individuals to express their thoughts in their own words, helping the researcher explain why and where certain effects occurred.

The following subsections represent the five categories in which the variables were grouped: client variables, consultant variables, context variables, relationship variables, assessment variables, and the success variable. These categories correspond with those shown in the conceptual model in the previous chapter.

3.9. Dependent Variable (A) – Overall, Success

The dependent variable in this study is the success variable, which measures the satisfaction of the involved actors regarding the consulting project outcomes. The questions used to determine this variable were derived from the work of Van Aken (1996), whose definition of project success closely aligned with the definition used in this study. Additionally, the scale Van Aken used had a Cronbach's Alpha of .85, indicating good internal consistency and reliability. His questions, originally designed for the general topic of project management, were adapted to fit the consulting project context due to the similarities between project management and consultancy.

The table below presents the questions and the answer possibilities used to measure the success variable:

Table 3 : The Operationalization of ‘Success’

Variable	Questions	Answer Possibilities
Success	71) I am satisfied with the result of the consulting project.	Interval (Likert scale)
"Satisfaction – the degree of satisfaction perceived by the involved actors as a result of the project outcomes."	72) I am satisfied with the moment the consulting project was completed.	1 = Totally disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Totally agree 6 = Not applicable / Don't know
	73) The consulting project was too expensive in relation to the quality of the result.	
	74) The quality of the result was high.	
	75) What was intended to be achieved with the result, is achieved.	
	76) The result was worth the investment (e.g., time, money, effort).	

The data acquired from these questions are level-1 data, representing the subjective perceptions of individual respondents about a specific project. To determine the group perception of all involved actors regarding a project, the input from both client and consultant respondents for each consulting project was aggregated and averaged, forming level-2 data. This aggregation process allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the collective satisfaction with the project outcomes.

This distinction between individual-level data (level-1) and aggregated group-level data (level-2) applies to all variables discussed in this section. The level-2 data and its implications will be further discussed later in this chapter.

3.10. Intervening Variables (B) – Assessment Factors for Success

De Caluwé & Stoppelenburg (2004) established criteria for measuring the effectiveness of consultancy services provided to clients. These criteria were categorized into formal, process, and content criteria. However, in this study, the term ‘assessment factors’ is used instead of ‘criteria’ to minimize potential confusion and bias among respondents. The categorization

was omitted in the questionnaire to avoid leading questions that could influence respondents' answers. Instead, the quantitative analyses, such as factor analysis, were relied upon to generate clear categories based on data from the questionnaires, reducing subjectivity.

The table below outlines the questions used in the questionnaire to measure the assessment factors for success:

Table 4: The Operationalization of the ‘Assessment Factors’

Variable	Questions	Answer Possibilities
Assessment Factors for Success	"Assessment factors represent specific indicators that indicate the quality of how a consulting project is executed and how the project outcomes were."	Interval (Likert scale)
	54) The objectives have not been achieved.	1 = Totally disagree
	55) The tasks, set in advance, have been carried out.	2 = Disagree
	56) The required sources and means have been used.	3 = Neutral
	57) The given time path has been followed.	4 = Agree
	58) The given budget frame has been followed.	5 = Totally agree
	59) A specific method has been used.	6 = Not applicable / Don't know
	60) The approach of the case was developed while working.	
	61) The consultant and the client were equivalent.	
	62) The consultant guided the consulting project from the beginning till the end.	
	63) During the entire consulting project, the client and the consultant communicated frequently.	
	64) The client and the consultant were involved in the consulting project from the beginning till the end.	
	65) The client did not learn from the consulting project.	
	66) More consensus has been reached within the client organization about the topic of the consulting project.	
	67) The cooperation within the client organization has been improved due to the consulting project.	
	68) The client organization has been more efficient due to the consulting project.	
	69) The client organization has become more energetic.	
70) The usability of the advice was good.		

These questions were designed to gauge various aspects related to the execution and outcomes of consulting projects, providing valuable insights into the quality and success of the projects from different perspectives.

3.11. Independent Variables (C) – Relationship Variable

Table 5 : Independent Variables (C) – Relationship Variable

Variable	Questions	Answer Possibilities
Trust	"Trust reflects the breadth of business issues to deal with and the depth of personal relationships."	Interval (Likert scale)
	50) I had confidence in the expertise of the project team.	1 = Totally disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Totally agree 6 = Not applicable / Don't know
	51) I felt free to talk about difficult issues with the project team.	
	52) A good understanding between the project team and me has been developed during the project.	
	53) It turned out that the project team was worth my trust.	

According to Maister et al. (2002), the degree of trust in a consulting relationship is defined by the breadth of business issues addressed by the client towards the consultant and the depth of the personal relationship between them. Drawing from this conceptual framework and insights from other studies such as Mayer et al. (1995), McAllister (1995), Zaheer et al. (1998), and Pearce, Branyiezki & Bigley (2000), this research operationalized the relationship variable with the following questions:

The Operationalization of ‘Mutual Trust’

These questions aimed to measure the level of trust and rapport between the client and the consultant during the consulting project, focusing on aspects such as confidence in expertise,

openness in discussing issues, development of understanding, and overall trustworthiness of the project team.

3.12. Independent Variables (D) – Context Variables

The context variables of 'client mandate' and 'time pressure' were explored by Otto (2000) and De Caluwé & Reitsma (2010). While De Caluwé & Reitsma provided a qualitative approach, this research aimed to construct closed questions with Likert-type answer possibilities for quantitative analyses. The operationalization process was guided by their work but adapted to suit this study's context.

1. Client Mandate

Client mandate refers to the authority of involved client actors in making crucial decisions to execute the consulting project effectively. The questions derived from this concept are:

Table 6 : The Operationalization of 'Client Mandate'

Variable	Questions	Answer Possibility
Client mandate	"Client mandate refers to a situation where the involved client can make important decisions."	Interval (Likert scale)
	48) The project leader had the required mandate to execute the consulting project.	1 = Totally disagree 2 =
	49) The client team members had insufficient mandate to execute the consulting project.	Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Totally agree 6 = Not applicable / Don't know

2. Time Pressure

Time pressure reflects situations where time constraints compel the client and consultant to compromise on the project's quality. The questions derived from this concept are:

Table 7: The Operationalization of 'Time Pressure'

Independent variables (E) – Consultant variables:

Variable	Questions	Answer Possibility
Time pressure	"Time pressure refers to a situation where time forces you to cut corners on the actual assignment." (see § 3.5)	Interval (Likert scale)
	45) The consulting project had a high priority within the client organization.	1 = Totally disagree 2 =
	46) The consulting project had to be carried out sooner.	Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 =
	47) During the consulting project, concessions have been made to the project's quality.	Agree 5 = Totally agree 6 = = Not applicable / Don't know

1. Knowledge

- Kubr (2002) identified three types of knowledge essential for consultants to execute projects effectively, as discussed in the previous chapter. Questions derived from this explanation were included in the questionnaire. The questions and answer options are detailed in the table below:

Variable: Knowledge

Table 8 : Operationalization of 'Knowledge'

Independent variables (E) – Consultant variables	
Knowledge	
Variable: Knowledge	
Questions	Answer possibility (Interval Likert scale)
25) Was I aware of developments relevant to the client organization?	1 = Totally disagree
26) Did I take into account developments relevant to the client organization?	2 = Disagree
27) Did I possess the necessary industry and functional knowledge?	3 = Neutral
28) Did I apply my expertise and knowledge during the consulting project?	4 = Agree
29) Did I know the client organization well?	5 = Totally agree
30) Did I apply my knowledge about the client organization during the consulting project?	6 = Not applicable / Don't know

2. Skills

- Skills refer to learned abilities that enable individuals to achieve predetermined results or tasks. De Caluwé & Reitsma (2010) extensively studied the competencies required for consultants to perform effectively. The questions derived from their study are presented in the table below:

Table 9: Operationalization of ‘Skills’

Variable: Skills	
Questions	Answer possibility (Interval Likert scale)
31) Could I adapt to changing circumstances during the consulting project?	1 = Totally disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Totally agree 6 = Not applicable / Don't know
32) Could I unravel relevant information, backgrounds, and structures?	
3) Could I put the client's problems in a broader frame?	
34) Could I generate new ideas/proposals?	
35) Could I make realistic choices or decisions?	
36) Could I assist in the decision-making process within the project team?	
37) Could I provide primary directions for the client organization?	
38) Did I listen well to others?	
39) Did I recognize the feelings of others?	
40) Was I well understood by others?	
41) Could I clearly communicate my ideas, plans, and viewpoints?	
42) Could I build trust among individuals I interacted with?	
43) Did I fulfil what I committed to?	
44) Could I positively influence the mood within the project team?	

3. Independent variables (F) – Client variables

Table 10 : Top management support

Top management support	
Questions	Answer possibility (Interval Likert scale)
8) Did top management emphasize the importance of the consulting project within the client organization?	1 = Totally disagree
9) Did top management put personal effort into the consulting project to achieve the final results?	2 = Disagree
10) Did top management offer sufficient resources for the consulting project?	3 = Neutral
11) Did top management believe in the usefulness of the consulting project?	4 = Agree
	5 = Totally agree
	6 = Not applicable / Don't know

In the Ethiopian context, top management support pertains to the readiness of senior executives to supply essential resources, authority, and influence necessary for the success of consulting projects. This definition draws heavily from the research of Jang & Lee (1998). Given that their study remained theoretical without operationalization, additional research was conducted to develop practical questions. Holt et al. (2007) provided a structured operationalization of top management support, offering relevant questions that align with this definition. Their scale demonstrated a strong internal consistency with a Cronbach's Alpha of .79, indicating reliability. These questions were then adapted to suit the specific context of consulting projects, and the resulting operationalization is presented in the table below, along with the corresponding answer categories.

In the Ethiopian context, the presence of a client leader/sponsor refers to the degree to which a client individual actively participates in a consulting project, strongly advocates for the proposed change or advice, and possesses the necessary authority, respect, leadership, and effective interpersonal skills to guide and support the project towards a positive outcome. This client leader/sponsor can be a member of senior management, a designated project leader, or a key member of the project team. The definition is primarily derived from the research of Jang

& Lee (1998), with additional insights gathered from the study of Sarin & McDermott (2003) to develop pertinent questions.

Sarin & McDermott's study provided an operationalization of the presence of a client leader, offering questions that align closely with this definition and demonstrating a Cronbach's Alpha of .76, indicating good reliability. These questions were adapted to suit the consulting project context and are presented in the table below. Note that the term "project leader" is used in the questionnaire, which may require clarification as it differs from the formal role in general project management literature. Therefore, the questionnaire explicitly defines what "project leader" means in this study.

Table 11 : Independent variables (F) – Client variables

Variable	Questions	Answer Possibility
Presence client leader/sponsor	“A client leader/sponsor is a leader of the client team who strongly believes in the change and has the necessary power, respect, leadership, and effective interpersonal skills.”	Interval (Likert scale)
	12) The project leader was appreciated within the client organization for his or her interpersonal skills.	
	1 = Totally disagree	
	2 = Disagree	
	3 = Neutral	
	4 = Agree	
	5 = Totally agree	
	6 = Not applicable / Don't know	
	13) The project leader was appreciated within the client organization for his or her knowledge regarding the content of the consulting project.	
14) The project manager had a significant impact on the consulting project.		
15) The project leader believed in the usefulness of the consulting project.		

4. Commitment of the Client Members

The commitment of client team members refers to their willingness to collaborate with consultants throughout the consulting project. This definition is based on the work of Jang &

Lee (1998). Insights from studies by Powell et al. (2006) and Meyer et al. (1993) were also considered to develop relevant questions for this variable. The questions used in the questionnaire are derived from these studies and are presented in the table below.

Table 12: The operationalization of ‘commitment client team members.

Variable	Questions	Answer Possibility
Commitment client team members	“The commitment of client team members refers to the extent to which they are willing to work collaboratively with the consultants throughout the management consulting process.”	Interval (Likert scale)
	16) The cooperation was good within the project team of the consulting project.	
	1 = Totally disagree	
	2 = Disagree	
	3 = Neutral	
	4 = Agree	
	5 = Totally agree	
	6 = Not applicable / Don’t know	
	17) The members of the project team were not personally involved with each other.	
18) The consulting project brought many personal benefits for the members of the project team.		

4. Diversity of the Client Members

The diversity of the client team refers to the extent of differences among team members in terms of their backgrounds, functions, and expertise. This definition is taken from Jang & Lee (1998). Clear questions were derived from their study to cover all aspects of this definition. The questions are presented in the table below and are used in the questionnaire.

Table 13: The operationalization of ‘functional diversity of client team’.

Variable	Questions	Answer Possibility
Team diversity of the client team	“The mix of different backgrounds, functions and expertise’s of client team members.”	Interval (Likert scale)
	19) The project team consisted of members from different backgrounds (e.g. origin, gender, religion etc.)	
	1 = Totally disagree	
	2 = Disagree	
	3 = Neutral	
	4 = Agree	
	5 = Totally agree	
	6 = Not applicable / Don’t know	
	20) The project team consisted of members with different functions (e.g. board member, manager, project manager, analyst etc.)	
21) The project team consisted of members with different expertise/knowledge areas		

5. Readiness to Change

Readiness to change refers to the attitude of client team members towards change and their support, enthusiasm, commitment, and willingness to experiment. This definition is mainly from Jang & Lee (1998) with insights from Kwahk & Lee (2008) for operationalization. The questions used in this research are derived from Kwahk & Lee's work and are presented in the table below.

Table 14: The operationalization of ‘client readiness to change’.

Variable	Questions	Answer Possibility
Client readiness to change	“Readiness refers to client involvement in the sense of an attitude about the need for change and the degree to which it will receive support and enthusiasm, the commitment to a project, and a willingness	

	to diagnose and experiment.”	
	22) The project team was excited when the consulting project started.	Interval (Likert scale)
	1 = Totally disagree	
	2 = Disagree	
	3 = Neutral	
	4 = Agree	
	5 = Totally agree	
	6 = Not applicable / Don't know	
	23) The external support was well received by the project team.	
	24) The members of the project team were not happy to work on the consulting project.	

3.13. Control Variable - Type of Consultancy

The control variable, Type of Consultancy, was not initially part of the conceptual model as a predictor for success. Instead, it served as a control to understand how differences in success among different types of consulting could be explained by the variables in the conceptual model. This control variable was not operationalized in the questionnaire directly. Rather, post hoc data analysis was used to classify consulting projects into four categories: Expert Consulting, Evaluation, Expert Consulting with Process Steps, and Guidance/Facilitation. This classification was done by three experienced practitioners who reviewed the open-ended responses from respondents and categorized the projects accordingly. This qualitative input formed the basis for categorizing the projects.

3.14. Data Collection Using the Questionnaire

The data collection process involved several phases to ensure efficient and comprehensive data collection. The initial phase included an inventory of all consulting projects at Novius Consultancy Group to determine their suitability for the study. Suitable projects were identified, and consultants and clients associated with these projects were approached to participate in the research. Consultants were asked to initiate cooperation with clients for the study. Questionnaires were then sent digitally using the SpiTs Questionnaire web application, which facilitated questionnaire distribution, progress tracking, and data management.

The use of an online questionnaire was chosen for its convenience and the ability to ensure complete responses from all respondents. The SpiTs application allowed for the inclusion of a "not applicable / don't know" option to ensure respondents could answer all questions. For respondents unable to use SpiTs, alternative methods such as mail, email, face-to-face, or telephone were used to collect data.

The data collection strategy also leveraged professional networks, including supervisors' networks and external consulting networks, to identify potential respondents. The research gained additional traction through endorsements from Dutch consulting associations and exposure on relevant websites. This proactive approach led to a substantial increase in respondents willing to participate in the study.

The data collected were organized into files per consulting project, including raw data from open-ended questions and aggregated data derived from individual responses. This approach facilitated familiarity with each project and aided in subsequent data analysis.

3.15. Multilevel Analyses for the Conceptual Model

The study employed multilevel analyses to examine the relationships between variables in the conceptual model and consulting project success. This approach was chosen due to the hierarchical nature of the data, with individual responses aggregated to the project level.

Linear mixed models were used for analysis, given the interval scale of the variables. These models allow for the examination of fixed effects between predictors and the dependent variable at the project level. The data were prepared to minimize missing values, ensuring the accuracy of parameter estimates.

The multilevel analysis involved three steps: specifying the null model, specifying the level-1 model, and analysing level-2 effects. The focus was primarily on level-2 effects, as the study aimed to understand differences between consulting projects rather than individual characteristics. The analyses were conducted using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) method to estimate fixed effects accurately.

The analysis process also included exploratory phases to investigate additional relationships and refine the conceptual model based on significant predictors. This iterative approach allowed for a thorough understanding of how variables influenced consulting project success.

The figure below represents an illustration of the steps that were carried out during the multilevel analyses.

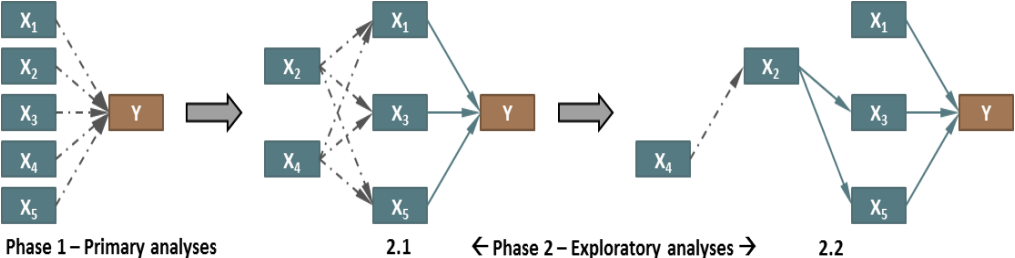


Figure 8 : A schematic overview of the procedural phases conducted during the multilevel analyses.

Multilevel analysis, although relatively newer compared to regression and ANOVA analyses, has gained prominence for its ability to handle hierarchical data effectively. In the past, researchers often aggregated data to the second level and used standard regression analysis, albeit less accurately for hierarchical data analysis. However, with the rise of multilevel analysis, researchers can now examine group effects more accurately.

To ensure the validity of multilevel analyses, regression analysis was employed as a secondary method to validate the findings. Although regression analysis was not the primary method, it served as a check to see if multilevel analyses were conducted appropriately. Large discrepancies between the outcomes of both analyses prompted further investigation to understand the reasons behind these differences, leading to refinements in the analytical procedures.

When conducting regression analysis, several assumptions were checked, including sample size adequacy, multicollinearity, outliers, and normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity of the data. Given the familiarity of multiple regressions as a statistical technique, detailed explanation of the method was not provided here.

3.16. Sampling strategy

The sample strategy employed in this research was meticulously crafted to ensure the acquisition of pertinent and representative data suitable for conducting multilevel analyses. Since obtaining data from an entire population is often impractical, careful sampling becomes essential, albeit with potential errors that necessitate attention.

The sampling decisions were guided by several pivotal questions, including defining the target population, identifying relevant parameters, selecting an appropriate sampling design, determining the necessary sample size, considering associated costs and time constraints, and ensuring the quality of data collection processes.

The target population, focusing on consulting projects in the Netherlands, posed challenges due to the lack of clear definitions and comprehensive data about the consulting industry. To mitigate this, specific criteria were established to differentiate suitable consulting projects for the research. These criteria encompassed project definitions, types of assignments, the involvement of external consultants, the absence of predefined outcomes, the engagement of two parties in achieving outcomes, a focus on companies/organizations, and project completion within specific years.

These criteria were designed to select consulting projects that aligned closely with the research's objectives and scope, thereby ensuring the relevance and diversity of the dataset. However, accurately determining the size of the target population remained challenging due to inherent data limitations.

The research adhered to guidelines from Van Assen (2013) regarding sample size for multilevel analyses, considering the number of parameters and the desired statistical power. The initial goal was to include at least 154 consulting projects and 308 respondents to achieve sufficient statistical power for the analyses. However, practical constraints such as the economic context, respondent cooperation, data collection timeframes, and network limitations led to a revised practical goal of including at least a hundred consulting projects, each with two respondents.

The data collection methodology involved a combination of probability sampling (simple random sampling) and non-probability sampling (snowball sampling), resulting in the acquisition of 392 usable questionnaires from 140 suitable projects. Although the sample size did not fully meet the desired criteria, additional precautions were taken to ensure data quality, including seeking a second opinion and imposing strict analysis requirements.

In essence, the sample strategy was meticulously crafted to strike a balance between practical feasibility and statistical rigor, ensuring that the collected data remained relevant and reliable for conducting multilevel analyses and effectively addressing the research questions at hand.

3.17. Examining the data and make them appropriate for the multilevel analyses

Before delving into the multilevel analyses, the data collected underwent a thorough preparation phase to ensure its appropriateness and reliability. This preparation involved several critical steps:

1. **Data Format and Entry:** The data file was created in accordance with the codebook specified in SpiTs (as detailed in section 3.3). This ensured that the raw data was converted into an SPSS-readable format, making it easier to interpret and analyse.
2. **Error Checking and Correction:** The data file was meticulously checked for errors, and any discrepancies or missing values were corrected. Notably, responses marked as 'not applicable/don't know' were coded as missing values to prevent bias in subsequent analyses.
3. **Unique Identification:** Each respondent and consulting project was assigned a unique identifier to facilitate proper grouping and analysis of the data.
4. **Codebook Consistency:** The codebook mirrored the questionnaire, ensuring that variables and questions were aligned accurately to avoid confusion or mixing up of data.

The use of SpiTs aided in verifying the codebook's correctness and minimizing errors during the data conversion process. However, additional checks were conducted post-conversion to ensure data integrity. Descriptive statistics were generated for each question to identify any out-of-range scores or anomalies, ensuring the cleanliness and reliability of the data file.

Moving forward, the dataset underwent further refinement to make it more amenable to analysis. This involved reducing the 69 questionnaire items into meaningful scales or variables using factor analysis. Factor analysis helps identify underlying relationships among items and condenses them into interpretable factors.

Several criteria guided the factor analysis process:

- **Sample Size:** A sample size larger than 345 respondents was deemed sufficient.
- **Item Relationships:** Strong inter-correlations among items were essential for meaningful factor analysis outcomes.
- **Statistical Tests:** Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index were used to assess the appropriateness of factor analysis.

Once factors were identified, they underwent rotation to simplify interpretation. The VARIMAX rotation method was primarily used, with OBLIMIN rotation applied when necessary. Factor loadings below 0.3 were suppressed, and negatively formulated questions were reversed as needed.

Beyond factor analysis, the reliability of scales was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient and corrected item-total correlation coefficient. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.6 or higher was considered reliable, with additional indicators considered for scale refinement.

This meticulous process ensured that the dataset was refined, relevant, and ready for the subsequent multilevel analyses. Additionally, an in-depth qualitative study complemented these quantitative findings, providing deeper insights into the observed effects and project success factors.

The qualitative aspect of this study complements the quantitative analyses, offering deeper insights into the factors influencing project success. Open-ended questions in the

questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were key components of this qualitative exploration.

1. **Open-ended Questionnaire Responses:** The study included three open questions at the end of each questionnaire, soliciting respondents' perspectives on key success factors, threats, and general comments about the consulting project. These responses were analysed inductively, following guidelines from Miles & Huberman (1994). Qualitative data was coded and categorized into concepts, providing a qualitative lens to interpret the quantitative findings.
2. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Following questionnaire analysis, in-depth interviews were conducted to delve deeper into the quantitative results. These interviews aimed to provide real-life examples and explanations for the observed effects. A purposive sample of respondents who agreed to participate in interviews was chosen to illustrate and expand on the quantitative analyses.

The selection criteria for interview participants and cases were methodical:

- Cases were chosen based on their alignment with or deviation from quantitative findings.
- Confirming cases showcased patterns observed in quantitative data.
- Disconfirming cases were selected to explore exceptions and variations in results.
- Each case covered a range of variables central to the primary analyses.

For instance, Case 41 displayed a high success score, yet a deviation in the quality reduction variable. This discrepancy prompted deeper investigation through semi-structured interviews to understand the underlying mechanisms and conditions influencing such outcomes.

Interviews were conducted individually to ensure open and unbiased responses. A structured interview guide (refer to Appendix D) was used to maintain consistency and depth in questioning. Recordings and transcriptions of interviews aided in data preservation and analysis.

Selective coding was employed post-transcription to extract quotes, arguments, and examples that elucidated and personalized the quantitative findings. This qualitative component enriched the overall study by providing nuanced explanations and contextual understanding of the quantitative results.

3.18. Quality indicators of the research strategy

The evaluation of the research strategy in terms of quality indicators revolves around three main criteria: reliability, replication, and validity. Let's break down each criterion and its relevant sub-criteria:

1. Reliability:

- **Stability:** The research focused on the stability of measurements over time, particularly regarding respondents' evaluations of consulting projects after completion. An ANOVA analysis was used to assess stability across different years, ensuring the consistency of results.
- **Internal Reliability:** This was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, ensuring that items/questions within scales/variables were consistent. High internal reliability was achieved through rigorous analysis.
- **Inter-Observer Consistency:** A panel of three experienced practitioners categorized consulting projects, demonstrating high consistency. Interviews further confirmed the accuracy of categorization.

2. Replication:

- The detailed procedures and explanations throughout the research facilitate replication by other researchers. The transparency and clarity of the research methodology enhance the likelihood of replicating findings.

3. Validity:

- **Measurement Validity:** Construct validity was high, supported by theoretical grounding and face validation with target groups. Interviewees confirmed that questions accurately measured defined concepts.

- **Internal Validity:** While cross-sectional designs typically have weaker causality inference, this study's conclusions were grounded in empirical research and theories, maintaining internal validity.
- **External Validity:** The sample size of 140 consulting projects with 392 respondents, diverse roles, and random selection enhanced external validity. The study covered a broad spectrum of consultancy practices, contributing to generalizability.
- **Ecological Validity:** Findings were applicable and recognizable to practitioners in the field, providing relevant and usable recommendations without making specific organizational comparisons.

The research strategy demonstrated high reliability through stable measurements, internal consistency, and inter-observer agreement. It also supported replication with detailed procedures and transparent methodology. Validity was ensured through rigorous construct validation, grounded conclusions, broad sample representation, and relevance to real-world settings, highlighting the robustness and quality of the research approach.

3.19. A summary of the methodological framework

The research aimed to analyse consulting projects in a manner that balanced depth and breadth, ensuring generalizability. A sample of 140 projects was studied using online questionnaires to gather data from 392 participants, complemented by semi-structured interviews with project stakeholders. This mixed-methods approach, coupled with the cooperation of consultants and clients per project, a large sample size, meticulous instrument construction, and extensive analyses, enhanced the study's reliability and validity.

The methodological steps followed in the research are delving into the data analyses in subsequent chapters; the current section will present the results of the data collection phase. This includes general information about the sample, derived from the responses provided by the respondents in the questionnaires.

3.20. The results of the data collection phase

The data gathering phase extended over 60 days, during this period, over 200 consultancy and client firms were approached to participate by providing a consulting project for investigation. Consequently, the research accumulated a dataset comprising 140 consulting projects. These projects were concluded in the years 2020, 2011, 2022, or 2023, as illustrated in Figure 10. Additionally, Figure 9, displays the distribution of the types of consulting projects studied.

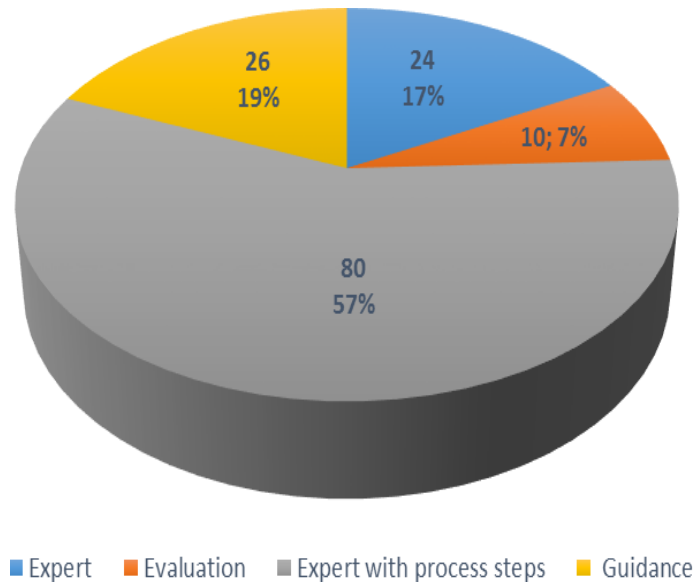


Figure 9 : Expert with process steps

The consulting projects have been classified into four types. Figure 9 indicates a notable representation of the "Expert with process steps" type among these projects.

Moreover, within each consulting project, at least one participating consultant and one client representative cooperated by filling in a questionnaire. Specifically, there were 30 consultants and 360 client representatives involved, as depicted in the above Figure.

The numbers indeed indicate that some projects had more than two respondents. The below figure highlights that projects with only two respondents are prominently represented. Additionally, the average number of respondents per project is 2.8, as shown in the Figure.

In Figure, the distribution of clients versus consultants within a case is presented. The numbers above the columns represent the number of cases where either client members or consultants are dominantly present or where an equal number of client members and

consultants are present within cases. For instance, '17' indicates that there are 17 cases in the sample where an additional consultant is present within a case compared to the number of client members within the same cases. The figure illustrates that the representation of clients a consultant within cases is generally equally distributed, resembling a normal distribution.

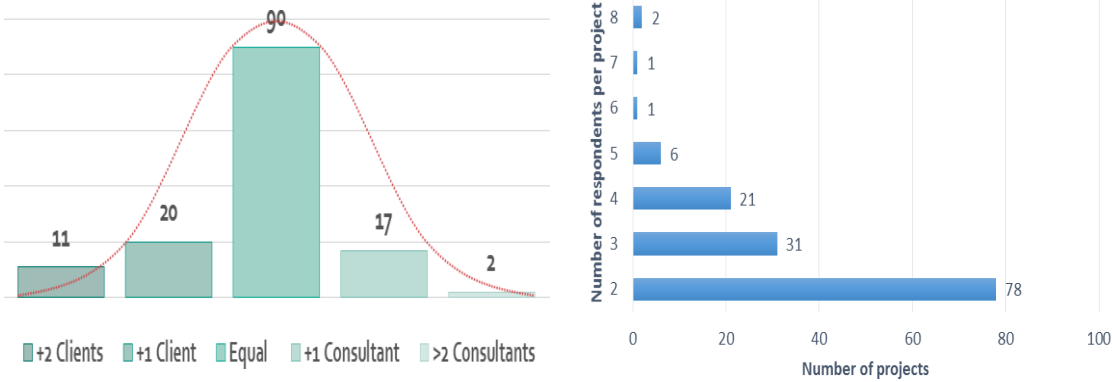


Figure 10 : The representation of clients

It's insightful to see how roles within consulting projects are distributed among respondents. In Figure 10, the distribution of consultant roles is depicted, showcasing the variety of roles that consultants can fulfil. Similarly, in Figure 16, the distribution of client roles is shown, with the principal role being prominently represented.

The principal role's dominance is understandable since principals typically provide assignments to consultants and have formal mandates to oversee and steer consulting projects. They bear overall responsibility for project outcomes on behalf of the client organization. Consequently, consultants often place significant value on the principal's opinions and directives, given their pivotal role in project management and decision-making.

The data collection phase has indeed yielded a diverse and substantial sample, offering valuable insights into consulting projects and their characteristics. In the upcoming chapters, we'll delve into how this sample relates to the conceptual model. This analysis will help us uncover key insights and findings that address the research questions effectively.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. CONTENTS AND RESULTS

4.1. Scaling: constructing the model variables

In this chapter, the factor analyses are presented to show how the gathered data is reduced in to the conceptual model. Remember from chapter 3 that several criteria must be applied to assess the appropriateness of conducting a factor analysis. The sample size of 392 respondents and 140 projects is sufficient for conducting a factor analysis. Although more ‘checks’ must be carried out, these checks will be described in the following sections. This chapter explains the scaling of the variables as presented in the conceptual model. Each section will describe the suitability assessment of the data for factor analysis, the factor extraction, the factor rotation and interpretation, and the reliability of the constructed scale or variable. It shows which questions, which are called ‘items’ as well, are grouped together. In case a group of items does not represent a predetermined variable, it will form a new variable. This will be explained in this chapter as well.

The 68 questions of the questionnaire, which are used to cover the conceptual model, are divided into: client questions, consultant questions, relation questions, context questions, assessment questions, and success questions. It is worth mentioning that the groups of variables and the corresponding questions, have to be strictly separated and the items between the groups should not overlay. Otherwise, it would be like comparing apples and oranges when all questions are analyzed at once. This would distort the interpretation of the analyses. Since the procedure per group of questions is the same, this chapter and its sections might be a bit repeatedly qua text and steps followed.

This involves steps such as assessing the suitability of the data, conducting factor extraction, rotating factors for interpretation, and ensuring the reliability of the constructed scales or variables.

Here's a summary of the key points and steps:

1. **Sample Size and Data Suitability:** You mentioned having a sample size of 392 respondents and 140 projects, which is considered sufficient for factor analysis. The

suitability of the data was assessed through criteria like the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index and Bartlett's test of Sphericity.

2. **Factor Extraction and Rotation:** Factor analysis was conducted to extract underlying factors or components from the data. Varimax and Oblimin rotations were performed to aid in the interpretation of these factors.
3. **Variable Construction and Reliability Testing:** Variables were constructed based on grouped questions/items, and reliability testing (Cronbach's Alpha) was used to assess the internal consistency of these variables.
4. **Results Interpretation and Decision Making:** The interpretation of factors/components was done based on factor loadings, scree plots, and theoretical frameworks. Decisions were made regarding the inclusion/exclusion of items in variables based on these interpretations and reliability assessments.
5. **Final Variable Summary:** A summary table was provided, outlining the variables, corresponding Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, included items, and any modifications made (e.g., mirroring negatively formulated questions, creating new variables).

4.2. Client variables

1. Top Management Support:

- Questions 8 to 11 form the scale with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .882, indicating very good internal consistency.
- All questions have a corrected item-total correlation coefficient higher than .30, ensuring they contribute well to the scale.

Presence of Client Leader/Sponsor:

- Questions 12 to 15 form a scale with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .761, indicating good internal consistency.
- Question 16, although it loads strong enough on this component, is not added to the scale due to its content not aligning with the scale's focus.
- Question 15 is included despite potential improvement in Cronbach Alpha if deleted.

Client Readiness:

- Questions 22 to 24 form a scale with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .742, indicating good internal consistency.
- Question 16, although loading strong enough is not included due to content mismatch.

Team Diversity:

- Questions 19 to 21 form the scale with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .589, which is below .60 but considered acceptable due to other factors like item-total correlation coefficients.

Commitment of Client Members:

- Originally, questions 16 to 18 formed the scale, but question 16 was removed based on factor analysis.
- The remaining two items form a scale with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .488, which is considered too low.
- As a result, question 16, 17, and 18 will form three separate variables: 'collaboration client members', 'personal involvement', and 'personal benefits'.

4.3. Consultant variables**1. Knowledge of the Consultant(s):**

- Questions 25 to 30 form the scale with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .823, indicating very good internal consistency.
- All questions in this scale have a corrected item-total correlation coefficient higher than .30, indicating they contribute well to the scale.

2. Skills of the Consultant(s):

- Questions 31 to 44 form a scale with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .892, which is very high and indicates excellent internal consistency.
- All questions in this scale also have a corrected item-total correlation coefficient higher than .30, demonstrating their strong contribution to the scale.

The factor analysis, parallel analysis, and reliability tests have guided the construction of these consultant variables, ensuring their internal consistency and relevance to the constructs being measured.

4.4. Context variables

1. Client Mandate during a Project:

- Questions 45, 48, and 49 form the scale with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .658, indicating acceptable internal consistency.
- All questions in this scale have a corrected item-total correlation coefficient higher than .30, contributing adequately to the scale.
- However, removing question 45 from the scale increases the Cronbach Alpha to .754, suggesting that this question doesn't align well with the other two in terms of content.

2. Time Pressure during a Consulting Project:

- Questions 46 and 47 form a scale with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .453, which is too low and indicates poor internal consistency.
- All questions in this scale have corrected item-total correlation coefficients lower than .30, further indicating weak contribution to the scale.
- As a result, this scale cannot be constructed effectively, and questions 45, 46, and 47 will form separate variables focusing on the priority of a consulting project, the timing of a consulting project, and the quality reduction of the outcome.

The factor analysis and reliability tests have guided the decision to separate the context variables into two distinct components based on their contribution and internal consistency.

4.5. Relationship variable

Trust Between Consultant and Client during a Consulting Project:

- Questions 50 to 53 form the scale with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .852, indicating very good internal consistency.
- All questions in this scale have a corrected item-total correlation coefficient higher than .30, which suggests they contribute well to the scale.
- The factor analysis revealed only one component with an eigenvalue exceeding 1, explaining 70.4% of the variance, indicating that all questions are strongly related to each other and contribute significantly to the overall trust variable.
- The scree plot and reliability tests support the use of this variable as suggested by the scale authors, affirming its validity and reliability for measuring trust between consultants and clients during consulting projects.

4.6. Assessment factors

Assessment Factors of a Consulting Project:

1. Improvements Within the Client Organization (Improvements Variable):

- Questions 54 and 65 to 70 form the scale.
- Cronbach Alpha coefficient: .839, indicating very good internal consistency.
- The items focus on the effects of a consulting project in the client organization after project completion, reflecting a retrospective perspective.

2. Collective Participation:

- Questions 62 to 64 form the scale.
- Cronbach Alpha coefficient: .751, indicating good internal consistency.
- These items assess the interaction, involvement, and guidance between the consultant and the client throughout the project, emphasizing collective participation.

3. Fulfilment of Pre-Agreements (Pre-Agreements Variable):

- Questions 55 to 58 form the scale, excluding question 61.
- Cronbach Alpha coefficient: .697, indicating acceptable internal consistency.
- The items focus on agreements made before a consulting project starts, such as timeline, budget, tasks, and resources. Question 61 forms a separate variable due to its unique content.

4. Approach:

- Questions 59 and 60 form the scale.
- Cronbach Alpha coefficient: .636, indicating acceptable internal consistency.
- These items assess the methods used during a consulting project, reflecting the approach taken by both the consultant and the client.

5. Equal Contribution:

- Question 61 forms a separate variable.
- The item assesses the equal contribution of both parties during a consulting project, which is not typically pre-agreed but emerges during project execution.

Note: Question 61, although not included in the four main scales, is retained as a separate variable to capture the aspect of equal contribution in the consulting project.

4.7. Success Variable:

- Questions Included: 71 to 76
- Analysis Method: Principal component analysis using SPSS version 20.0
- Data Suitability Assessment:
- Correlation matrix inspection: Many coefficients of 0.3 and above.
- KMO index: 0.848, exceeding the recommended value of 0.6.
- Bartlett's test of Sphericity: Reached statistical significance.
- Both measures support the factorability of the items.

Factor Analysis:

- Presence of one component with an eigenvalue exceeding 1.
- Explains 56.9% of the variance.
- Scree plot reveals a break after the second component, deciding to retain only one component.

Interpretation and Use:

- Consistent with previous research as described by the scale author.

Reliability:

- Cronbach Alpha coefficient: .842, indicating very good internal consistency.
- All questions have a corrected item-total correlation coefficient higher than .30.

The success variable in your questionnaire demonstrates good internal consistency and validity based on the analysis results.

Table 15 : Overview of variables and Cronbach Alpha Coefficients

Variable	Cronbach Alpha	Included Items (Questions)	Mirrored Questions
Client Variables		8-11, 12-15, 22-24, 19-21	17, 24
Consultant Variables		25-30, 31-44	35, 38
Context Variables		45, 48-49, 46-47	46, 47, 49
Trust Variables		50-53	N/A
Assessment Factors		54, 55-58, 61, 59-60, 62-64	54, 60, 65
Success Variable		71-76	N/A
New Variables		Improvements, Collective Participation, Pre-agreements, Approach, Equal Contribution	N/A

- Due to factor analyses, several variables are added to the original model.
- Original variables like client commitment, time pressure, and assessment factors are scaled into new variables.
- New variables are defined as Improvements, Collective Participation, Pre-agreements, Approach, and Equal Contribution.
- This summary and figure provide a clear overview of the variables, their corresponding Cronbach Alpha coefficients, the included items, and the changes made to the conceptual model based on factor analyses.

Table 16: An overview of the old and new variables constructed after the factor analyses

	Variables	Items
Client	1. Top management support (.882)	Question 8, 9, 10, and 11
	2. Presence client leader / sponsor (.761)	Question 12, 13, 14, and 15
	3. Client readiness (.742)	Question 22, 23, and 24 (mirrored)
	4. Team diversity (.589)	Question 19, 20, and 21
	5. Collaboration client members “Collaboration refers to the extent in which the client team members cooperated in order to make the consulting project a success.”	Question 16
	6. Personal involvement “Personal involvement refers to the extent in which the client team members were personal involved towards each other, regarding the Consulting project.”	Question 17 (mirrored)
	7. Personal benefits “Personal benefits refer to the extent in which the consulting project has brought personal benefits for client team members.”	Question 18
Consultant	8. Knowledge (.823)	Question 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30
	9. Skills (.892)	Question 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 (mirrored), 36, 37, 38 (mirrored), 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, and 44
Context	10. Priority of a consulting project “Priority refers to the extent in which the consulting	Question 45

	project had a priority in the client organization.”	
	11. The timing of a consulting project “Timing refers to the extent in which the consulting project was started at the right moment in the client organization.”	Question 46 (mirrored)
	12. The quality reduction of the outcome “Quality reduction refers to the extent in which the quality of the consulting project has been reduced.”	Question 47 (mirrored)
	13. Client mandate (.754)	Question 48, 49 (mirrored)
Relation	14. Mutual trust (.852)	Questions 50, 51, 52, and 53
	15. Improvements within the client organization (.839) “Improvements refer to the extent in which the client organization has improved, in retrospective, due to the consulting project.”	Questions 54 (mirrored), 65 (mirrored), 66, 67, 68, 69 and 70
	16. Collective participation (.751) “Collective participation refers to the extent in which the consultant and the client were involved actively, communicated back and forth, and whether the consultant guided the project during the whole consulting project.”	Questions 62, 63, and 64
	17. Fulfillment of the pre-agreements (.697) “Fulfillment of the pre-agreements refers to the extent in which the predetermined goals, objectives, and agreements between the client and consultant are achieved.”	Questions 55, 56, 57, and 58
Assessment factors	18. Approach (.751) “Approach refers to the extent a common accepted method/approach is used, which has been determined at the start of the consulting project.”	Questions 59 and 60 (mirrored)
	19. Equal contribution “Equal contribution refers to the extent in which the client and the consultant contributed equivalently during the project.”	Question 61
Success	20. Satisfaction (.842)	Questions 71, 72, 73 (mirrored), 74, 75, and 76

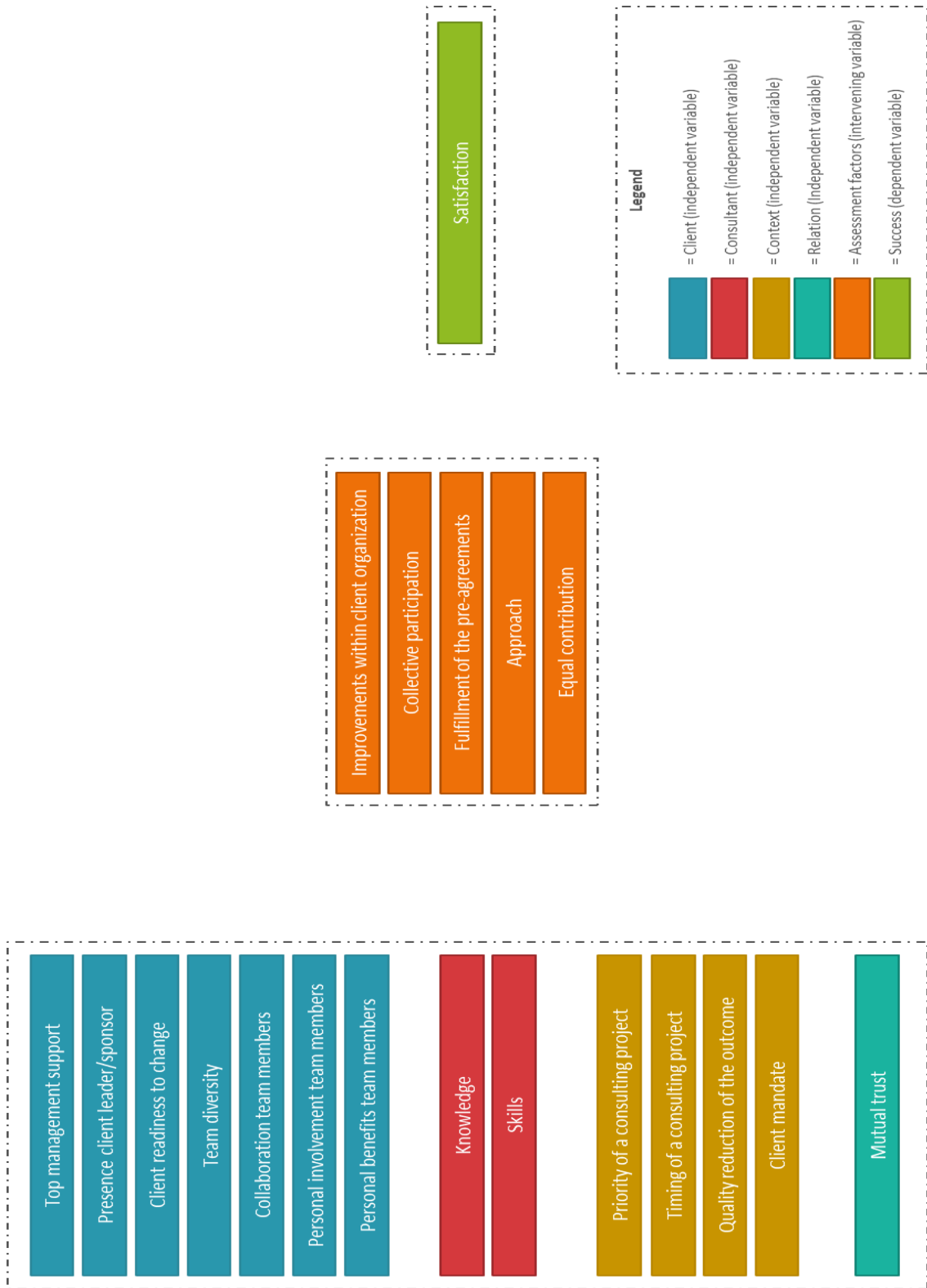


Figure 11 : Success Variable

4.8. Testing the conceptual model

First, descriptive statistics of the conceptual model and its variables that characterize the data are presented. Remember that the variables are used that are constructed after the factor analyses as described in chapter 5 (i.e. table 19 and figure 17). Second, a clear description of the multilevel analyses will be presented. It helps to understand what steps are followed and how the results of the analyses must be interpreted. These steps are executed per (sub-) model that is investigated.

As a result, this chapter is rather repetitive since the steps of the analyses per model are the same. Third, the presentation of the so-called null-model (0-model) will be discussed. The 0-model is the starting point in a multilevel analysis and in analyzing the conceptual model. Third, the effects of the independent variables on the intervening variables will be analyzed. Fourth, the effects of the independent and the intervening variables on the dependent variable are discussed. Fifth, the complete conceptual model will be illustrated. This is an overview of all the effects found within the conceptual model. Up to this point, the core of the conceptual model is analyzed.

The results and followed steps are discussed in more detail. The following phase is the exploratory phase as discussed in chapter 4. Since the executed steps of the multilevel analyses in this phase are the same, the results are discussed in less detail. So, a further investigation of the effects between the variables will be discussed. This chapter provides the results of the analyses as objective as possible. Interpretation of the results is only carried out in order to explain the meaning of the results.

1. Descriptive Statistics (Section 6.1):

- Presents descriptive statistics of variables from the conceptual model.
- Provides an overview of the data characteristics.

2. Multilevel Analyses (Section 6.2):

- Describes the steps and methodology followed in multilevel analyses.
- Explains how to interpret the results obtained from these analyses.
- Discusses the steps per model investigated, which may involve nested analyses.

3. Null-Model Analysis (Section 6.3):

- Discusses the 0-model, which serves as the baseline for multilevel analyses.
- Analyses the starting point in understanding relationships within the conceptual model.

4. Effects of Independent Variables on Intervening Variables (Section 6.4):

- Analyses how independent variables impact intervening variables within the model.
- Discusses the significance and implications of these effects.

5. Effects on Dependent Variable (Section 6.5):

- Examines the effects of both independent and intervening variables on the dependent variable.
- Discusses the magnitude and direction of these effects.

6. Complete Conceptual Model (Section 6.6):

- Illustrates all the effects found within the conceptual model.
- Provides a comprehensive overview of relationships between variables.

7. Exploratory Phase (Section 6.7):

- Continues the analysis with an exploratory phase, investigating further effects between variables.
- Discusses results in less detail compared to previous sections.

8. Interpretation and Explanation (Throughout Chapter 6):

- Provides objective results and interpretations to explain the meaning of the findings.
- Full interpretation of results is reserved for later

9. Bookmark:

- Serves as a guide for readers, helping them navigate through the complex analyses and discussions in Chapter 5.
- Provides a visual reference to understand which sections correspond to specific parts of the conceptual model.

Table 17 : Conceptual model testing results

Variable	Mean (SD)	5% Trimmed Mean	Minimum	Maximum
Top management Support (Client)	4.22 (.65)	4.28	1.88	5.00
Presence of a client leader/sponsor (Client)	4.26 (.42)	4.27	3.38	5.00
Client Readiness (Client)	4.10 (.44)	4.12	2.50	4.89
Team Diversity (Client)	3.73 (.56)	3.74	2.50	5.00
Collaboration client members (Client)	4.26 (.59)	4.30	2.00	5.00
Personal involvement (Client)	4.19 (.56)	4.22	2.00	5.00
Personal benefits (Client)	3.77 (.62)	3.79	2.00	5.00
Knowledge (Consultant)	4.08 (.44)	4.08	2.20	5.00
Skills (Consultant)	4.21 (.31)	4.22	3.07	4.89
Priority of a consulting project (Context)	4.02 (.79)	4.09	1.33	5.00
The timing of a consulting project (Context)	2.87 (.93)	2.88	1.00	5.00
The quality reduction of the outcome (Context)	3.26 (.81)	3.26	1.50	5.00
Client mandate (Context)	3.99 (.62)	4.04	1.75	5.00
Mutual trust (Relation)	4.33 (.38)	4.34	3.33	5.00
Improvements within the client organization (Assessment factors)	3.89 (.42)	3.91	1.93	4.79
Collective participation (Assessment factors)	4.25 (.50)	4.28	2.33	5.00
Fulfilment of the pre-agreements (Assessment factors)	4.04 (.44)	4.05	2.13	5.00
Approach (Assessment factors)	3.09 (.77)	3.10	1.00	4.50
Equal contribution (Assessment factors)	3.37 (.66)	3.39	2.00	4.50
Satisfaction (Success)	4.01 (.47)	4.03	1.75	5.00

These statistics provide a snapshot of the central tendency (mean), dispersion (standard deviation), and range of scores for each variable, offering valuable insights into the characteristics of the data.

The fact that most average scores are on the right-hand side of the 1 to 5 scale indicates a generally positive perception or evaluation of the variables by respondents. The exception is the 'timing of a consulting project' variable, where lower scores suggest a desire for projects to be carried out sooner.

The presence of outliers can greatly affect the interpretation of data, but since the trimmed mean and the regular mean are not significantly different for most variables, it suggests that extreme scores or outliers are not influencing the overall results. This strengthens the reliability of your data.

The high standard deviations (SD) for variables like 'timing of a consulting project' and 'quality reduction of the outcome' indicate a wide dispersion of scores around the mean. This variability can provide valuable insights into the diversity of opinions or experiences regarding these aspects of consulting projects.

Regarding the one-way ANOVA analysis, it's interesting to see that only a few variables showed statistically significant differences based on the year a consulting project ended. The small effect sizes suggest that these differences, although statistically significant, may not be practically significant.

The ANOVA results give insights into the statistical significance of differences between groups for each variable. The Sum of Squares indicates the variability between groups (Between Groups), within groups (Within Groups), and the total variability (Total). The Sig. value represents the p-value, which indicates the statistical significance of the differences.

Based on the provided results:

1. **Skills (Consultant):** There is a statistically significant difference in scores based on the year a consulting project ended ($p = .018$).
2. **The quality reduction of the outcome (Context):** There is a statistically significant difference in scores based on the year a consulting project ended ($p = .009$).
3. **Mutual trust (Relation):** There is no statistically significant difference in scores based on the year a consulting project ended ($p = .288$).
4. **Improvements within the client organization (Assessment factors):** There is no statistically significant difference in scores based on the year a consulting project

ended ($p = .069$). However, this p -value is close to the conventional significance level of .05, indicating a borderline significance.

5. **Collective participation (Assessment factors):** There is no statistically significant difference in scores based on the year a consulting project ended ($p = .601$).
6. **Fulfillment of the pre-agreements (Assessment factors):** There is no statistically significant difference in scores based on the year a consulting project ended ($p = .737$).
7. **Approach (Assessment factors):** There is a statistically significant difference in scores based on the year a consulting project ended ($p = .009$).
8. **Equal contribution (Assessment factors):** There is no statistically significant difference in scores based on the year a consulting project ended ($p = .871$).
9. **Satisfaction (Success):** There is no statistically significant difference in scores based on the year a consulting project ended ($p = .756$).

For the "Approach" variable, there is a significant difference in scores based on the year a consulting project ended ($p = .009$), indicating that the approach taken during consulting projects may have varied across different years. The other variables did not show significant differences in scores based on the year a consulting project ended, suggesting that these aspects were relatively consistent across the years considered in the analysis.

For the other variables, the p -values are greater than .05, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in scores based on the year a consulting project ended for these variables.

Generally, these results suggest that while there are some statistically significant differences in scores for certain variables, the differences are not substantial, as indicated by the small effect sizes previously discussed. This reinforces the stability of the results over time, supporting the reliability of your analyses.

- **Variables Correlation:** A Pearson correlation matrix was used to explore the relationships between variables.
- **Significance Level:** Correlations significant at $p < .05$ are shaded. Red indicates negative correlations, and green indicates positive correlations.

- **Interpretation Example:** For instance, the correlation between "approach" and "timing" variables is negative, suggesting that a perception of a consulting project needing to be carried out sooner is associated with a predetermined approach, and vice versa.
- **Strength of Correlations:** Correlations were interpreted based on their strength using guidelines by Pallant (2011): small ($r = .10$ to $.29$), medium ($r = .30$ to $.49$), large ($r = .50$ to 1.0).
- **Strong Correlations:** Strong correlations (marked bold and underlined) were identified and are noteworthy, especially those involving the "success" variable, which shows strong correlations with eight other variables.
- **Coefficient of Determination:** The coefficient of determination (r^2) was calculated to understand how much variance variables share. For example, an r-value of $.748$ between "success" and "improvements" variables indicates they share nearly 60% of their variance.
- **Multicollinearity Check:** Given the high number of strong correlations, there's a possibility of multicollinearity, which will be further explored in subsequent analyses.

This analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between variables and sets the stage for subsequent multilevel and regression analyses.

Table 18 : Correlations

	Top management Support	Presence of a client leader/sponsor	Client Readiness	Team Diversity	Collaboration client members	Personal involvement	Personal benefits	Knowledge	Skills	Priority of a consulting project	The timing of a consulting project	The quality reduction of the outcome	Client mandate	Mutual trust	Improvements within the client organization	Collective participation	Fulfillment of pre-agreements	Approach	Equal contribution	Satisfaction
Top management Support		0,365	0,304	0,341	0,403	0,163	0,346	0,425	0,391	0,650	0,238	0,345	0,585	0,419	0,584	0,321	0,357	-0,057	0,087	0,518
Presence of a client leader/sponsor	0,365		0,162	0,317	0,591	0,115	0,371	0,395	0,463	0,352	0,098	0,240	0,494	0,364	0,400	0,343	0,403	-0,093	0,117	0,463
Client Readiness	0,304	0,162		0,168	0,419	0,273	0,272	0,345	0,397	0,201	0,164	0,189	0,422	0,387	0,374	0,280	0,313	-0,031	0,290	0,421
Team Diversity	0,341	0,317	0,168		0,258	0,061	0,297	0,220	0,299	0,337	0,001	0,215	0,292	0,352	0,289	0,255	0,170	-0,003	0,160	0,339
Collaboration client members	0,403	0,591	0,419	0,258		0,308	0,381	0,430	0,428	0,347	0,099	0,375	0,497	0,408	0,385	0,341	0,405	-0,011	0,198	0,444
Personal involvement	0,163	0,115	0,273	0,061	0,308		0,298	0,233	0,193	0,108	0,134	0,145	0,188	0,250	0,192	-0,018	0,212	-0,187	0,165	0,163
Personal benefits	0,346	0,371	0,272	0,297	0,381	0,298		0,431	0,512	0,368	0,022	0,306	0,490	0,525	0,597	0,292	0,254	-0,124	0,171	0,553
Knowledge	0,425	0,395	0,345	0,220	0,430	0,233	0,431		0,646	0,387	0,171	0,324	0,460	0,626	0,491	0,307	0,382	-0,140	0,290	0,593
Skills	0,391	0,463	0,397	0,299	0,428	0,193	0,512	0,646		0,339	0,070	0,411	0,474	0,664	0,612	0,408	0,510	-0,069	0,183	0,672
Priority of a consulting project	0,650	0,352	0,201	0,337	0,347	0,108	0,368	0,387	0,339		0,204	0,162	0,441	0,290	0,538	0,259	0,326	-0,114	0,171	0,537
The timing of a consulting project	0,238	0,098	0,164	0,001	0,099	0,134	0,022	0,171	0,070	0,204		0,262	0,111	0,125	0,090	0,122	0,131	-0,253	0,175	0,143
The quality reduction of the outcome	0,345	0,240	0,189	0,215	0,375	0,145	0,306	0,324	0,411	0,162	0,262		0,366	0,310	0,341	0,263	0,393	0,042	-0,002	0,417
Client mandate	0,585	0,494	0,422	0,292	0,497	0,188	0,490	0,460	0,474	0,441	0,111	0,366		0,414	0,616	0,537	0,504	-0,024	0,173	0,669
Mutual trust	0,419	0,364	0,387	0,352	0,408	0,250	0,525	0,626	0,664	0,290	0,125	0,310	0,414		0,446	0,395	0,358	-0,067	0,317	0,575
Improvements within the client organization	0,584	0,400	0,374	0,289	0,385	0,192	0,597	0,491	0,612	0,538	0,090	0,341	0,616	0,446		0,416	0,441	-0,145	0,106	0,748
Collective participation	0,321	0,343	0,280	0,255	0,341	-0,018	0,292	0,307	0,408	0,259	0,122	0,263	0,537	0,395	0,416		0,321	0,068	0,086	0,471
Fulfillment of pre-agreements	0,357	0,403	0,313	0,170	0,405	0,212	0,254	0,382	0,510	0,326	0,131	0,393	0,504	0,358	0,441	0,321		0,122	0,165	0,622
Approach	-0,057	-0,093	-0,031	-0,003	-0,011	-0,187	-0,124	-0,140	-0,069	-0,114	-0,253	0,042	-0,024	-0,067	-0,145	0,068	0,122		-0,167	0,017
Equal contribution	0,087	0,117	0,290	0,160	0,198	0,165	0,171	0,290	0,183	0,171	0,175	-0,002	0,173	0,317	0,106	0,086	0,165	-0,167		0,197
Satisfaction	0,518	0,463	0,421	0,339	0,444	0,163	0,553	0,593	0,672	0,537	0,143	0,417	0,669	0,575	0,748	0,471	0,622	0,017	0,197	

4.9. Explanation of the executed procedure of the multilevel analyses

1. Null Model Specification (M0):

- This initial model includes only the dependent variable at the lowest level (within projects).
- The purpose is to assess whether conducting a multilevel analysis is appropriate by examining the intra class correlation (ICC), which measures the variability between consulting projects.
- If the ICC is sufficiently large (typically above 0.05), indicating meaningful differences between projects, a multilevel analysis is justified.

2. Level-1 Model Specification:

- Skipped in your study, as the focus is on between-project (level-2) effects rather than within-project (level-1) or cross-level effects.

3. Level-2 Model Specification (M1):

- This model includes independent variables and any controlling variables (e.g., type of consulting projects).
- Three key components of the analysis are discussed:
 - a) **Fixed Effects:** Examines the relationships between independent variables and the dependent variable.
 - b) **Random Effects:** Assesses how much of the variance in the dependent variable between projects can be explained by the independent variables.
 - c) **Model Fit:** Utilizes a deviance test to evaluate how well the model fits the data compared to alternative models.

4. Refinement of Model:

- After analysing M1, subsequent models (e.g., M2, M3) may be created by including only significant predictors from the previous model.
- This iterative process refines the model by excluding non-significant predictors and re-evaluating the model's fit.

5. Linear Regression Analysis:

- Conducted as a validation step to compare results with the multilevel analysis.
- Provides additional insights such as the presence of multi collinearity and the amount of variance explained by the model (R-squared).

This procedure involves progressively refining the model based on significant predictors and ensuring the model's fit to the data through various statistical tests. Each step contributes to a comprehensive analysis of the relationships and effects within the conceptual model.

Breakdown of what each model represents:

1. Null Model (M0):

- Estimates the variances of the intercept and residual.
- Calculates the intra class correlation (ICC) to determine the variability between consulting projects.
- Indicates whether a multilevel analysis is warranted based on the ICC.

2. Model 1 (M1):

- Includes all independent variables and controlling variables.
- Examines the effects of these variables on the satisfaction variable.
- Provides a baseline for comparison with more refined models.

3. Model 2 (M2):

- Includes only significant effects from Model 1.
- Refines the model by excluding non-significant predictors.

4. Model 3 (M3):

- Includes all independent variables, assessment factors, and the controlling variable.
- Explores the additional impact of assessment factors on satisfaction.

5. Model 4 (M4):

- Includes significant effects from Model 3.
- Further refines the model based on significant predictors.

6. Model with Assessment Factors Only:

- Focuses specifically on the assessment factors' effects on satisfaction.
- Provides insights into the direct impact of these factors on the outcome variable.

By systematically analysing these models, you can determine which variables and factors have significant effects on satisfaction and whether there are intervening effects of the assessment factors. This approach helps in understanding the nuanced relationships within your conceptual model and how different variables contribute to the outcome variable of interest.

Table 19 : Linear Regression Analysis

Model	M0: Intercept only	M1: with predictors	M2: with sign. predictors only	M3: with predictors	M4: with sign. predictors only	M5: with sign. predictors only
	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)
Fixed part Intercept Types of projects	3.99 (.04) *	-0.31 (.47) Not significant	-0.24 (.38)	-0.91 (.50) Not significant	-0.12 (.29)	-0.14 (.29)
Top management support		-0.07 (.06)		-0.10 (.06)		
Presence client leader/sponsor		0.05 (.09)		0.02 (.09)		
Client Readiness		0.11 (.08)		0.07 (.08)		
Team diversity		0.01 (.05)		0.02 (.05)		
Collaboration client members		-0.05 (.07)		-0.04 (.07)		
Personal involvement team members		-0.07 (.06)		-0.07 (.06)		
Personal benefits team members		0.09 (.06)		0.05 (.06)		
Knowledge		0.09 (.09)		0.11 (.09)		
Skills		0.31 (.15) *	0.61 (.10) *	0.08 (.15)		
Priority of a consulting project		0.15 (.05) *	0.14 (.04) *	0.10 (.05) *	0.08 (.04)	
Timing of a consulting project		0.01 (.03)		0.01 (.03)		
Quality reduction of the outcome		0.06 (.05)		0.02 (.04)		
Client mandate		0.23 (.07) *	0.27 (.05) *	0.13 (.07)		
Mutual trust		0.15 (.11)		0.16 (.11)		
Improvement within the client organization				0.39 (.11) *	0.59 (.08) *	0.66 (.07) *
Collective participation				0.00 (.07)		
Fulfillment of the pre-agreements				0.25 (.08) *	0.38 (.07) *	0.40 (.06) *
Approach				0.05 (.04)		
Equal contribution				0.00 (.05)		
Random part Residual (σ^2 :	0.30 (.03) *	0.25 (.02)	0.26 (.02)	0.23 (.02) *	0.25 (.02)	0.25

within)		*	*		*	(.02) *
Intercept (between)	(τ_2 : 0.09 (.03) *	Redundant	Redundant	Redundant	Redundant	Redundant
ICC (ρ)	0.2202					
Model fit						
-2LL	720,519	563,503	579.481	536,084	562.372	565.925
AIC	724,519	603,503	591.481	586,084	574.372	575.925
BIC	732,446	682,723	615.278	685,109	598.169	595.756
# of parameters	3	20	6	25	6	5
Dependent variable: Satisfaction (i.e. success) (lvl. 1) Predictors are aggregated from lvl. 1 --> lvl. 2 *: significant at $p < 0.05$						

1. M1 - Full Model with All Predictors:

- The controlling variable (type of project) is not significant.
- Three significant direct effects on success are found: skills of consultants, priority of the project, and client mandate.
- The covariance parameters suggest remaining variability within projects, but a reduction in the residual is achieved, indicating the predictors account for substantial variance at the project level.
- Model fit analysis shows M1 fits the data better than the null model (M0).

2. M2 - Model with Significant Predictors Only:

- Retains the significant direct effects found in M1.
- Removes non-significant predictors, indicating the remaining variables are essential for explaining success.

3. M3 - Model with Assessment Factors as Intervening Variables:

- Type of project remains insignificant.
- Assessment factors (improvements, pre-agreements) act as intervening variables, absorbing direct effects found in M1 and M2.
- Priority of the project no longer directly affects success in this model.

4. M4 - Model with Significant Assessment Factors Only:

- Confirms that only assessment factors significantly affect success.
- Deviance test suggests additional variables in M3 are superfluous.
- Model fit analysis shows M4 fits the data better than M2.

5. M5 - Model with Only Significant Assessment Factors:

- Priority of the project is found to be superfluous, reinforcing the role of assessment factors as intervening variables.
- Two assessment factors (improvements, pre-agreements) significantly affect success.

The analysis demonstrates that the skills of consultants, client mandate, and priority of the project directly influence success. However, when assessment factors are introduced as intervening variables, they absorb these direct effects, indicating that improvements and pre-agreements play a crucial role in mediating the relationship between predictors and success. The final model (M5) confirms the significance of these assessment factors in determining success in consulting projects.

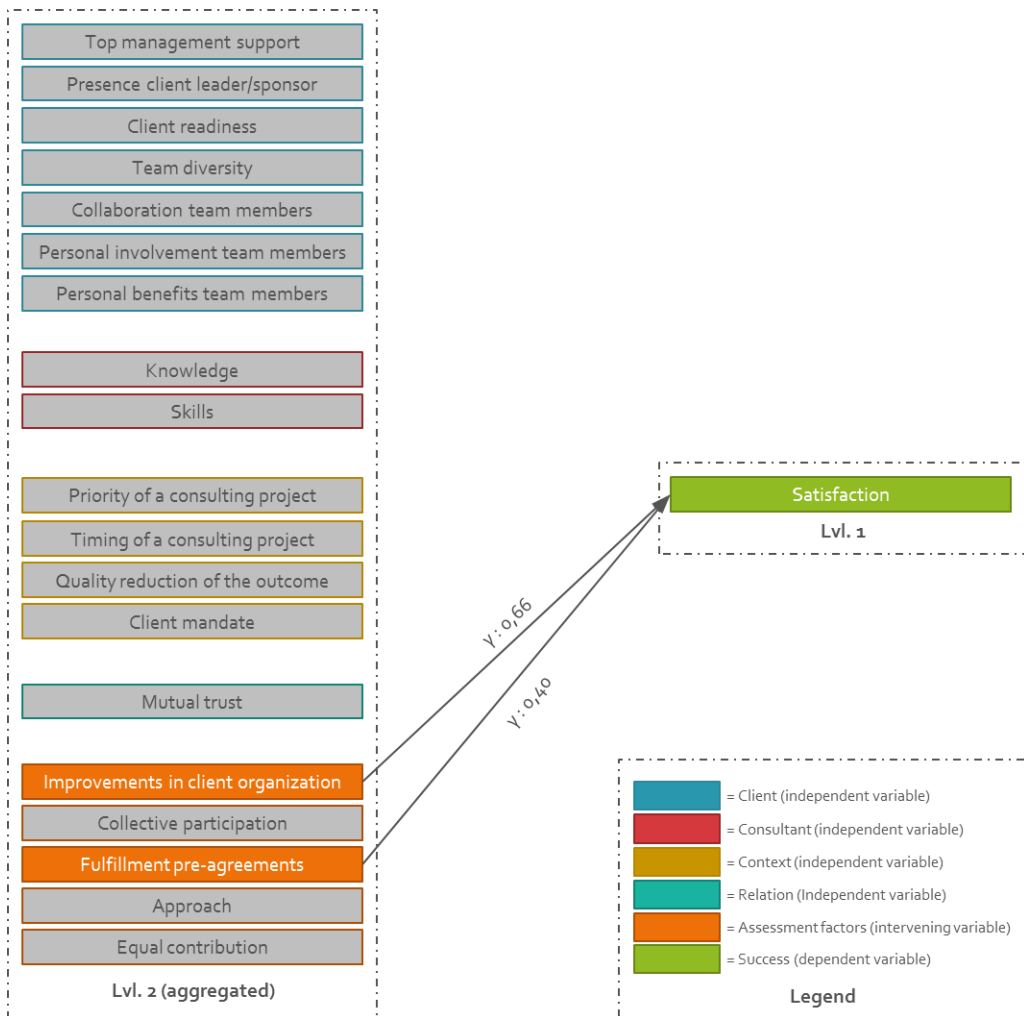


Figure 12 : Skills that directly influence success

4.10. The effects of the independent variables on the improvement factors

The analysis of the multilevel model with the improvement factors as the dependent variable and all predictors included reveals several important insights:

Table 20 : The effects of the independent variables on the improvement factors

Model	M0: Intercept only	M1: with predictors	M2: with sign. predictors only
	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)
Fixed part			
Intercept	3.88 (.04) *	0.55 (.43)	0.42 (.35)
Type of project		Not significant	
Top management support		0.09 (.06)	
Presence client leader/sponsor		0.02 (.08)	
Client Readiness		0.10 (.07)	
Team diversity		-0.03 (.05)	
Collaboration client members		-0.09 (.06)	
Personal involvement team members		-0.01 (.05)	
Personal benefits team members		0.22 (.05) *	0.19 (.05) *
Knowledge		0.02 (.08)	
Skills		0.41 (.14) *	0.38 (.10) *
Priority of a consulting project		0.10 (.05) *	0.13 (.04) *
Timing of a consulting project		-0.01 (.03)	
Quality reduction of the outcome		0.02 (.04)	
Client mandate		0.14 (.06) *	0.16 (.05) *
Mutual trust		-0.12 (.10)	
Random part			
Residual (σ^2: within)	0.25 (.02) *	0.21 (.02) *	0.22 (.02) *
Intercept (τ^2: between)	0.07 (.02) *	Redundant	Redundant
ICC (ρ)	0.2219		
Model fit			
-2LL	654.023	505.050	522.649
AIC	658.023	545.050	536.649
BIC	665.960	624.373	564.448

# of parameters	3	20	7
Dependent variable: Improvement factors (lvl. 1) Predictors are aggregated from lvl. 1 --> lvl. 2			
*: significant at $p < 0.05$			

Generally, the analysis indicates that the personal benefits of client members, skills of consultants, priority of the project, and client mandate significantly influence the realization of improvements within client organizations. These variables account for all the variance at the project level, emphasizing their importance in explaining variation in improvement factors. The final model (M2) is less complex and easier to interpret, fitting the data better than both the null model (M0) and the full model (M1).

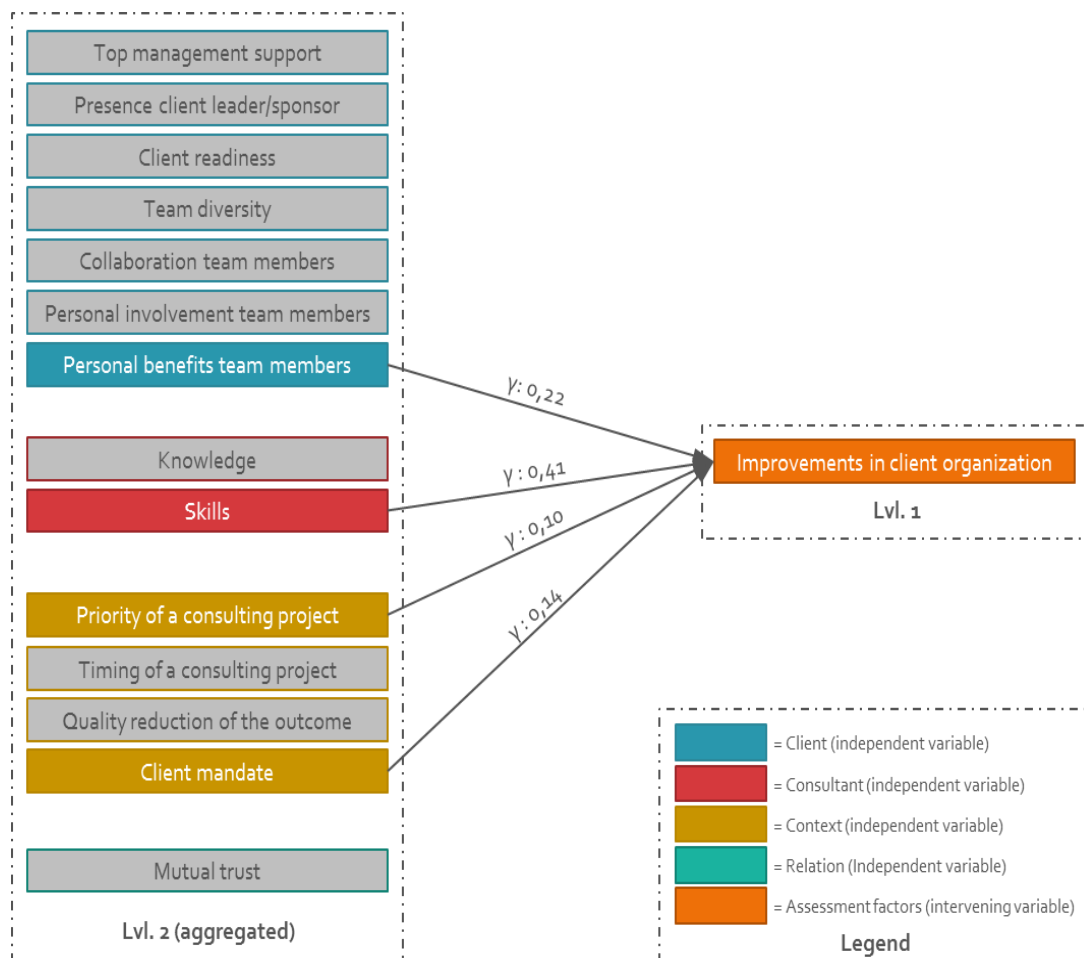


Figure 13 : Influential Variables in the realization of improvements within client Organizations.

4.11. The effects of the independent variables on the collective participation factors

The next model tested, concerns the effects of the independent variables on the collective participation. Table shows the output of the multilevel analyses that are carried out to test the model. In the table, three models are shown. The first model is the null-model (M0). The second model is the complete model, including all variables and the controlling variable (M1). The third model is the model with the significant effects only (M2).

Table 21 : The output of the multilevel analyses with ‘collective participation’ as a dependent variable

Model	M0: Intercept only	M1: with predictors	M2: with sign. predictors only
Fixed part	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)	Coefficient (s.e.)
Intercept	4.25 (.04) *	1.34 (.57) *	1.84 (.39) *
Type of project		Not significant	
Top management support		-0.06 (.08)	
Presence client leader/sponsor		0.02 (.11)	
Client Readiness		0.01 (.10)	
Team diversity		0.07 (.07)	
Collaboration client members		0.04 (.08)	
Personal involvement team members		-0.17 (.07) *	-0.16 (.06) *
Personal benefits team members		-0.04 (.07)	
Knowledge		-0.15 (.11)	
Skills		0.21 (.18)	
Priority of a consulting project		-0.01 (.06)	
Timing of a consulting		0.05 (.04)	

Model	M0: Intercept only	M1: with predictors	M2: with sign. predictors only
project			
Quality reduction of the outcome		-0.00 (.06)	
Client mandate		0.41 (.08) *	0.39 (.06) *
Mutual trust		0.33 (.13) *	0.35 (.10) *
Random part			
Residual (σ^2: within)	0.37 (.03) *	0.37 (.03) *	0.38 (.03) *
Intercept (τ^2: between)	0.09 (.03) *	Redundant	Redundant
ICC (ρ)	0.2028		
Model fit			
-2LL	796.849	712.553	725.718
AIC	800.849	752.553	737.718
BIC	808.776	831.773	761.515
# of parameters	3	20	6
Dependent variable: Collective participation (lvl. 1) Predictors are aggregated from lvl. 1 --> lvl. 2 *: significant at $p < 0.05$			

The analysis of the multilevel models M0, M1, and M2 for collective participation factors reveals important insights into the predictors' effects and the model fit. Here's a breakdown of the findings from each model:

M0 - Null Model:

- ICC of 0.2028 indicates justification for conducting a multilevel analysis.
- The introduction of variables in subsequent models significantly reduces level-2 variance in collective participation factors.
- Model fit analysis shows that M1 fits the data better than M0, indicating the contribution of predictors to explaining variance in collective participation.

M1 - Full Model with All Predictors:

- Controlling variable (type of project) is not significant, emphasizing the relevance of included predictors.
- Direct effects:
 1. Personal involvement of client project members negatively influences collective participation.
 2. Client mandate and mutual trust positively influence collective participation.
- Covariance parameters suggest that included variables account for all level-2 variance in collective participation factors.
- Model fit analysis confirms M1's superior fit compared to M0.

M2 - Model with Significant Predictors Only:

- Retains significant direct effects found in M1.
- Eliminates non-significant predictors, reducing model complexity while maintaining explanatory power.
- Model fit analysis indicates that M2 fits the data better than M1 and significantly better than M0, highlighting the relevance of the retained predictors.

The analysis demonstrates that the personal involvement of client project members negatively impacts collective participation, while client mandate and mutual trust have positive influences. The significant reduction in level-2 variance by included predictors emphasizes their importance in explaining collective participation factors. M2 emerges as the most suitable model, offering a better fit, reduced complexity, and clearer interpretation compared to M0 and M1.

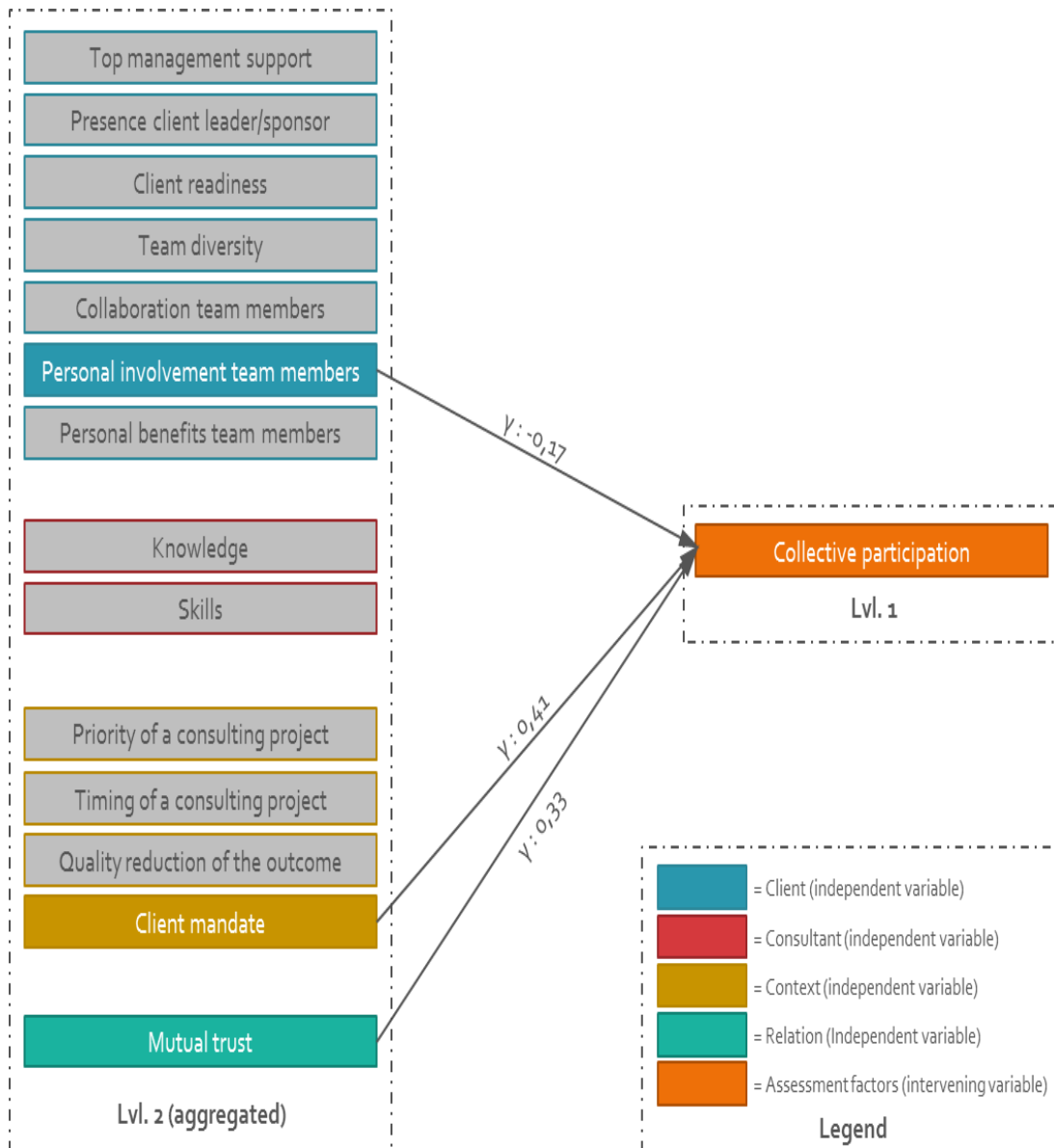


Figure 14 : A visualization of the found effects between the predictors and collective participation

Achieving a significant model that explains a substantial portion of the variance (38%) in success at level-2 is a strong validation of the methodology and the reliability of the results. The significant effects of the client mandate and personal involvement of client team members further confirm the importance of these variables in influencing success outcomes. Overall, the consistency between the regression analysis and multilevel analysis strengthens the credibility of the study's conclusions.

4.12. The effects of the independent variables on the pre-agreement factors

Table 22 : Output of Multilevel Analyses with ‘Fulfillment of Pre-Agreements’ as Dependent Variable

Model	M0: Intercept Only	M1: With Predictors	M2: With Significant Predictors Only	M3: With Refined Predictors Only
Fixed Part				
Intercept	4.02 (.04) *	0.59 (.51)	1.21 (0.43) *	1.26 (.43) *
Type of Project		Not significant		
Top Management Support		-0.06 (.07)		
Presence Client Leader		0.14 (.10)		
Client Readiness		0.04 (.09)		
Team Diversity		-0.04 (.06)		
Collaboration		0.05 (.07)		
Personal Involvement		0.06 (.06)		
Personal Benefits		-0.14 (.06) *	-0.10 (.06)	
Knowledge		-0.03 (.10)		
Skills		0.34 (.16) *	0.44 (.13) *	0.37 (.12) *
Project Priority		0.08 (.05)		
Timing of Project		0.02 (.04)		
Quality Reduction		0.11 (.05) *	0.16 (.04) *	0.12 (.04) *
Client Mandate		0.17 (.07) *	0.29 (.06) *	0.20 (.06) *
Mutual Trust		0.08 (.12)		
Random Part				
Residual (σ^2 : within)	0.27 (.02) *	0.27 (.02) *	0.26 (.02) *	0.26 (.02) *
Intercept (τ^2 : between)	0.08 (.02) *	0.01 (.01)	0.03 (.01) *	0.03 (.02) *
ICC (ρ)	0.2347	0.0462	0.0872	0.0913
Model Fit				
-2LL	688.252	606.728	619.715	622.358
AIC	692.252	646.728	633.715	634.358
BIC	700.189	726.051	661.514	658.185
# of Parameters	3	20	7	6

* Significant at $p < 0.05$ (random part significance divided by 2)

4.13. Description of Multilevel Analysis Results

Model M0 (Intercept Only):

- The null model shows an intercept estimate of 4.02 with a standard error of 0.04, indicating a significant base level of pre-agreement fulfillment.
- The variances for the intercept and residual are estimated at 0.08 and 0.27 respectively.
- The ICC of 0.2347 indicates that about 23.47% of the variance in pre-agreement fulfillment is at the project level, justifying the use of a multilevel model.

Model M1 (With Predictors):

- The inclusion of predictors does not show the type of project as significant, implying that project type differences in pre-agreement fulfillment can be explained by the included predictors.
- Significant predictors include:
 - **Personal Benefits of Team Members:** Negative effect (-0.14, s.e. 0.06).
 - **Skills of Consultants:** Positive effect (0.34, s.e. 0.16).
 - **Quality Reduction:** Positive effect (0.11, s.e. 0.05).
 - **Client Mandate:** Positive effect (0.17, s.e. 0.07).
- The residual variance remains at 0.27, while the intercept variance is reduced to 0.01.
- The model fit improves significantly (-2LL reduced by 81.524), indicating that the predictors contribute substantially to explaining variance in pre-agreement fulfillment.

Model M2 (With Significant Predictors Only):

- Only the significant predictors from M1 are included.
- Personal benefits lose significance when isolated (-0.10, s.e. 0.06).
- The skills, quality reduction, and client mandate effects become stronger:
 - **Skills of Consultants: Positive effect (0.44, s.e. 0.13).**
 - **Quality Reduction: Positive effect (0.16, s.e. 0.04).**
 - **Client Mandate: Positive effect (0.29, s.e. 0.06).**
- The proportion of explained variance at level-2 is about 30%, slightly less than in M1.
- The model fit indicates a slightly lower -2LL, AIC, and BIC compared to M1, supporting that non-significant variables in M1 do not contribute to explaining variance.

Model M3 (Refined Model):

- Tests whether the personal benefits of client team members add value.
- The ICC increases to 0.0913.
- The model fit slightly improves (-2LL difference of 2.643, lower than the critical χ^2 value), indicating that personal benefits do not significantly affect pre-agreement fulfillment.

M1 best explains the variance in pre-agreement fulfilment, with skills of consultants, quality reduction, and client mandate as significant positive predictors.

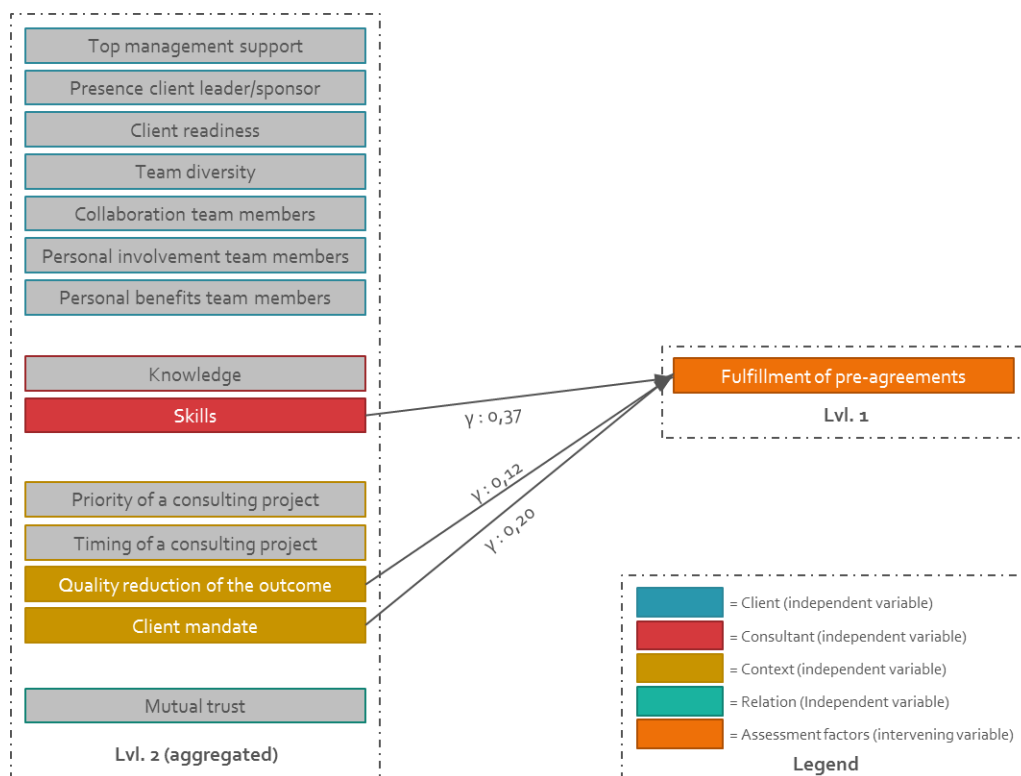


Figure 15 : Regression Analysis

The output of the regression analysis for this model is presented in appendix. The output shows a significant model, which explains about 42% of the variance in the pre-agreement’s variable at level-2. The analysis shows no presence of multicollinearity, with boundaries in tolerance values of less than .10 or VIF values of above 10 (Pallant, 2011), and no violation

of the assumptions of outliers and normality. The regression also shows significant effects of the client mandate, the quality reduction of the outcome, and the skills of the consultant. It can be stated that the multilevel analysis is carried out in the proper manner since the output of the regression analysis and the output of the multilevel analysis show many similarities.

4.13. The Effects of the Independent Variables on the Approach Factors

The following model investigates the effects of the independent variables on the approach factors. Table 23 presents the results of the multilevel analyses carried out to test this model.

Table 23 Output of Multilevel Analyses with ‘Approach’ as a Dependent Variable

Model	M0: Intercept Only	M1: With Predictors	M2: With Significant Predictors Only
Fixed Part			
Intercept	3.11 (.07) *	4.53 (1.05) *	3.68 (.21) *
Type of Project		Not significant	
Top Management Support		0.10 (.14)	
Presence Client Leader		-0.19 (.21)	
Client Readiness		0.01 (.18)	
Team Diversity		0.03 (.12)	
Collaboration		0.17 (.15)	
Personal Involvement		-0.21 (.13)	
Personal Benefits		-0.17 (.13)	
Knowledge		-0.27 (.20)	
Skills		0.04 (.33)	
Project Priority		-0.05 (.11)	
Timing of Project		-0.21 (.07) *	-0.20 (.07) *
Quality Reduction		0.09 (.10)	
Client Mandate		0.06 (.14)	
Mutual Trust		0.12 (.25)	
Random Part			
Residual (σ^2: within	0.47 (.04) *	0.47 (.04) *	0.47 (.04) *

Model	M0: Intercept Only	M1: With Predictors	M2: With Significant Predictors Only
Intercept (τ^2: between)	0.40 (.07) *	0.30 (.06) *	0.36 (.07) *
ICC (ρ)	0.4595	0.3890	0.4389
Model Fit			
-2LL	965.183	934.329	953.324
AIC	969.183	974.329	961.324
BIC	977.084	1053.342	977.137
# of Parameters	3	20	4

* Significant at $p < 0.05$ (random part significance divided by 2)

Description of Multilevel Analysis Results

Model M0 (Intercept Only):

- The null model shows an intercept estimate of 3.11 with a standard error of 0.07, indicating a significant base level of approach factors.
- The variances for the intercept and residual are estimated at 0.40 and 0.47 respectively.
- The ICC of 0.4595 indicates that about 45.95% of the variance in approach factors is at the project level, justifying the use of a multilevel model.

Model M1 (With Predictors):

- The inclusion of predictors does not show the type of project as significant, implying that project type differences in approach factors can be explained by the included predictors.
- Only one significant predictor was found:
- **Timing of the Consulting Project:** Negative effect (-0.21, s.e. 0.07).
- The residual variance remains at 0.47, while the intercept variance is reduced to 0.30.
- The model fit improves significantly (-2LL reduced by 30.854), indicating that the predictors contribute substantially to explaining variance in approach factors.

Model M2 (With Significant Predictors Only):

- Only the significant predictor from M1 is included.
- Timing of the consulting project maintains its significance by its own (-0.20, s.e. 0.07).
- The proportion of explained variance at level-2 is about 7%, less than the 18% in M1.

- The model fit indicates a slightly lower -2LL, AIC, and BIC compared to M1, supporting that non-significant variables in M1 do not contribute to explaining variance.

M1 best explains the variance in approach factors, with the timing of the consulting project as a significant negative predictor.

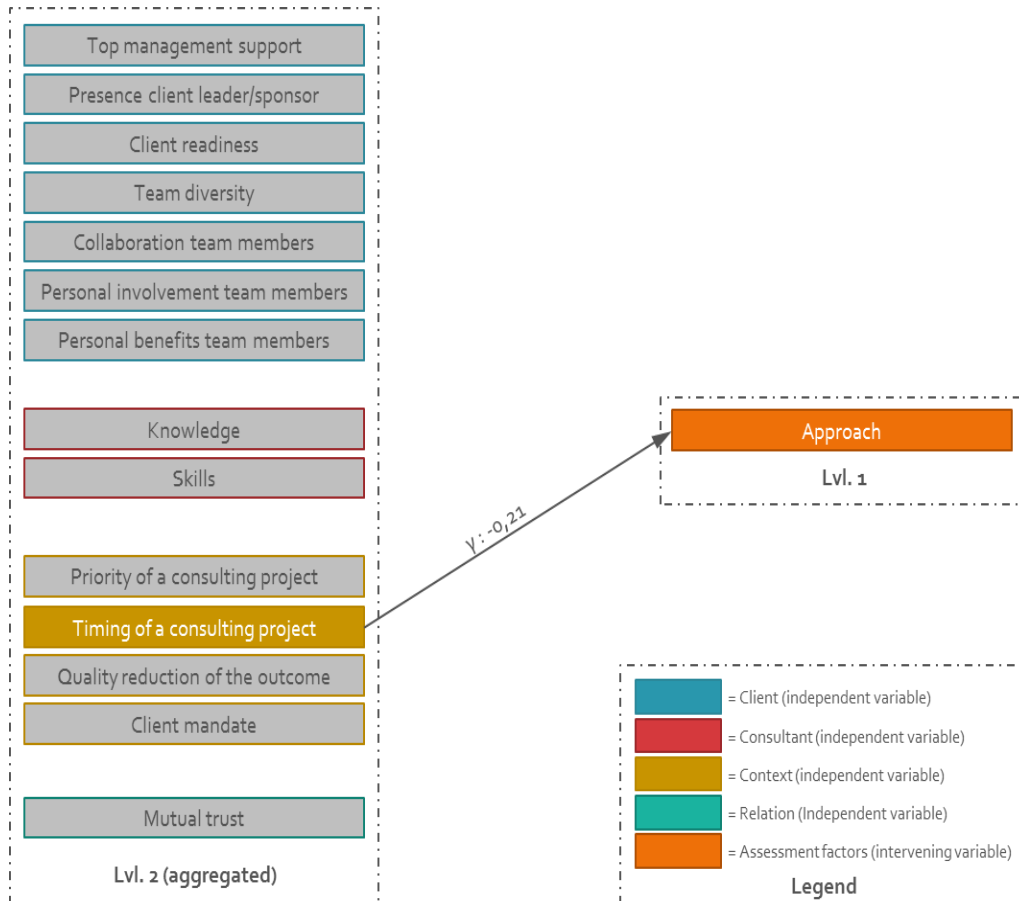


Figure 16 : A visualization of the found effects between the predictors and approach

The output of the regression analysis for this model is presented in appendix F5. The output shows a non-significant model, which explains about 14% of the variance in success at level-2. The analysis shows no presence of multicollinearity, with boundaries in tolerance values of less than .10 or VIF values of above 10 (Pallant, 2011), and no violation of the assumptions of outliers and normality. Although the model is not significant, the regression shows a significant effect of the timing of a consulting project on the approach as well. It can be stated that the multilevel analysis is carried out in the proper manner since the output of the regression analysis and the output of the multilevel analysis show many similarities.

4.14. The Effects of the Independent Variables on the Equal Contribution Factors

The following model examines the effects of the independent variables on the equal contribution factors. Table 28 presents the output of the multilevel analyses conducted to test this model. The table includes the null model (M0) and the complete model with all predictors and the controlling variable (M1).

Table 24 : Output of Multilevel Analyses with ‘Equal Contribution’ as a Dependent Variable

Model	M0: Intercept Only	M1: With Predictors
Fixed Part		
Intercept	3.37 (.05) *	0.81 (.91)
Type of Project		Not significant
Top Management Support		-0.16 (.12)
Presence Client Leader		-0.04 (.18)
Client Readiness		0.22 (.16)
Team Diversity		0.11 (.11)
Collaboration		0.13 (.13)
Personal Involvement		0.02 (.11)
Personal Benefits		0.01 (.11)
Knowledge		0.24 (.18)
Skills		-0.32 (.30)
Project Priority		0.07 (.10)
Timing of Project		0.10 (.06)
Quality Reduction		-0.09 (.09)
Client Mandate		-0.01 (.13)
Mutual Trust		0.34 (.21)
Random Part		
Residual (σ^2 : within)	0.96 (.08) *	0.91 (.07) *
Intercept (τ^2 : between)	0.03 (.05)	Redundant

Model	M0: Intercept Only	M1: With Predictors
ICC (ρ)	0.0295	
Model Fit		
-2LL	1070.058	1030.344
AIC	1074.058	1070.344
BIC	1081.917	1148.883
# of Parameters	3	20

* Significant at $p < 0.05$ (random part significance divided by 2)

Description of Multilevel Analysis Results

Model M0 (Intercept Only):

- The intercept is estimated at 3.37 with a standard error of 0.05, indicating a significant base level of equal contribution factors.
- Variances for the intercept and residual are estimated at 0.03 and 0.96, respectively.
- The ICC of 0.0295 suggests that only 2.95% of the total variability in equal contribution lies between consulting projects. This indicates that only a small portion of the variance can be attributed to differences between projects, which is below the 5% threshold typically considered necessary for a multilevel analysis.

Model M1 (With Predictors):

- When all predictors are included, the type of project remains not significant.
- None of the predictors show significant effects on equal contribution.
- The residual variance is slightly reduced to 0.91, but the intercept variance is considered redundant.
- The model fit improves as indicated by a reduction in -2LL from 1070.058 in M0 to 1030.344 in M1, suggesting a better fit to the data.
- Despite the better fit, no significant effects are present in the model, indicating that none of the predictors have a substantial impact on equal contribution factors.

The low ICC and lack of significant effects in M1 suggest that a multilevel analysis may not be warranted for the equal contribution factors. The variance between consulting projects is too low to justify the use of a multilevel model.

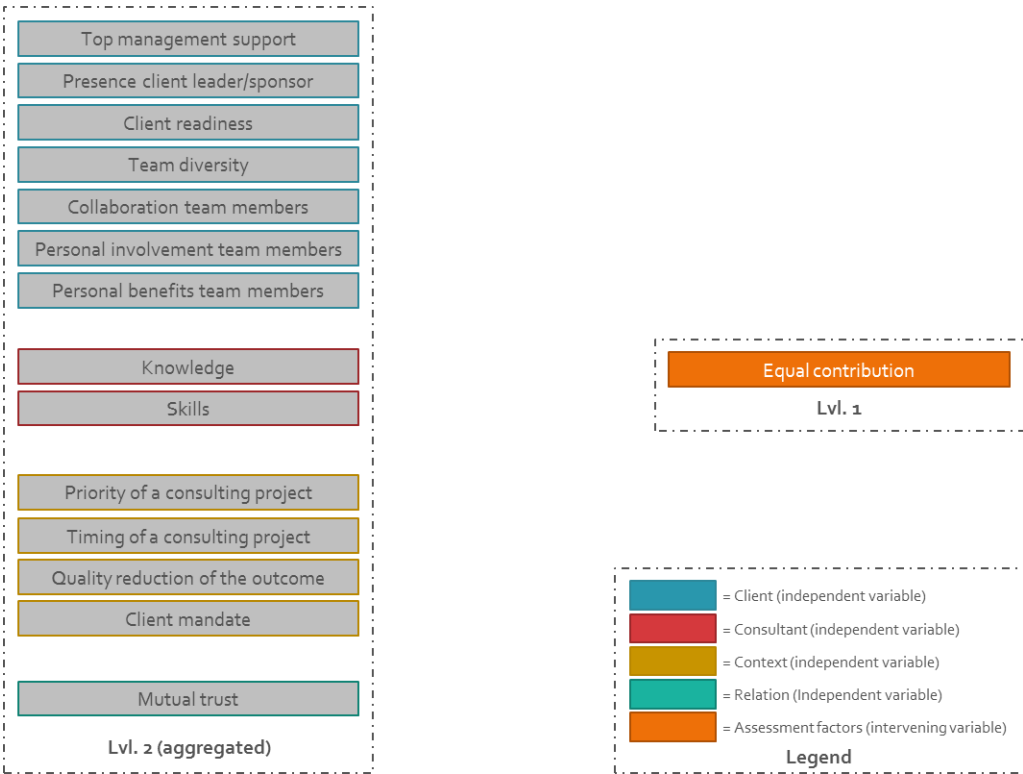


Figure 17 : A visualization of the found effects between the predictors and equal contribution

Since a multilevel analysis is not warranted and there are no effects present between the independent variables and the equal contribution variable, no regression analysis is executed.

Up to this point, the whole conceptual model has been analyzed. As a result, the next section presents the results found thus far. Below is also a summary of the results of the phase where the conceptual model of this study is analyzed.

4.15. Putting all the found effects so far into a basic model

Combining all the identified impacts into a foundational framework After scrutinizing the entire conceptual framework, we will now provide a summary of all the identified impacts. In Figure 25, we have incorporated all the effects discovered in the preceding sections into the conceptual model.

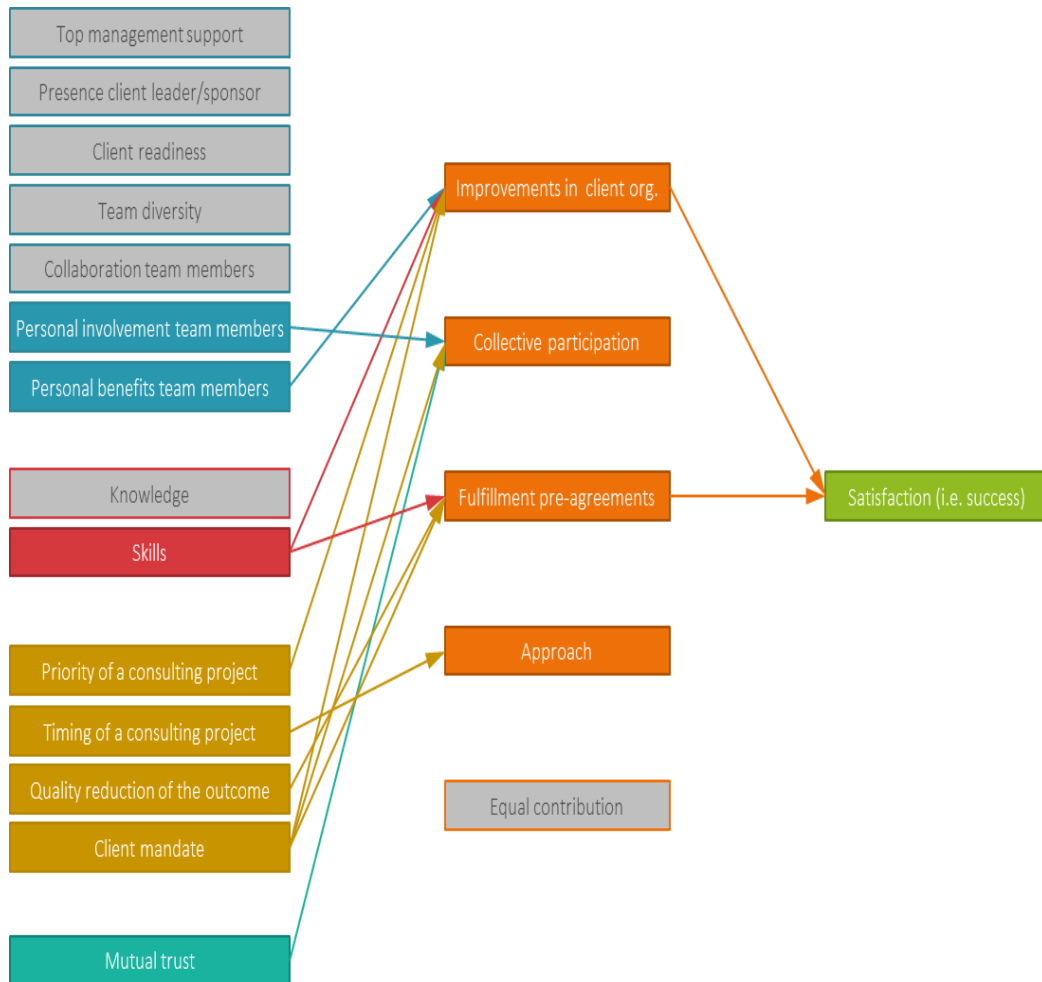


Figure 18 : A visualization of the found effects between the independent, intervening, and dependent variables

The purpose of showing this visualization is that it becomes clear which variables matter. The variables that are shaded grey, are the variables that do not affect other variables as proposed in the conceptual model. So, the variables top management support, the presence of a client leader/sponsor, client readiness, team diversity, collaboration of client members, knowledge of the consultant, and equal contribution do not have a significant role as far as they affect other variables. When those variables are taken out of the conceptual model, a more interpretable model can be drawn as shown in figure 26.

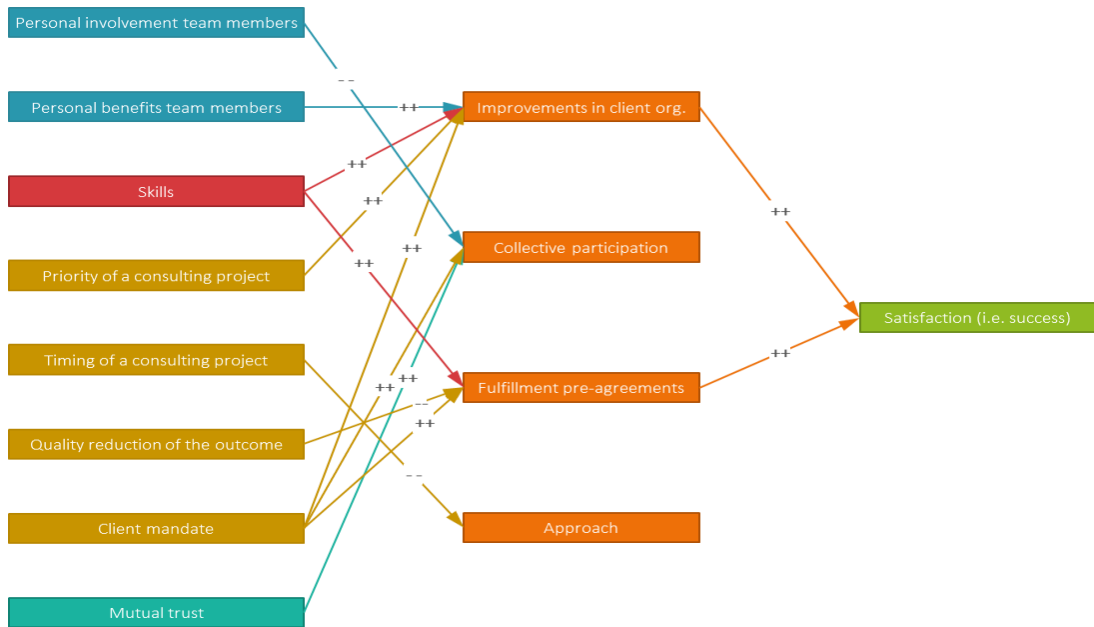


Figure 19: A visualization of the found effects only in the conceptual model

The figure above shows all the variables that do influence other variables as proposed in the conceptual model. It also shows the direction (that is positive/negative) of the effects found in the previous sections. The figure also shows that not all effects reach the dependent variable. As an example, the personal involvement of the client team members, the client mandate, and the mutual trust between the client and the consultant affect the collective participation. But the collective participation does not affect the success of consulting projects. The same goes for the timing of a consulting project, which affects the approach. But the approach does not affect the success of a consulting project. When the variables that do not affect success directly or indirectly are removed from the conceptual model, the following conceptual model can be constructed.

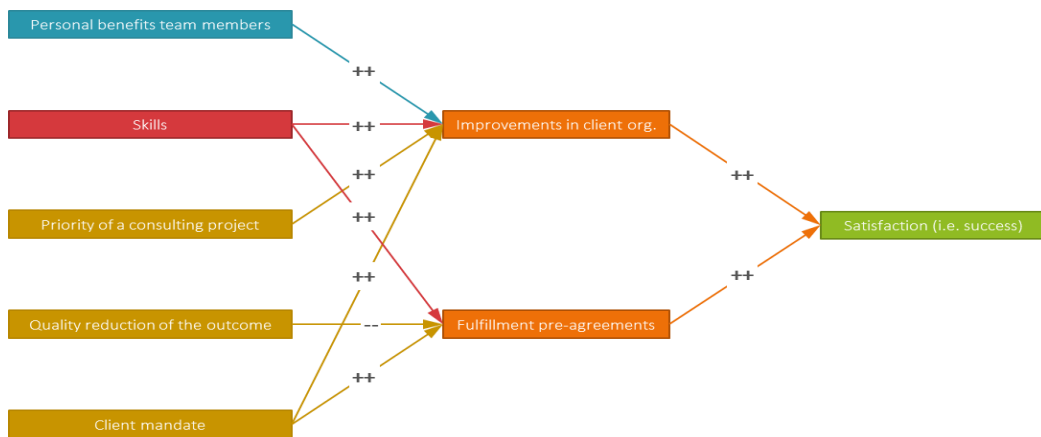


Figure 20: A visualization of the found effects that influence success directly and indirectly

This model is more comprehensible within an Ethiopian context. It illustrates all the factors that directly and indirectly influence the success of a consulting project. The analysis revealed that two assessment variables, namely the improvements variable and the pre-agreements variable, impact success. These variables are influenced by factors such as the personal benefits obtained by client team members in a consulting project, the consultant(s)' skills, the project's priority, the degree of outcome quality reduction during the project, and the client's mandate.

It's important to note that although the analysis indicated a positive effect of quality reduction on pre-agreement fulfilment, it's presented as a negative effect for clarity. This is because the item in that variable is mirrored and negatively labelled, thus the effect is also mirrored. However, the fundamental interpretation remains unchanged: a higher degree of quality reduction during consulting projects leads to a lower likelihood of pre-agreement fulfilment.

While the adjusted conceptual model incorporates all significant effects directly and indirectly, this doesn't imply that excluded variables are no longer relevant. The research question and hypotheses can be addressed and tested now, but it's essential not to rush to conclusions without examining the role of other theoretically sound variables. Therefore, the subsequent sections will delve into the conceptual model and analyze how other variables are interconnected with it. This phase is known as the exploratory phase of quantitative analyses.

Section 6.11 delves into examining the inter-group effects among independent variables.

While the previous section focused on intra-group effects, analysing the relations between independent, intervening, and dependent variables, it's equally interesting to explore potential relationships between groups of independent variables. For example, it's reasonable to assume that a consultant's skills could influence the client-consultant relationship, or that top management support affects the priority of consulting projects. This section aims to uncover these inter-group effects by separately considering each group of independent variables and analysing their potential influence on other groups.

Focuses on the client group versus the consultant group.

Every effect between client variables and consultant variables has been scrutinized. Figure 33 provides an overview of these identified effects, all of which are positive. Due to the multitude of uncovered inter-group effects, the results will be discussed at a more abstract level.

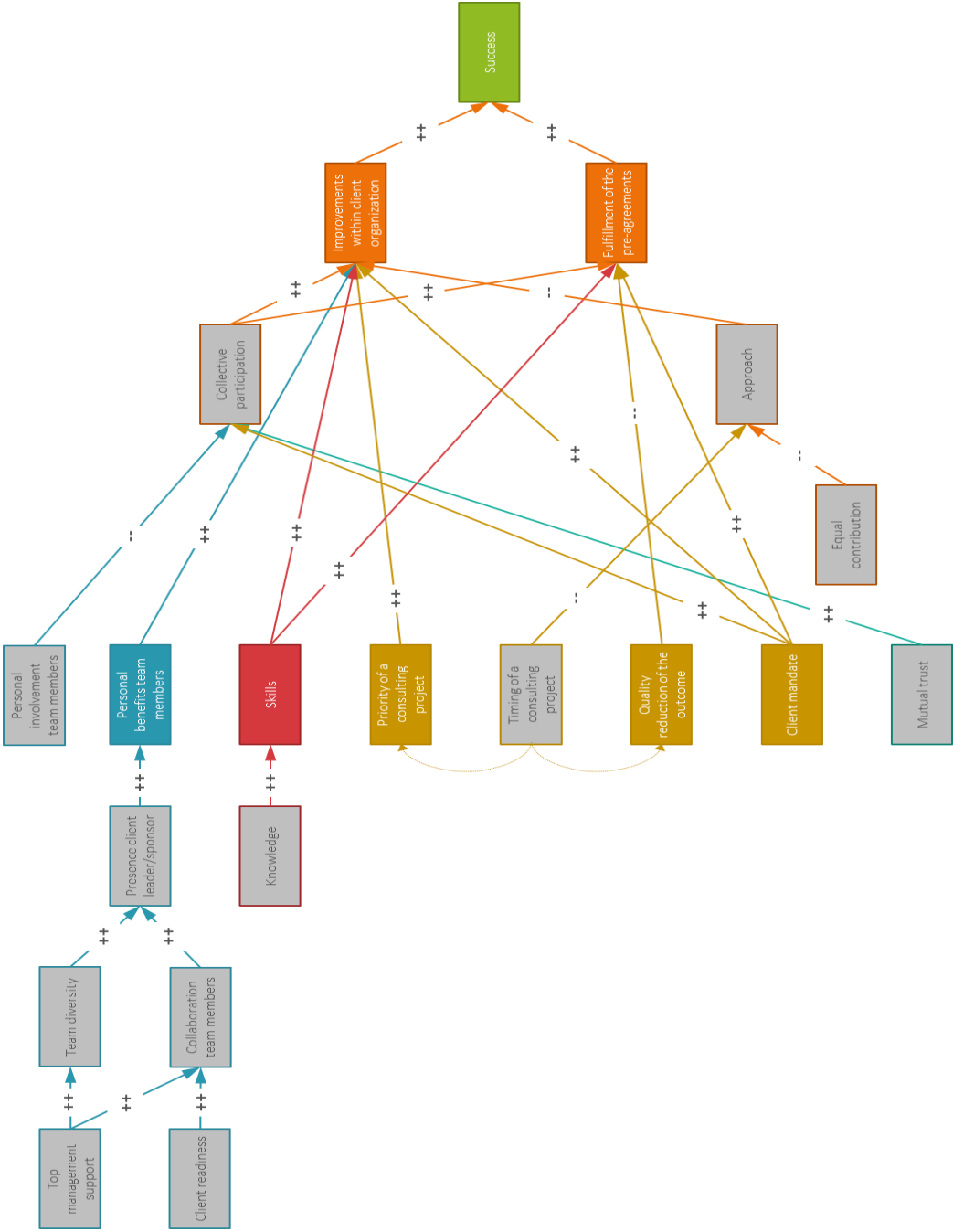


Figure 21: An overview of the found results including the intra-group effects

CHAPTER FIVE

5. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the conceptual model proceeded in two phases. The first phase involved primary analyses to explore the direct, intervening, and indirect effects among the variables as hypothesized in Chapter 3. This phase revealed that only two assessment variables have a positive impact on the success of consulting projects: the degree to which improvements within the client organization have been achieved due to the consulting project and the extent to which pre-agreements of the project have been met by its end. These variables, in turn, are positively influenced by five independent variables:

1. Personal benefits of client members.
2. Consultant skills.
3. Priority of the consulting project.
4. Reduction in outcome quality.
5. Client mandate.

The visualization below illustrates the results of the primary analyses:

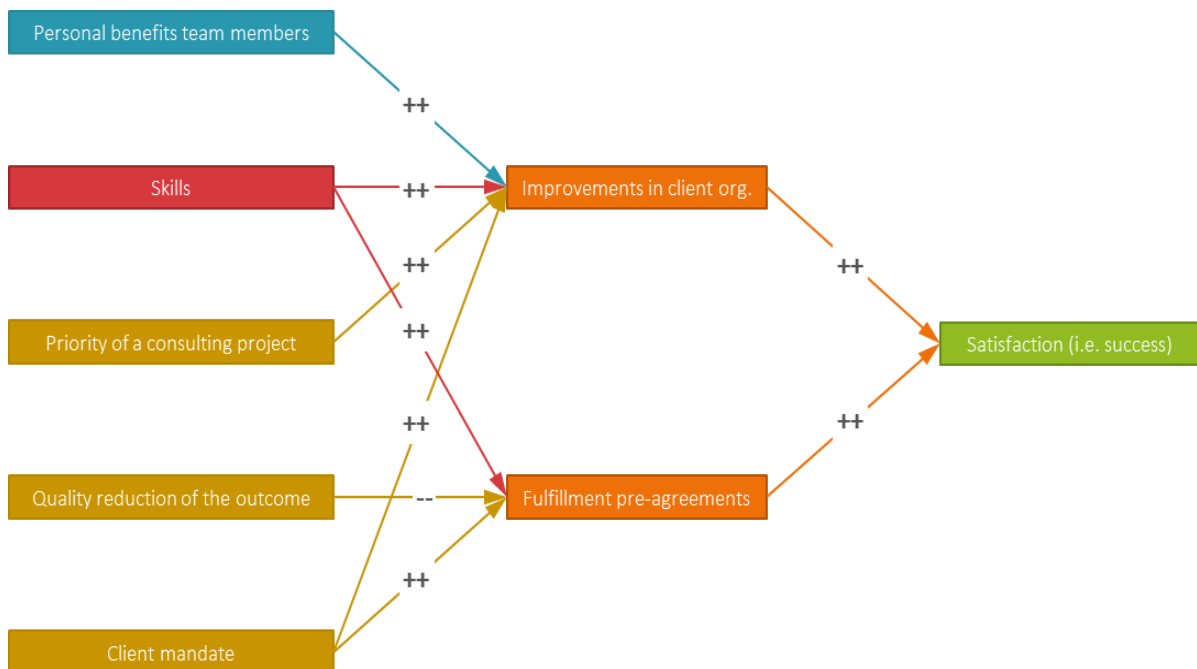


Figure 22 : the results of the primary Analyses

The exact effects are:

- The more client team members personally benefit from a consulting project, the more likely that the improvements are realized within the client organization due to the consulting project.
- The better the skills of the consultant are developed, the more likely that the improvements are realized within the client organization due to the consulting project.
- The better the skills of the consultant are developed, the more likely that the pre-agreements are fulfilled at the end of a consulting project.
- The higher the priority of the project within the client organization, the more likely that the improvements are realized within the client organization due to the consulting project.
- The more the quality of the outcome has been reduced during a consulting project, the less likely that the pre- agreements are fulfilled at the end of a consulting project.
- The stronger the mandate of the involved client members, the more likely that the improvements are realized within the client organization due to the consulting project.
- The stronger the mandate of the involved client members, the more likely that the pre-agreements are fulfilled at the end of a consulting project.

The exploratory analyses showed that the initial variables that are excluded from the primary analyses, relate to the variables that are included in the primary analyses. The uncovered effects are visualized below. So, all variables influence success directly and indirectly. Some variables influence success more indirectly than others. This means that some variables influence success via multiple other variables. The effects are called ‘indirect-indirect-effects’ and the variables are called indirect-indirect-variables’ in this study. The terms are used to label the variables and the effects found in the exploratory analyses. The extent, to which the indirect-indirect variables explain the variance in success, is not examined in this study. This is an interesting research question in a follow-up study.

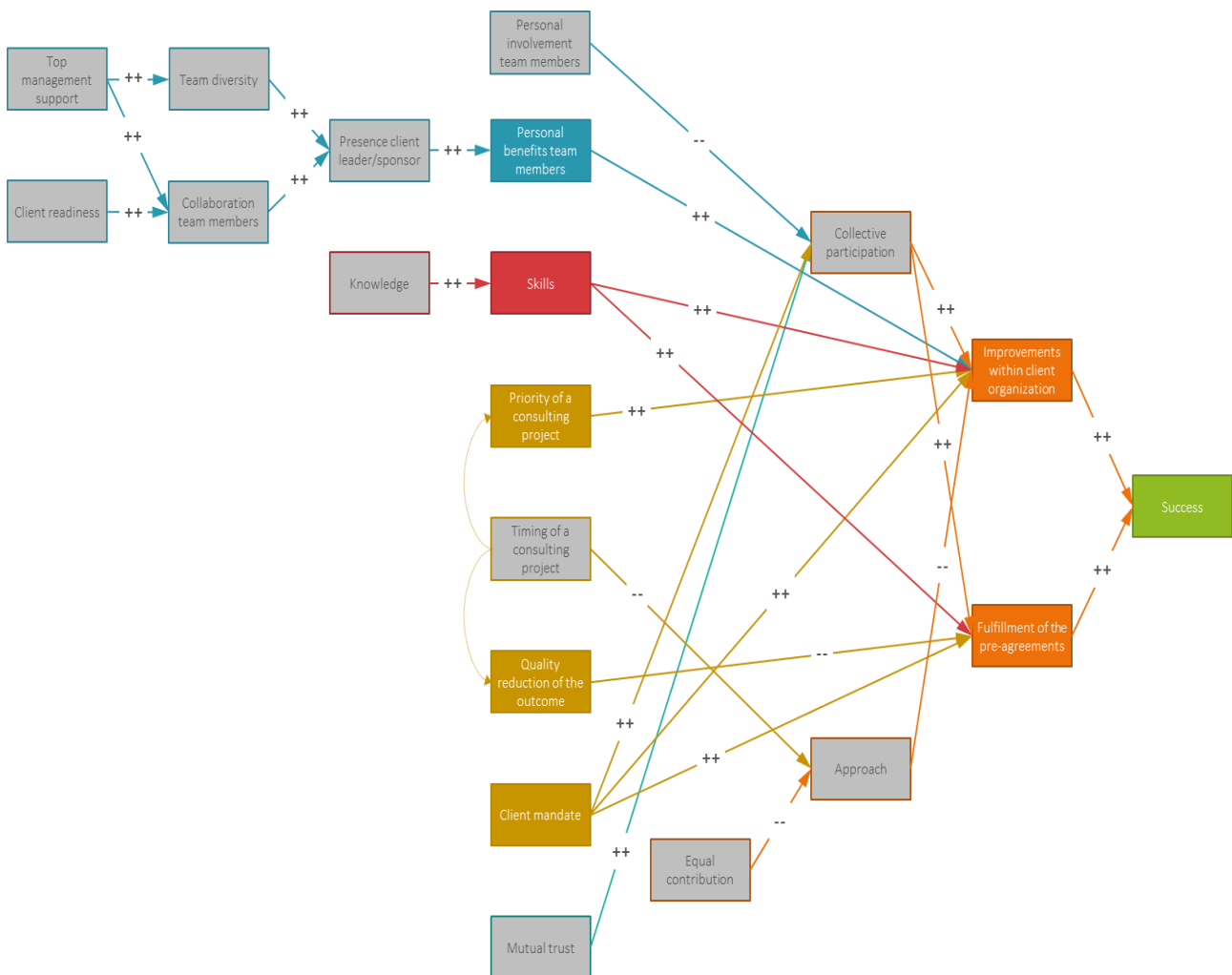


Figure 23 : An overview of the found results including the intra-group effects

The negative effects are a bit harder to interpret. Therefore, the negative effects are:

- The more the client team members are personally involved in a consulting project, the less likely the client members and the consultant(s) participate collectively during the project.
- The sooner a consulting project had to be executed within a client organization, the less likely that the approach of a project is developed along the way. In other words: the sooner a consulting project had to be executed within a client organization, the more likely that a pre-determined approach is strictly applied.
- The more the quality of the outcome is reduced during a consulting project, the less likely that the pre-agreements are fulfilled at the end of a consulting project.
- The more equal the client and the consultant contribute to a consulting project, the less

likely that a pre-determined approach is strictly applied. In other words: the more equal the client and the consultant contribute to a consulting project, the more likely that the approach of a project is developed and applied along the way.

- The stricter a pre-determined approach (or method) is applied during consulting projects, the less likely that the improvements are realized within the client organization due to a consulting project.

The exploratory analyses revealed additional inter-group effects within the conceptual model. Notably, the trust variable, consultant knowledge, and top management support are influenced by and influence various other variables. For instance, the trust variable is linked to every independent variable except for the timing variable, which is logical as there's no causal link between them. Top management support correlates with all other group variables in the model and particularly affects team diversity and collaboration among client team members in the client variables group. Consultant knowledge is related to all context variables, the relationship variable, and three out of six client variables, including top management support, collaboration of client members, and personal benefits of client members.

Although these variables weren't part of the primary analyses, their numerous inter-group effects suggest their importance in facilitating the intended processes and outcomes of consulting projects. However, the specific mechanisms underlying these effects in consulting projects have not been explored.

Following the completion of all analyses, it's intriguing to delve into the mechanisms driving the effects observed in the primary analyses. Why do personal benefits influence improvements within the client organization? How do consultant skills impact pre-agreement fulfilment? These questions were posed to respondents during interview sessions, forming part of the qualitative examination of the identified effects. The results of this qualitative examination will be presented in the next part.

5.1. A qualitative examination of the found effects

In this section, the results of qualitative analyses are discussed, aiming to understand the specific effects observed in consulting projects. Initially, the answers from open-ended questions in the questionnaires are reviewed. Respondents' perspectives on what contributes to the success or failure of a consulting project are highlighted. Following this, insights from face-to-face interviews are provided, considering each case separately. These interviews offer perspectives from clients and consultants, shedding light on how the analyzed variables influenced project success and revealing any similarities or differences in their opinions.

Results of the open-ended questions from the questionnaires

As detailed in Chapter 5, 392 respondents completed a questionnaire regarding a specific consulting project. The questionnaire concluded with two open-ended questions:

1. What were, in your own words, the most important factors that positively contributed to the results of the consulting project?
2. What were, in your own words, the greatest threats that negatively contributed to the results of the consulting project?

These questions allowed respondents to express their personal views on success or failure factors in the projects they were involved in. The responses yielded 718 factors identified as positive contributors to project results and 510 factors identified as negative contributors. These factors are unique to each respondent's perspective, although they largely relate to specific variables within the conceptual model.

To manage the large number of factors, they were systematically related to the variables one by one using a comprehensive spread sheet. Due to the extensive number of factors, it's impractical to discuss each one individually or demonstrate how they are categorized into variables. Instead, the results of this categorization exercise are summarized.

Positive factors from the questionnaires

Regarding the positive factors, the result of the classification is shown in figure 41. What becomes apparent, regarding the positive factors, is that some variables are more reflected in the open answers than other variables.

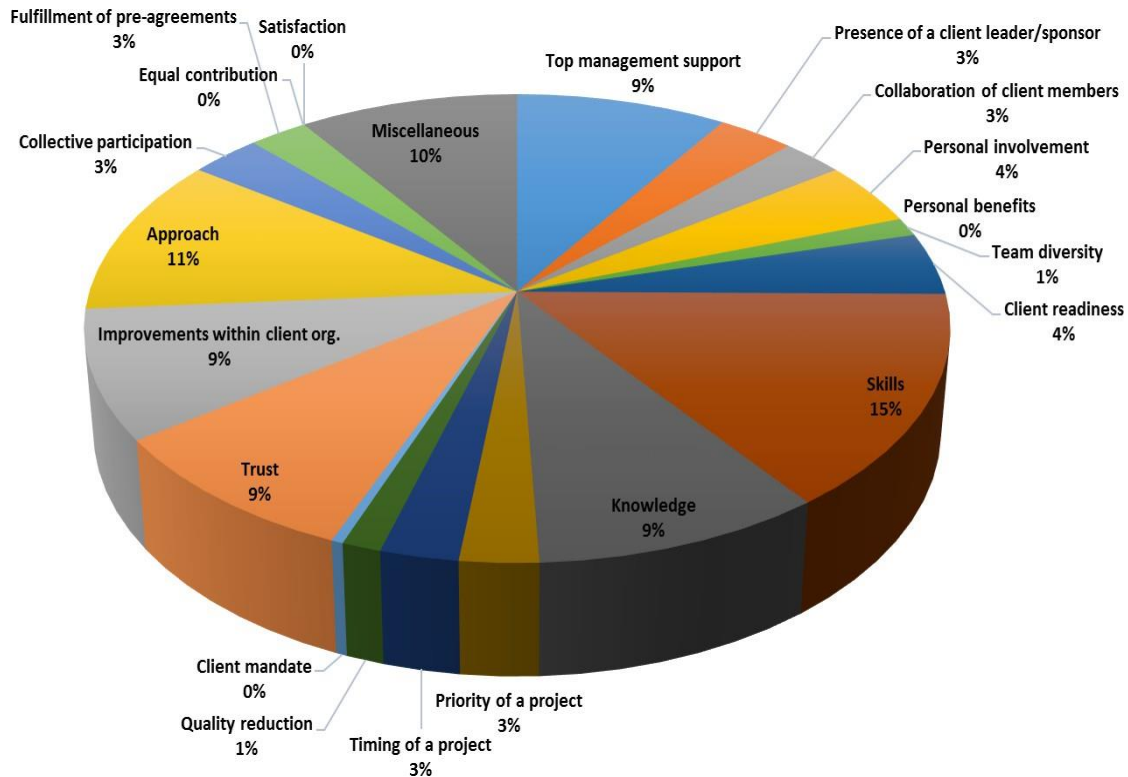


Figure 24 : A pie chart of the classification of the positive open answers.

The pie chart shows that there are basically three *categories*' variables present: (1) most mentioned variables, (2) average mentioned variables, and (3) least mentioned variables. Table 29 shows the classification of the variables. Note that the miscellaneous part is not taken into account. The miscellaneous category includes answers from respondents that are divers and unrelated. As a result, the answers in this category could not be related to any of the existing variables.

Table 25 : Three categories of mentioned variables positively.

Most mentioned variables (>12%)	Average mentioned variables (8 – 2%)	Least mentioned variables (<8%)
1. Skills consultant	2. Approach 3. Knowledge consultant 4. Top management support 5. Improvements within client organization Trust	7. Client readiness 8. Personal involvement 9. Fulfillment of pre-agreements 10. Collective participation 11. Presence of a client leader/sponsor 12. Collaboration of client members 13. Priority of a project 14. Timing of a project 15. Team diversity 16. Quality reduction 17. Equal contribution 18. Satisfaction 19. Client mandate Personal benefits

The variables that are mentioned most are examined in relation with the results of the quantitative analyses:

- Skills of the consultant:** although both consultant variables (thus knowledge and skills) are often referred to as being a success factor in consulting projects, the skills of a consultant are mentioned most. Respondents gave answers such as ‘the guiding role and the positivity of the consultant’, ‘the perseverance of the consultant’, ‘the flexibility of the consultants’, ‘the independence and intractability of the consultants’, and ‘the advisor who could stand above the involved parties and was able to bring the various opinions of the project members together’. Many respondents simply gave ‘the skills of the consultant’ as an answer or ‘the skills and expertise of the consultant’. The latter indicates that both skills and knowledge are relevant to possess as a consultant. Figure 42 shows why the skills of a consultant play an important role in consulting projects. The figure is constructed from the results of the

quantitative analyses. As the quantitative analyses show, the skills of the consultant positively influence the improvements variable and pre- agreements variable directly. These assessment variables are essential variables because they influence success directly. But the skills of a consultant also influence many other variables as shown in the figure below. So, the indirect influences of the skills of a consultant also play a significant role in consulting projects. That could explain why the skills of the consultant are mentioned that often. It is interesting that there are variables that influence the skills of a consultant. Some may argue that the skills of a consultant are ‘fixed’ at the start and during a consulting project. However, it is likely that a consultant learns during a consulting project and that this variable is rather dynamic than static. For instance, the presence of a client leader/sponsor positively influences the skills of a consultant. When a strong and dominant individual from the client organization is the central foreman in a project, a consultant is likely to possess the skills or has to develop his/her skills to restore the status quo between him/her and the client. Alternatively, a consultant could also learn from a strong client leader/sponsor in which he/she develops his or her skills.

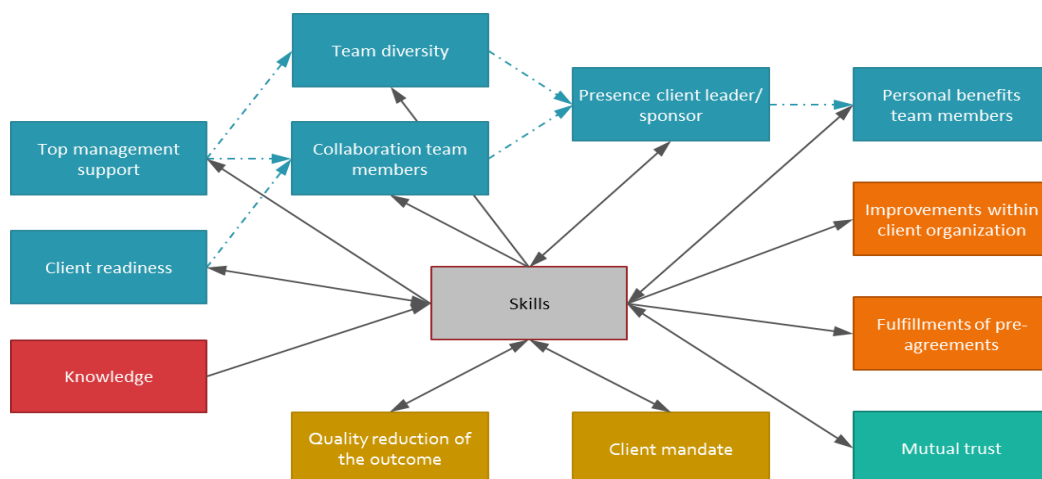


Figure 25 : Skills of the Consultant

- Approach: the approach variable was mentioned very often as well in the questionnaires. Respondents gave answers such as ‘the focus on the end result/assignment’, ‘tight schedule’, ‘the timetable followed’, ‘structure of the project approach’, or shortly ‘the approach’. The latter is mentioned very often. It is interesting to see that the approach is mentioned that often because it is not a variable that is included in the primary analyses. Figure 43 shows the

effects to and from the approach variable, as found in the quantitative analyses. The figure tells us that the sooner the project had to be carried within the client organization, the stricter a pre-determined approach is applied in a consulting project. Note that the item within the timing variable was mirrored. For the interpretability of the effect, this formulation is chosen. The figure also tells us that the more equal the client and the consultant contributed to the project, the less a strict approach is used or applied in a consulting project. And the stricter an approach is used during a consulting project, the less the client organization will be improved due to the consulting project. But the fact that many respondents mentioned the approach as an important success factor, might suggest that the use of a good approach is useful. However, the approach must not be followed too strictly. There must be some flexibility to deviate from the approach.

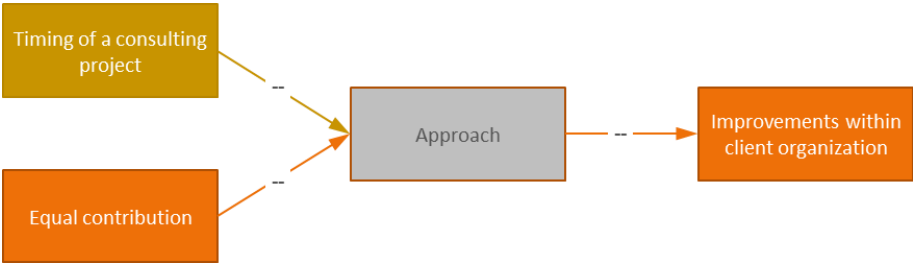


Figure 26 : The skills of a consultant and its direct relations with other variables.

- Knowledge of the consultant: the knowledge of a consultant is the third most often mentioned variable in the questionnaires. Respondents gave answers such as ‘knowledge about (culture) changes (transition), ‘expertise of the external advisors, ‘the consultant had the knowledge of the organization and the environment (consultant was familiar with the Organization)’, or ‘the fact that the consultant had no knowledge of the domain’. Many respondents simply gave ‘the knowledge of the consultant’ as an answer. Respondents also gave answers such as ‘the seniority of the consultant’ or ‘the experience of the consultant’ as success factors. The assumption is made that such answers relate to both the knowledge and the skills of consultants. That is why such statements are divided equally over both variables. Figure 44 shows why the knowledge of a consultant might be mentioned that often in the questionnaires. The figure is constructed from the results of the quantitative analyses. Interesting is that the knowledge of a consultant might be a great facilitator in consulting projects, as described in section 6.12. For instance, when consultants possess a lot of knowledge about a certain knowledge domain such as process optimization (in different

organizations), they can focus their attention to other relevant elements such as the behavior of the client, what type of interventions must be applied, which skills are needed and so on. They do not need to worry about possessing the specific knowledge first.

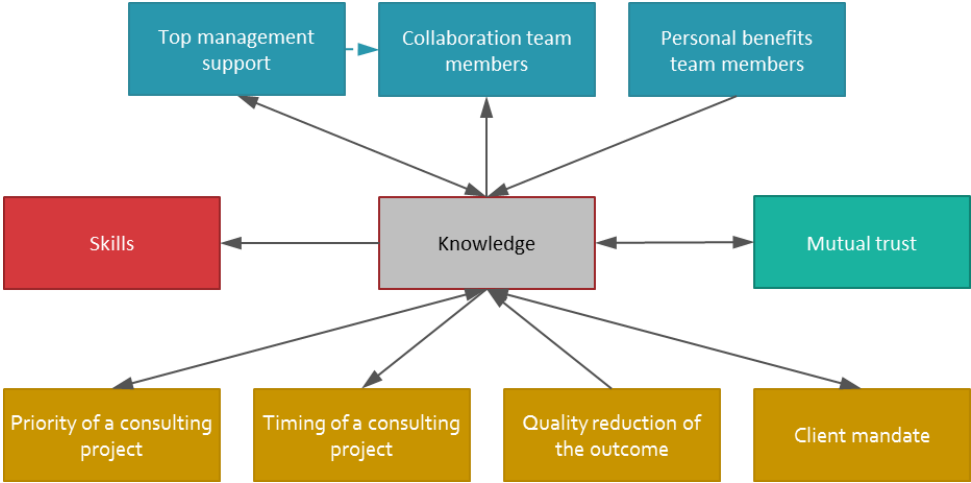


Figure 27: The knowledge of a consultant and its direct relations with other variables.

It is interesting to see that the answers, which were categorized in the miscellaneous category, showed that the required skills and knowledge within the client organization might be just as relevant as the skills and knowledge of the consultant. Examples of such answers are ‘the learning skills of the project leader’, ‘lack of knowledge within the client organization’, and ‘decision-making ability’. Some examples are of a different order and they concern different skills and knowledge domains compared with the consultant. Nonetheless, they seem relevant to take into account in a next study, since this research did not include these aspects.

- Top management support (TMS): TMS is the most often mentioned client variable as being beneficial for success. Respondents gave answers such as ‘the Executive Board was visibly involved in the project’, ‘commitment top management’, ‘sponsorship executive board (providing many resources’, ‘the communicated importance and urgency from the CIO’, or ‘exemplary behaviour and participation of the director in the project’. It is not surprising that TMS is mentioned very often as being beneficial, because it relates to many other variables

as analyzed in the previous chapter. Figure 45 shows the relations of TMS with other variables. These relations are all positive. As described in section 6.12, TMS seems to play an important role for other variables to become a relevant variable. Just like the knowledge of the consultant, TMS might be a great facilitator to realize the intended process and intended outcome.

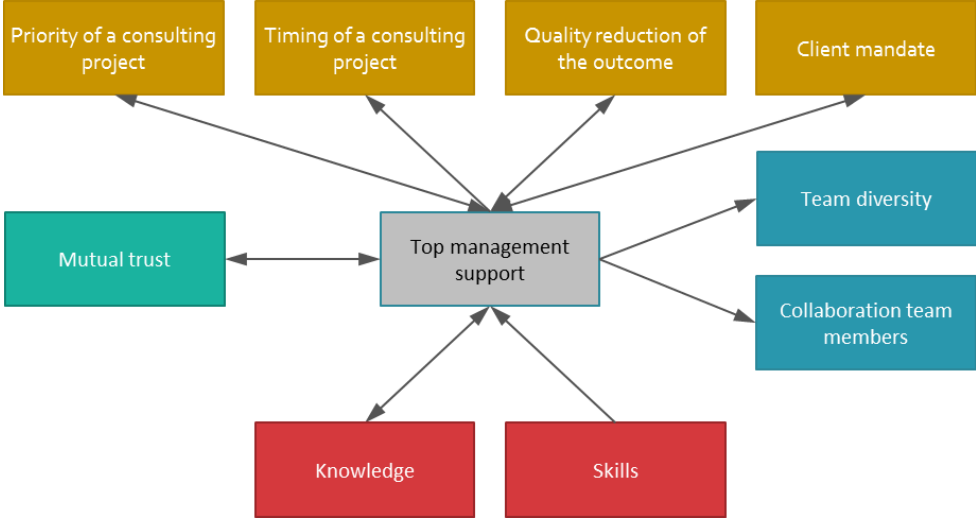


Figure 28 : TMS and its direct relations with other variables.

- Improvements realized within the client organization: As shown in the quantitative analyses, the improvements variable are one of the two assessment variables that influences success directly. Figure 46 shows a schematic overview of all the effects found in the quantitative analyses that influence the improvements variable as well as the effect of the improvement’s variable on success. This might explain why the improvements variable is often mentioned by the respondents in the questionnaires. It seems that respondents see certain improvements as factors that determine the level of success. Answers were given such as ‘there is more clarity within the client organization about how the vision should look like according to different disciplines’, ‘the learning experience (that this is not the way how it should be done)’, ‘the energy and togetherness that was formed at the target groups’, ‘a good strategy that is shared with and supported by all employees’, or ‘all the pain was discussed with respect. This created an atmosphere where a discussion could be started in which all involved individuals felt appreciated’.

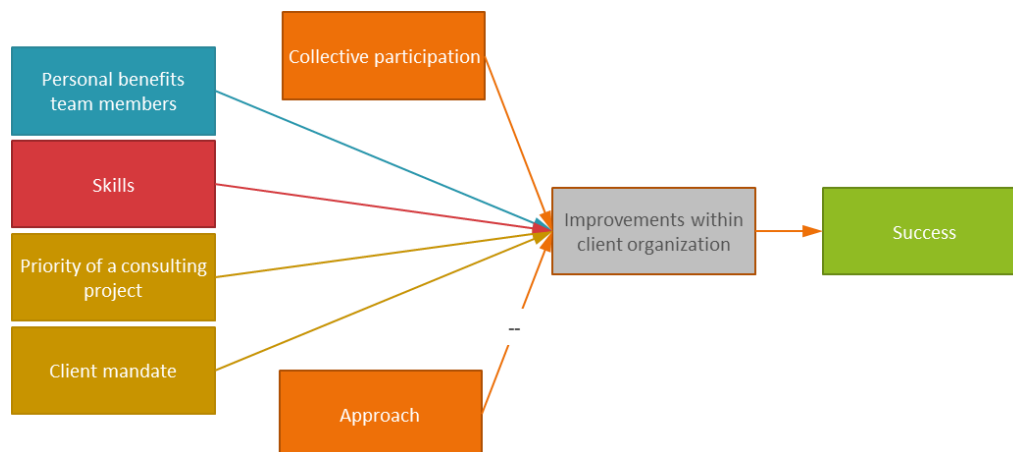


Figure 29 : The improvements variable and its direct relations with other variables.

- **Mutual trust:** Many practitioners often see trust as a crucial aspect within consulting projects. Indeed, many respondents mentioned trust as a success factor in their project. Answers were given such as ‘the mutual trust between the consultant and the client’, ‘No interference of the management because of the trust. Individuals were open, free of thought, and dared to express themselves’, ‘Individual click between the project group – Advisor’, ‘Good relationship with client and team’, ‘the personal relationships’, ‘the enormous mandate that was given to the consultant’, or ‘the openness between the client and the consultant’. What is true for TMS and the knowledge of a consultant, also applies to trust. Trust is positively related to all independent variables except the timing of a consulting project. To construct a figure for trust, which stems from the quantitative analyses, would become a tangle of lines and blocks. Nonetheless, trust can also be labelled as an important factor that facilitates a consulting project.
- **Miscellaneous:** although this category is a collection of answers that could not be related to any of the variables, it is interesting to see what other factors might be relevant to the success of a consulting project. Respondents gave answers such as ‘creativity’, ‘ownership’, ‘the culture of the organization’, ‘the skills and knowledge of the client members’, ‘hard work’, ‘transparency’, or ‘no fooling around’. Many answers are not related to certain variables because it is not clear about whom or on what the answer refers to. Respondents often use key words where no further explanation is provided. In addition, there are no

factors that were mentioned more often than other factors within this category.

Negative factors from the questionnaires

Regarding the negative factors, the result of the classification is shown in figure 30. What is true for the positive factors, also applies to the negative factors. What becomes apparent is that there are basically 3 categories of the variables present. The pie chart shows that there are three distinct groups of variables: most mentioned variables, average mentioned variables, and least mentioned variables.

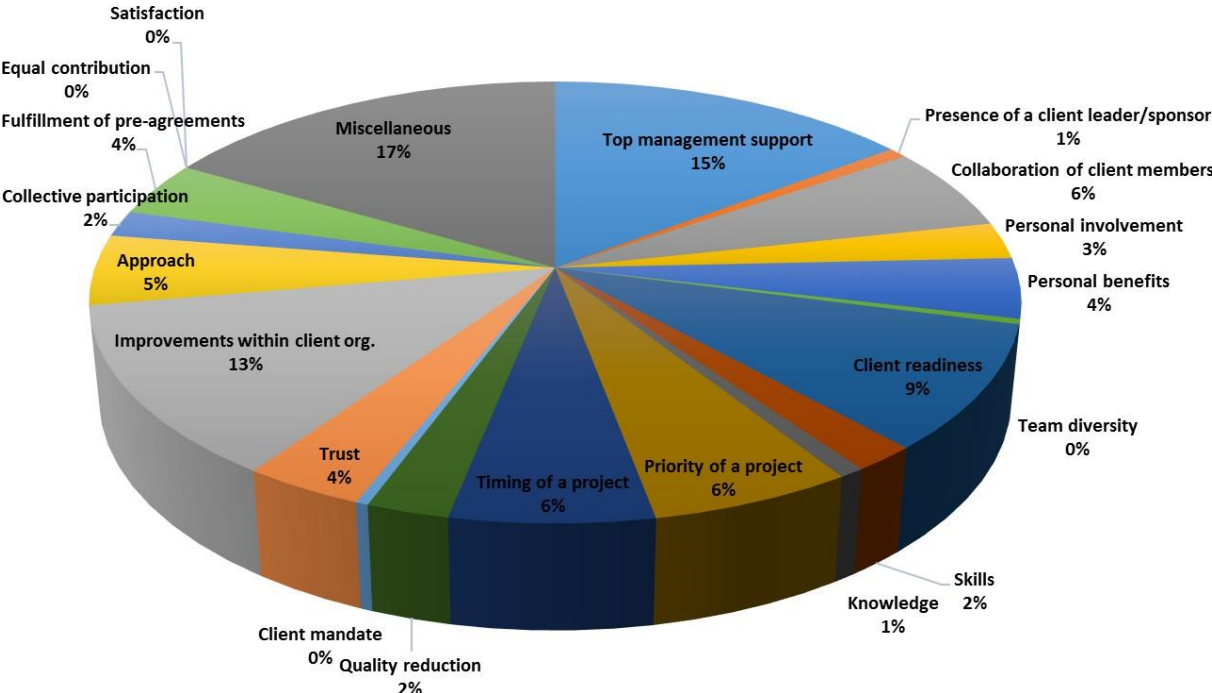


Figure 30 : A pie chart of the classification of the negative open answers.

Table shows the classification of the variables. Note that the miscellaneous part is again not taken into account in the table. The answers in this category could not be related to any of the existing variables.

The variables that are mentioned most as potentially negative factors, are again examined in relation with the results of the quantitative analyses:

Table 26 : Three categories of negatively mentioned variables

Most mentioned variables (>12%)	Average mentioned variables (8-12%)	Least mentioned variables (<8%)
<p>Top management support</p> <p>Improvements within client organization</p>	<p>3. Client readiness</p>	<p>Timing of a project Priority of a project Collaboration of client members Approach Trust Fulfillment of pre-agreements Personal benefits Personal involvement</p> <p>Skills of a consultant Quality reduction Collective participation Presence of a client leader/sponsor Knowledge of a consultant Team diversity Equal contribution Satisfaction Client mandate</p>

- Top management support (TMS): it is interesting to see that TMS is also one of the most cited variables in the negative context. Respondents gave answers such as ‘No commitment from the senior management’, ‘no support from the top’, ‘providing zero capacity’, ‘the wait-and-see attitude of the MT-members, including the Director’, ‘the role of the board’, ‘the top stepped out’, or ‘no attention from the MT’. The fact that TMS is often mentioned as a positive factor and as a negative factor, confirms that TMS plays an important role in consulting projects. Although it is not a variable that is included in the primary analyses, TMS can be seen as an element in consulting projects that could be beneficial if present. Apparently, TMS can strengthen or weaken the other effects in such a manner, that it can ‘boost’ or ‘hinder’ a consulting project enormously.
- Improvements realized within the client organization: similar to TMS, the improvements variable is also often mentioned in the negative context. Respondents gave answers such as ‘fall back into old habits at crucial moments (no learning)’, ‘the advice was not concrete enough’, ‘there was no support at the end’, ‘the chance was present that the customer did not recognize the results’, ‘too much details’, ‘that it remained an exercise on paper’, or ‘the

organization remained ‘rusted’’. Although it might be a pretty straightforward explanation, it seems as if respondents rely on the improvements within the client organization in which they judge about the success or failure of a consulting project. In other words, the improvements are an important variable that largely determines the level of satisfaction.

- Client readiness: client readiness is often referred to as being a factor that negatively contributed to the success of consulting projects. Respondents gave answers such as ‘the lack of dedication of the project team members’, ‘the resistance within the organization and the project team’, ‘the unwillingness to work within the consulting project’, ‘no acceptance by the client members’, ‘passive attitude of the project team’, or ‘unmotivated client members. The words ‘resistance’ and ‘unwilling’ or ‘not willing’ are often used in this context. Figure 48 shows why client readiness might play an important role in consulting projects. The figure is constructed from the results of the quantitative analyses. The figure suggests that when there is trust between the client members and the consultants, the client members are more willing to cooperate within the project. As a result, client team members are more likely to work together. The client readiness is likely to increase when the skills of the consultants are well developed and the client members have the mandate to execute the project. The former might suggest that client members have a better belief in the consultant when his or her skills are well developed, so that they are more willing to work with him or her. The latter might suggest that client members feel the urge to perform or to cooperate within the consulting project when they have the responsibility (i.e. mandate) to execute the project.

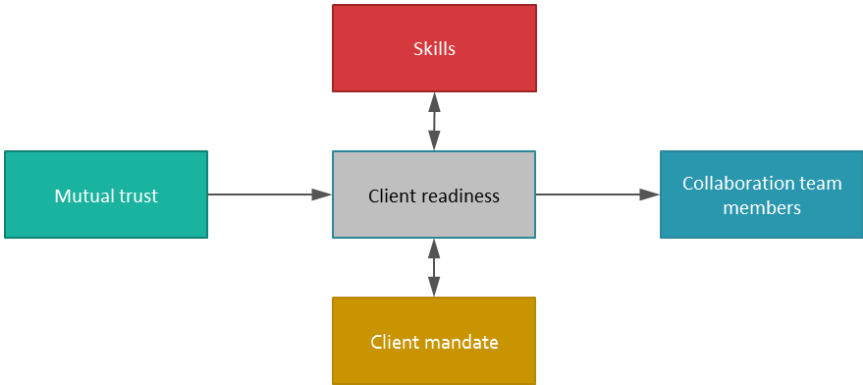


Figure 31 : The improvements variable and its direct relations with other variables.

- Miscellaneous: although this category is a collection of answers that could not be related to any of the variables, it is interesting to see what other factors might be relevant. Respondents gave answers such as 'an immature organization', 'the culture of the organization', 'fear', 'politics', 'influences from the outside', 'no experience within the client organization with the type of changes/projects', 'no knowledge and skills present within the client organization', or 'too much dynamic within the organization'. Many answers are not related to certain variables because it is not clear about whom or on what the answer refers to. Respondents often use key words where no further explanation is provided. However, the factors 'immature organization', 'the culture of the organization' and 'no experience present' were mentioned more often than other factors within this category.

This section showed what mechanisms might explain the effects present within the conceptual model. The next section discusses the face-to-face interviews that were carried out with client representatives and consultants. The interviews illustrate the mechanisms behind the effects from a practical point of view.

5.2. The results of the face-to-face interviews regarding the primary analyses

As indicated in section 4.7, face-to-face interviews were held with both the consultant and a client representative of five cases. Based on the primary analyses, five cases were selected that primarily confirm the basic model, but include disconfirming elements as well. In table 31, the selected cases are shown. The table also shows on which variables the cases deviate.

Table 27: Five selected consulting projects and the scores on the variables.

Type of variable -->	Independent variables					Intervening variables		Dependent variable
Related to -->	Client	Consultant	Context			Assessment factors		Success
Variable -->			Priority of a consulting project	The quality reduction of the outcome	Client mandate	improvements within client organization	Fulfillment of pre-agreements	Satisfaction
Overall mean -->	3,77	4,21	4,02	3,26	3,99	3,89	4,04	4,01
Case 41	5,00	4,86	4,50	3,00	5,00	4,71	5,00	5,00
Case 50	3,00	3,61	4,50	4,00	4,75	3,77	3,88	4,00
Case 60	4,00	4,19	4,50	4,00	3,00	4,43	3,63	4,47
Case 96	2,67	3,97	4,20	3,20	3,50	3,40	4,10	3,78
Case 99	4,00	4,43	3,50	4,50	4,50	4,43	4,33	4,47

By discussing these deviations during the interviews, it was explored why these deviations exist and how these deviations affected the success. In the following sections, the cases will be discussed one by one. Per case, a short explanation is given what the case is about. Afterwards, quotes from the client and the consultant are used to illustrate the mechanisms behind the effects. Then, the deviations will be discussed in more detail. At the end of this chapter, a summary will be given where the conclusions of the cases are also mentioned.

Case 41: establishing a central business unit to direct expertise's throughout the entire organization

Case 41 is about a healthcare organization that created a central business unit in order to improve the specific care it provides to clients that need specific health care. Due to certain market conditions, the organization saw opportunities to increase its competitive advantage by improving their primary processes, which is providing health care. The client organization hired two consultants to guide this program. It concerned a large organizational change program in which many employees were involved. The project lasted 1,5 years and is considered very successful by both the client and the consultants.

The score on personal benefits of the client members within this case is maximal. That is underlined during the interviews. The researcher asked the client 'to what extent do personal benefits contributed to the success of the project?'. The client responded with:

Client: The most important thing for me is that the people, who were involved, had an enormous resistance against the change in the beginning. They had the feeling like 'soon we have no saying anymore and we are managed from a central office or something', or 'soon we have to administer all our minutes and hours and are we not seen as professionals' {...} that you can turn a club of 250 professionals around and that they think 'hey, this is for us and we can do this quite well' or 'hey, I can do my job better like this', 'hey, the planning is solid, I don't have to worry about that anymore' {...} And step by step, by doing things systematically and explaining how it benefits the professionals and put the employees central like 'what does this mean for you? How are you going to do your job and what do you need for that?', that more and more people get enthusiastic. That works as a kind of an oil stain towards others {...} rather than that there was a project leader who delegates people and told them what to do.

Notice that more variables can be related to this quote, such as client readiness or the approach variable, but the essence is that the personal benefits for the professionals are made explicit. This is verified in the following quote:

Interviewer: Can I say that you put the personal benefits of the people upfront?

Client: It is indeed the personal benefits but especially the professional benefits. A doctor who says 'I do not know what those other experts have done for two years for certain clients, because I cannot find it anywhere' but now say 'hey, now I can see it. I can see in the reports what other experts did and I can add my piece to it where others can build upon. I do not need to ask others or call again what is done or who carried out the treatment. Now I know it. I know who is doing what, what the medications are' {...} So first, there's resistance. But people are more willing to try it and find out that it works very well. You can imagine, it saves almost half of the time they spilled with travelling or waiting. And if you really are a professional and you see that your routine is insufficient towards clients because you can put too little effort in. Yes, that moves people. I think that that is the core of the success. Aside from appointments, aside from the right people on the right place. Just say 'no, this is about you. And within the boundaries of the organization, you must say what you need ' The whole story has always been: it's not about me, it's not about the entire organization, it is about how they can do their job well and why they should be able to do their work well because the life of the client is dependent upon it.

These quotes show that when the personal benefits are made explicit, people are more willing to work in accordance with the consulting project. It contributes to the fact that real improvements can be realized in the client organization as shown in the quotes. The fact that the client explicitly mentioned that; the personal benefits are perhaps the most important variable, confirms the central role of the variable in the conceptual model.

The skills of the consultant score very high as well within this case. That is underlined during the interviews. The consultant and the client gave arguments that relate to the skills of the consultant:

Consultant: We are not blueprint thinkers. Of course, you need to make a planning, that is pretty blue. But the professionals there, they had the idea of 'oh, there are two of those consultants in their suits again, that are going to tell us what we need to do and how '. But

when we talked to them, we said 'what bothers you the most? What must be the result? Where are you proud of and what may not be lost?'. We really talked with them, from human to human, where there was no inequality. Professionals often think that they are in an unequal position compared to consultants. So, we had to be very, very careful. We had to level with them. So, we started with that and that immediately cleared the air between the professionals and us. Professionals went like 'well, oh. So, you guys have no blueprint?', 'No, we do have a number of tools that we use, but we use them to facilitate you to make something out of it'. What we did as well is saying 'it is your organization; you need to be there and we facilitate the way it is. We do not say how to do it, but we can help you to do the right things right' {...} So, good listening is a success factor {...} and making sure that you talk to people on an equivalent way.

Client: The added value of {the consultants} in this project was that they very clearly had a helicopter view. They knew what I wanted, what my intentions were, and were able to translate it into concrete steps and actions and were also able to tell my story and use it towards the people to get them where they wanted them. But also, to mention or notice all kinds of inconsistencies in the story {...} they helped me because I was under tremendous pressure {...} that added value is the helicopter view and their independence.

The quotes show that the skills of the consultants are much appreciated by the client and that the skills of the consultants helped to finish the project as it did. It is interesting to see that the knowledge of the consultants is not mentioned in the interviews as being a success factor. This strengthens the results of the quantitative analyses that it is indeed the skills of the consultant that contribute to the success of a consulting project.

The priority of the consulting project scored high as well. This is also discussed during the interviews. The explanation of this case, at the beginning of this section, already stressed the importance of the project. The researcher asked the client 'to what extent did the priority of the project contributed to the success of it?'

Client: The priority within the organization was high, due to external circumstances {...} but that was quickly exchanged by another priority. A lot happened at once within the

organization. So, it is very important that a consulting project has priority. But when it is not brought under the attention of a board member on a daily basis, it will quickly be exchanged by something else that has a high priority. So, I think you need to make certain agreements with each other. I could call the chairman whenever I wanted to discuss certain matters with him. That was possible because we agreed with each other that I could call him whenever I needed his confirmation, vision etc. {...} otherwise the attention will be reduced because of the regular issues {...} So prioritization, I think, is important, but you have to make agreements as well because otherwise, it disappears very quickly from someone's radar and nobody puts their effort into it.

The quote shows that the priority of consulting project can be beneficial because people put their effort into it when the priority is high. However, the quote also states that a project has to maintain its priority along the way because a project can easily lose its priority because of other, 'more important', projects, issues etcetera.

The quality reduction scores below average within this case. It is also the deviating score compared to the other cases. This score refers to the fact that concessions to the quality of the outcome have been made during the consulting project. This variable should score high according to the found effects in the primary analyses, since the success of the consulting project has a maximum score. The researcher asked the client and the consultant what concessions were made during the project. Several examples were given such as 'we wanted to put the revised portfolio, with its target groups and product range, on the web with an intelligent search functionality. So that customers or potential customers could search through the product range very easily', 'we wanted to involve the regions a bit more. We wanted to translate the plans to the regions as well', or 'we were not able to purify the funding in time and get an approval from the board for the funding'. But the following quotes put these concessions in perspective:

Client: We could purify the funding without taking some circumstances into account. But ultimately, the organization makes choices and moves the money. When you see what had to be moved at the moment, I can imagine that the board said 'wait a minute, we want to put everything together because we keep moving the money'. So, it is a concession, but at the same time I think it was reasonable because the time wasn't right. The whole funding was

under discussion. But we delivered what we wanted to deliver and as intended, particularly on the operational level.

Consultant: The main objective was met. Namely that the new business unit was up and running as planned. And what we saw is that, also with that project, a culture change was realized and those professionals functioned much better in the new organization. So, they were less frustrated, what made them of course much more effective. So, the concessions were not life-threatening or in critical processes. Those concessions involved secondary business processes. {...} If you are a perfectionist, everything must be finished like you wanted. So, these secondary concessions are considered relevant concessions that you made. The quotes show that the concessions were not essential due to the circumstances that put those concessions into perspective. Since the concessions were not essential, they did not affect the success of the consulting project. Since the score on quality reduction deviated, while there was little reason to, it shows that the interviewees are critical towards themselves.

The client as well as the consultant gave a maximum score on the client mandate within the case. During the interviews, this was discussed. The following quotes illustrate how the client mandate can be beneficial:

Consultant: {client} was the director of {the business unit (BU)} and was asked by the board if he and his buddy {colleague director} could establish the new {BU} within {the client organization}. {...} The board was like 'if there are two people within this organization whom we can trust this to, to set this up in a proper way, then it is these two men'. So that made sure that {the client and his colleague} could make decisions quickly and could maintain the pace and progression.

Client: Because I had a certain vision on this matter, I got the full mandate pretty quickly. In addition, I was kindly requested to translate my vision into a really clear and sharp story. I had a more visionary story and I translated it into a detailed story with answers to questions such as 'How do we going to achieve it? What does that mean?'. I submitted the story to the board of directors and the management team. A received a 'go' and then it started. {...} The first

process what we have gone through together was to sharpen the project plan, the assignment. With the result, I went back to the board in order to get more commitment and support. This was just a formal procedure because I already got the space to get the job done with a specific budget.

Adjustments are better possible then. But I thought it was important to explain the details to a broader audience because the assignment affected the whole organization.

The quotes show how the mandate was received and how it may contribute to the success of the project. Since the client members got the full mandate, they were able to make decisions quickly and maintain the progression. It also implies that the client members were not hindered by other influential stakeholders who could disturb the process. This could delay the project or change its goals. The mandate gave the client members the necessary 'power' to keep the pace and to hold on to its objectives.

Since success has the highest score possible, it is interesting to see what determines the success. During the interviews, the question was asked why the project was such a success. Without further suggestive indications, the client and the consultant gave the following responses:

Client: The most important thing is that people got into a different mode and have been thinking about how they could spend their precious time in the most effective way. {...} This has led to the improvements that have been realized within the organization.

Consultant: What always plays a role for me is, in the beginning, the atmosphere was so tense that people wanted to throw rotten tomatoes at us. But in the end, there was mutual respect and the people came to us to thank us for the work we have done for them. That determines a high level of satisfaction for me. That makes me think 'ok, I've contributed something that matters'.

Otherwise, they would not have thanked me. And surely these people don't. {...} But the level of satisfaction is also high because we agreed upon a certain assignment, budget, approach, and planning and that you see that we stayed within budget, that we stayed within

the agreed timeframe, and that the results that we achieved together, are in line with your own professional demands and the assignment. {...} and what also determined the satisfaction is that there was a so-called 'warm transfer'. That means that a new team could adjust to the new setting and that we could guide them in the beginning. This resulted in the fact that the new people could fulfill our roles tremendously. So, we were not giving a project to them, but that there is a new group of people who continue your work.

What becomes apparent is that the client and the consultant refer to the improvements that have been realized within the client organizations. One argument about the fulfillment of the pre-agreements is that the project was carried out within the pre-determined planning, timeframe and budget. But it is striking that both interviewees instantly refer to certain improvements that were realized within the client organization. This suggests that this is the most influential factor that determines the level of success.

Case 50: the launch of a new cultural institution

Case 50 is about a department of a municipality that initiated the construction and the development of a new cultural institution. Due to internal changes within the municipality, the new head of the department, who is responsible for these types of projects, received this project within his portfolio. Before he became responsible for this portfolio, and thus this project, he already received some signals about the project not going very well. On the contrary, the current board as well as the director of the new institution communicated towards the key-decision makers within the municipality that the progression was going very well, but they never showed any tangible results as evidence of the progress. When the new head of the department became responsible, he started to ask questions and exposed the 'as-is' situation. This caused much turmoil whereby the key-decision makers of the municipality decided to start an independent investigation by an external consultant to analyze the current situation. The results of the investigation had a great impact on the project and the municipality.

The personal benefits variable scored below average within this case. This would indicate that the involved stakeholders of the project, did not personally benefit from the project. This was discussed during the interviews. The following quote illustrates why the score on the personal benefits, deviates from the other cases:

Client: More and more signals became apparent and finally we convinced our own board member of the thought 'this is not good'. But the supervisory board did not want to admit it, and covered the director. {...} So, it was clear that the involved parties, i.e. the supervisory board and our board, had different opinions. Eventually, after much discussion, the assignment for an independent investigation was given. 'Let's do research to solve the gap between the different opinions'. And that was also the question that was given to the consultant. {...} Then, it still took a lot of time and effort to formulate the exact assignment. There were different interests of course. I had, of course, an interest in formulating the assignment as sharp as possible, given my responsibilities. This would result in a better outcome. The supervisory board, in my opinion, had a suspicion that they would not benefit from this assignment and did not want to admit it. So, of course, they had an interest in keeping the assignment as vague as possible. {...} They didn't want their reputation to be affected. {...} Ultimately, a compromise was the basis of which the consultant could start his work.

This was a project where personal prestige and positions were at stake. There could not be any winners in this project. Notice that more variables can be related to this quote, such as client readiness, but the essence is that the personal benefits were mixed. The quote shows that when a project is not beneficial for the involved parties, it may delay or redirect the project. This could affect the outcome of the project since stakeholders try to create an outcome that would benefit them.

The skills of the consultant scored below average as well within this case. This was discussed during the interviews:

Client: In my opinion, the consultant didn't act that well. No. No. Initially, he was influenced by the small talk of the director. It seemed like he had listened to the director and the supervisory board only. {...} He interviewed them and afterwards, he immediately came with partial conclusions without interviewing us and investigating our evidence. And those partial conclusions contained statements such as 'that it wasn't all that bad' and 'that there were several opportunities to improve the current situation' etcetera. That was the first version of his report. He also was influenced by an expert, who was an old acquaintance of the director and himself. {...} Therefore, I doubted his independence. I didn't have to take hard measures

because in an interview with our board, including the mayor and a new member of the board, they asked very sharp questions to {the consultant}, where he had no answer to. {...} He could not answer the questions and had to adjust his approach and view. So, it's more 'despite of' than 'thanks to' {the consultant} that the improvements were realized. The outcome of the report was formed primarily due to the interview with our board. And from that moment on out, it was a continuous discussion. Yes. He continuously tried to get back to his original conclusions. And we had to correct that every time. {...} I have never understood why actually.

What becomes clear in the quote of the client, is that the outcome of the project is realized thanks to the intervention of the client. Given the scores on the realized improvements and on the fulfillment of the pre-agreements, these scores would be higher when the score of the skills of the consultant was high as well. This quote from the interview illustrates the mechanism behind it.

The priority of the consulting project scored high. The explanation of this case, at the beginning of this section, already stressed the importance of the project. The researcher asked the client 'to what extent did the priority of the project contributed to the success of it?'

Client: In the end, the priority helped a lot. Everybody went for it, even the board. And I had the space to operate freely. That was very pleasant. It didn't matter what I asked, it was okay. I could do whatever I thought that was right.

The quote shows that the priority of consulting project can be beneficial because the involved individuals received precedence whenever they needed something to be done. It makes it easier for the individuals to carry out their tasks and achieve their goals.

The quality reduction scored high within this case as well. This indicates that no concessions were made during the project. Both the respondents stated that no concessions were made, due to the delicate nature of the project. The client and the consultant could not afford themselves to make concessions.

The client mandate has the highest score of all the variables within this case. Although the previous quote could be related to the client mandate as well, the following quote explains

why the client had the space to act freely:

Interviewer: when the mayor was convinced that something had to happen, did you receive the necessary mandate to act upon that?

Client: It was almost carte blanche, but not totally.

The quote shows how the client received his space to operate freely. It explains the score on client mandate and how it contributes to the results of the project. Other influential stakeholders who could disturb or delay the process did not hinder the client.

The case has an average score when it comes to success. It is interesting to see what determines the success in such a delicate case. During the interviews, the question was asked why the project was in fact a success. Without further suggestive indications, the client and the consultant gave the following responses:

Client: Well, from my perspective, my goal with the research was to make clear that we were not crazy. Yes, and that's what happened. So, how could I be dissatisfied with the results. Yes. It's that simple. {...} Actually, for me, the effect that I wanted to accomplish with the research, was already achieved. Namely that the director was suspended, the supervisory board quitted, thus we could intervene. {...} If we didn't intervene, the director would still be in charge there and we would have major financial problems. As a consequence, the institution could not be established. The city council would pull the plug. {...} So the role that our board had, even if it was that single meeting only, that was crucial. Two meetings. Those were crucial. So that was very good. {...} Well, and our backs were covered by the town clerk and the mayor. So, trust, also crucial.

Consultant: Look, there was a situation that was out of control. Someone was trusted, the Director, and he didn't act as desired. In addition, there were insufficient checks & balances around it. What we have now is a new well-functioning board and a new director who acts as desired and delivers the necessary checks & balances. So, in that sense, the situation is stable.

Interviewer: So, you are saying that the level of success is determined by the improvements that are realized?

Consultant: Yes, it led to a self-reflection. The supervisory board eventually said 'we withdraw in favor of other candidates' and so, the director could only undergo the process that he would be put on hold and that he would be suspended eventually.

Interviewer: Would you do things differently if you had the chance to do it over?

Consultant: No, I don't think so. I think that this has been an approach that was thought through in advance by myself. The first step was the most important step because I did preliminary research to construct an assignment that would be supported by all the involved stakeholders. {...} And when we agreed on the wording of the contract/assignment {...} That was a very important milestone. That enabled me to do the actual research.

What becomes apparent is that the client and the consultant refer to the improvements that have been realized within the client organizations. What is mentioned as well is that trust, top management support, and the approach also contributed. But both interviewees instantly refer to certain improvements that were realized within the client organization. This suggests that this is the most influential factor that determines the level of success, which is similar to the previous case.

Case 60: creating a new network organization of several municipalities.

Case 60 is about creating a new network organization within a province in which several municipalities were involved. On a national level, an agreement has been made that provinces should establish a regional execution service regarding several domains. Therefore, this project was rather mandatory. Provinces are free to decide how they organize it. It can be realized using a classic organization or a network organization for instance. Within this case, the goal was to establish such a service organization around the environmental licensing and enforcement domain. However, the process to realize the service organization reached a low point. Between the involved municipalities, there was a disagreement regarding the end-state of the service organization. Some municipalities wanted a classic organization and other municipalities wanted a network organization. Since there were some difficulties, the idea was raised to construct a plan in order to unite both perspectives. This plan described how the organization would look like. An external consultant was hired to construct such a plan. Noteworthy to say is that when the consultant started to write his plan, the client immediately created a so-called 'trial garden'. The purpose was to test whatever was made up during the

assignment with the external consultant. As a result, stakeholders would immediately see how it would turn out in practice and whether it was beneficial.

This case is chosen since it deviates on the client mandate variable and the pre-agreements variable. Nonetheless, the score on success remains high. This was discussed during the project.

The personal benefits variable scored above average within this case. This indicates that the involved stakeholders of the project, benefitted from the project. The question was asked ‘to what extent did this conflict of interest affected the project’:

Client: We just noticed that it was an enormous disturbing factor. When ‘one camp’ stepped out, everybody faced into the same direction and everybody was like ‘Yes ok, let’s do it’. You had one municipality, they had some doubts, hesitated, found it a bit tricky. But at some point, they said ‘let’s do it’ as well. From there, it went very fast. {...} In addition, an advantage of such a trial garden was that people immediately saw the results. So, you moved the discussion away from the management. Otherwise, they only delayed the project due to their different interests. Each question towards the management is simply causing a delay in the project.

Consultant: The thing is that you have to convince everybody, who have different interests, sometimes opposing interests, of your thoughts. If they have the feeling, especially board members, like ‘well, I find it all a bit difficult, tricky and annoying. I have to make all kind of choices and I cannot foresee what the consequences are’. And if they get the feeling that it is prepared very well, that they are informed about our thoughts and that they say ‘Ok, I can follow it, I understand it, I put in my comments and suggestions and they are processed properly’. Then it's a matter of time till they say ‘well, if that's coming, fine! I have no worries anymore; it is in good hands and it will be fine’. Well, that's what you have to achieve.

Although more variables could be related to these quotes, such as trust and the skills of the consultant, the quotes show that the uncertainty about the personal benefits delayed the project. It took quite the effort to get an agreement on several aspects, due to the opposite interests of the involved parties. Certain choices were more beneficial for others. It shows that when parties with opposite benefits are involved in such a project, this affects the process of a

consulting project. It could also affect the outcome of the project since stakeholders try to create an outcome that would benefit all.

The skills of the consultant scored average within this case. This was discussed briefly during the interviews. The following quote shows the essence of what both the client and the consultant thought about the skills:

Consultant: The core of my work is, that I have to be trusted by the client members and I need to earn it. To do that, you have to make the right decisions; to make the right proposals {...} and it are also the little things that create trust. For instance, you always have to deliver the right documents on time, the quality of the documents must be high. Always. All that kind of things contribute to the trust that you get from the principal and all other stakeholders.

Interviewer: Are you saying that your skills enable trust?

Consultant: Yes. Yes. Yes. Absolutely. {...} If the board members have the feeling that they trust the process and confirm it, then meetings are going really fast, everything can be discussed quickly, people will not whine about all kind of dots and commas. It is an important indicator that people say ‘well, this is going well’. It is perhaps the most important indication. And you notice it by the atmosphere within the group. Anyway, it is important that meetings go fast. Every large decision was made quickly. That is important.

Although only a quote from the consultant is used here, the client said the same thing about the skills of the consultant. Both interviewees stated that the skills of the consultant created trust between the stakeholders and the consultant. As a result, the collaboration went smoothly and was considered very pleasant. The quote also shows how skills contributed to the project. Noteworthy to state is that the client and the consultant were convinced of the fact that knowledge is a pre-condition for consultants, to be able to act as desired. In other words, knowledge enables the consultant to utilize his or her skills to the fullest.

The priority of the consulting project scored high. The client and the consultant were quite clear about it:

Consultant: Well yes. You cannot say that it contributed to success explicitly. It has been a condition that I used. I used it as an argument to put pressure on certain tasks and individuals.

Interviewer: You create some sort of momentum to make things possible?

Consultant: Yes. Yes. You try to maintain the pressure on the process and use that as an argument.

Anyway, the planning, gosh, they are never followed. Neither here.

Client: Well look, if it wasn't present, the execution service would never be established. We already had orienting conversations with {municipality 1} and {municipality 2}, before the formal discussion took place, to discuss the possibilities for a collaboration between several municipalities. But if the priority hadn't been there, then those execution services were never established.

The quote shows how the priority of consulting project can be beneficial. Partly, this was due to its mandatory character. The consultant has an interesting point of view about the priority. He sees the priority of a project more or less as an enabler to get things done. It makes it easier for the consultant to get the assignment done.

The quality reduction scored high within this case as well. This indicates that no concessions were made during the project. This variable is discussed during the interviews, but both the respondents stated that no concessions were made. In fact, the opposite was true. The quality of the report, which was delivered by the client, was considered excellent and very usable.

The client mandate scores beneath average. This is also the score that deviates from other cases. The following quote illustrate why this is the case and how it affected the project:

Client: Actually, we never got mandate. This has grown {...} Every time we really wanted something, such as the assignment for {the consultant}, I went to the board. In fact, all municipalities had to decide separately. Yes. So that happened every time when we wanted something, all municipalities were asked separately. So, we had zero mandate. {...} We were given the mandate whenever we stepped to the municipalities. At some point, it was formally given, but that happened a lot later when I was appointed quartermaster. {...} That was the first time I formally got the mandate. {...} I don't know if it would matter if I was given the formal mandate earlier. The advantage is more support in advance or having status. But on the other hand, I always think 'Yes, you can never make progression when you don't use it when it is given to you'.

And if you have no mandate, it sometimes means that you have a little more space to operate. You can ‘play the game’ more so to speak.

The quote explains why the client mandate variable scored below average. The client could not tell if it affected the outcome of the results positively or negatively. Given the scores on success within this case, it seems that it did not affect the outcome. It indicates that the benefits of having no formal mandate, contributed to the outcome of the project.

The case scored above average when it comes to success. It is interesting to see what determines the success in a project where the fulfillment of the pre-agreements scored beneath average. The question was asked why the project was such a success. Without further suggestive indications, the client and the consultant gave the following responses:

Client: What made it successful. That just depends on how you define successful. But I think of three things. The pleasant cooperation with {the consultant}, because we complement each other. So that it is in the relational atmosphere what went well. It made it more than just a clinical advice.

At one point, you understand each other, which enables you to grow in the process. {...} The second thing is that the product was just well made. The quality was of such a level, we could rely on it and use it to proceed the process. So, the product was good. {...} The other thing is that the plan was very detailed, which was very important. Everyone from the board was committed to it, and there was little room for deviations. And the costs, well, it was a bit more expensive than we originally thought.

Interviewer: But I hear you saying that the latter is more or less subordinate.

Client: Yes. I don’t know it anymore actually. But I think that it was more expensive than originally budgeted. But we arranged one and other with each other.

Consultant: In fact, you can say that they came out of it pretty well and that the decision-making has been realized within the board and councils. They were behind schedule at first, but they are back on track now and the service is established. People are employed and so on. {...} The tricky part was, in terms of the planning, fine. So, we realized it according plan. And I’m not referring to the details, but we were ready in time. However, it was not possible

to stay within budget. That always has something to do with how you start. And of course, you can say at the beginning like 'this is what we are going to do and how we are going to do it as discussed and you can check it in the quotation. These are the steps we distinguished and then we'll do this and that.' But if you go through such a process, you have to be able to see it from a certain perspective and deal with the situation as it is. You just don't know how everything is progressing up front. So, at one point, we ran out of budget. I discussed it with {the client} and made certain agreements about it. That took the problem away.

What becomes apparent is that the client and the consultant refer to the improvements that have been realized within the client organizations. The quotes also show that the fulfillment of the pre-agreements scored below average because the original budget was exceeded. However, it seems that fulfilling the pre-agreements are of less importance than realizing improvements. This is strengthened by the fact that the scores on the improvements variable and the success are high, while the score on the pre-agreement's variable is below average. This suggests that realizing improvements due to a consulting project is the most influential factor that determines the level of success, which is similar to the previous cases.

Case 96: the integration of three organizations

Case 96 is about the integration of two smaller companies, spread over Africa and Ethiopia, and a large multinational corporation (MNC). A few years ago, the MNC bought two smaller companies to expand their activities in Africa and Ethiopia to benefit from certain economies of scale. The three organizations, including the MNC itself, had to be aligned with each other. An important aspect within the alignment was to establish a single inventory system that could be used by all the organizations in order to create efficiency and transparency. The question that the MNC had was 'we all sell the same products and we all have our strengths and weaknesses. But momentarily, we operate independently and on our own. To what extent can we use each other strengths and how can we ensure that we can achieve more synergy in our business operations? Can a single ERP-system help us so that we can buy our products together for instance?' The MNC asked two external consultants to help them to find answers to these questions.

What is interesting about this case is that it confirms the importance of the personal benefits of client members and the realized improvements within the client organization as shown in the previous cases. The scores of successes, personal benefits and realized improvements are

relatively low and deviate from the scores of the other cases namely. This case emphasizes the relevance of these variables.

The personal benefits variable scored below average within this case. This indicates that the involved stakeholders of the project, did not benefitted from the project. The following quotes illustrate why the score on the personal benefits is low:

Consultant: {organization 1} had an outdated ERP system. {organization 2} just implemented a new ERP-system with a lot of effort and pain. So, they did not want to implement a new ERP- system. That was about the first thing I was told when I set foot in the organization, like ‘Hey, we are not going to implement a new ERP-system here’. Let’s see. {Organization 3} worked with an ERP-system quite a while, but relatively new. But the problem over there was that the old system was transferred literally to the new functionality. So, they had an old system that worked well, then bought a new system that was completely customized in order to look like the old system. And no one actually knew how the system worked any further. So that was the as-is situation a bit. {...} You see, all three directors agreed that it would be profitable to use one central ERP system. But the problem was that they all operated independently and had difficulties to think from a group or common point of view. What do we want as a MNC and what is good for the MNC? They sat on their own island and two of the three organizations had a strong preference, what system they wanted to use. Which was their own of course. So, the pain and effort it would take to implement a single ERP system was not foreseen in the beginning. {...} that immediately influenced our first workshop that we had in the process.

Interviewer: How?

Consultant: Well, I remember that {organization 2}. Yes. I don’t know any exact examples now but I know that that man had a really big mouth and was commenting on everything all the time. Also, that they put their own system in a better spotlight than it actually was. So, they were saying things like 'Yes, it's very good, and very fast, and very stable'. And when we were there, it was not stable at all and things like that.

Client: So basically, and now I'm saying it very harsh, no one wanted to. But we, as the MNC, did want it of course. But the men on the floor didn't want to. And that made it very, very difficult.

{...} Everybody thought that we were too pushy, that it was unnecessary, that the way they did it was the best, it was all better. {...} We only felt resistance. That's very bad. {...} It has been a big obstacle in the whole project what we've done. The consultants acknowledged this as well at the time.

Interviewer: So those directors of the organizations, they only saw the negative aspects of the project. I can imagine that they showed resistance in their actions.

Client: Yes, and what you saw was, in one case, that a director could determine the opinions of the entire company. I mean, in {organization 2}, the director didn't agree with our proposal and that strengthened the other people in their thoughts. He vented his opinion very explicitly, to resist against us. If he was a bit calmer and quieter about it like 'Ok, well, let's see what it is', the people within that organization would probably be calmer and quieter as well. But strengthened with the fact that the director was obviously against our initiative, they could easily say 'yes, this is worthless'.

What becomes clear in this case is that the solution that was preferred by the MNC, namely to establish one ERP-system, was not supported by the organizations. The quotes illustrate that stakeholders tried to manipulate the process and used this information to benefit from the project. This formed an obstacle as illustrated in the quotes. The quotes show that when a project is not beneficial for the involved parties, this affects the process. As a consequence, it could affect the outcome of the project since individual stakeholders try to create an outcome that they prefer. Notice that "personal" could refer to a smaller group within a larger whole as well. The personal benefits in this case are namely the benefits of the smaller companies.

Since the improvements score is low as well within the case, this proves that the personal benefits are an important influencer of realizing improvements.

The skills of the consultant scored average within this case. This was discussed during the interviews:

Consultant: Yes, you need your skills to convince the people who were influenced by the change to cooperate. An objective attempt has been made to realize that and our approach showed it, I think.

I think that that contributed to the results.

Interviewer: So, it comes to skills among other things when you look at your roles and contribution.

How about the knowledge?

Consultant: Well, that is two folded again. You have the content and you have the way to apply the content into the organization. I believe that we did that quite well. I know a special moment when we had a workshop with all kind of parties. Suppliers, the directors and some other stakeholders. A group of 18 men or something like that. And everybody had different interests during that workshop. {...} But {consultant 1} pulled it off to obtain the necessary content about interfacing and expose certain opinions and so on. As a consequence, we were able to deliver a better advice. Yes, I found that pretty amazing. At first, I had my doubts about the workshop, given certain sensitivities. But I don't know if the client experienced it like this as well.

Researcher: But it comes to skills then?

Consultant: Yes. Yes. That he pulled it off to obtain that much information. Because you are also judged by your expertise, I found it extra ingenious that he received that much information, without having a certain expertise about it. He didn't vent his opinion about certain matters during the workshop, which is good by the way. So, facilitating the workshop, making people talk, write it down and reflecting on it to trigger others to comment on it and so on. That went pretty well.

Client: For me, the most important thing is that such a guy understands what you are doing. {...} With those consultants, you just had the thought 'ok, they get it'. He got acquainted with our industry quite fast, since it was new for him. And he says no nonsense. That is also very important.

{...} Otherwise, you are continuously correcting and compensating and that was not necessary now.

Interviewer: Are you losing your credibility then?

Client: Yes. Yes. And {consultant 1} managed that quite well. Yes.

Interviewer: Is it correct to state that you are satisfied about the consultants due to their skills?

Client: Yes. Yes. But what the consultants did, and that's the beauty of being a consultant in such a role, and now I'm bringing them down a bit, is that, in my opinion, the only thing they do is listening, writing things down what others say, analyze it and providing an advice. They don't add something new to our business. That's the great thing when you are a project manager, you just have to think very logical and keep things clear, see what kind of differences are present and what the similarities are, and to listen very carefully what we want. That is what they did well I think, they were not influenced by other things and gave their independent and clear advice.

The quotes illustrate that the consultants did their job quite well. However, the client illustrates why the score of the consultants is average. Although the client is positive about the consultant, he indicates that consultants should try to add (new) value towards the business in order to score high. Nonetheless, the skills of the consultants contributed to the outcome because it triggered the stakeholders to give them the necessary input. This enabled the consultants to bring the different opinions together in an objective way and come to conclusions.

The priority of the consulting project scored high. But both the client and the consultant stated that this did not contribute to the results. Although the vice-president of the MNC stressed the importance of the project, which relates to top management support, there was no formal deadline or a certain dependence with other projects. Besides, the delegated principal and the consultants could not afford themselves to rush things because there was a lot of resistance towards the idea of one ERP-system. It was a delicate project. The emphasis was more on executing the project thoroughly and objectively than executing it quickly due to the priority.

The quality reduction scored high within this case as well. This indicates that no concessions were made during the project. This variable was discussed during the interviews, but both the respondents stated that no concessions were made, due to the delicate project. The client and the consultant could not afford themselves to make concessions.

Interviewer: To what extent did you and the consultants made some concessions to the results?

Client: I wouldn't say concessions. I think it is more the sequence of activities that we adjusted. We took into account what currently played a role within the organizations. For instance, the story around {organization X} was just bad. As a consequence, we said: 'we must maintain different priorities there'. But no, it was not like 'oh, we have to act now, so we don't do that' or something like that. No, that wasn't the case.

The client mandate variable scored average:

Interviewer: So, you were given the mandate to execute this project?

Client: Yes. Yes, we meet a lot and it is a small group. That enables you to communicate quickly. So of course, there were all kind of moments to synchronize between my boss and me. But since I have been given the full mandate, you have to meet certain expectations. That also applies for the consultants. If you do, the collaboration will be very pleasant. If you don't, you will need to deal with all kind of obstacles, that makes it difficult. But now, it went smoothly.

Interviewer: What if the senior vice-president didn't make clear what the importance of the project was? Was the mandate of the client large enough to come up with the same results?

Consultant: It would certainly be a lot more difficult. Look, the fact that the senior vice president came along and said that the project was important, that signal was important, yes. The client could not do that by his own. {...} He made explicit 'this is important and we are going to do it like this'. So, I think that helped. {...} See, according to the hierarchy, the employees look at the senior vice president. So, the scope of {the client} is more limited. For us, as executioners, the mandate that the client had was enough for us. We could do what we

wanted to do, in consultation with the client of course. But the vice-president was the man who called the shots in the end.

The quotes show why the score on the client mandate was average. Since it was a delicate project, with different interests, and the fact that it could have a large impact, the decision of what to do was not the call of the team. The only thing that they could do is deliver the results in such an objective manner that the vice-president was able to decide what the next steps should be. Shortly put, it explains the score on client mandate and how it contributes to the results of the project.

When it comes to success, the case scored relatively low. Since the score deviates from the other cases, it is interesting to see what determined ‘success’ in this case. During the interviews, the question was asked why the project was such a success. Without further suggestive indications, the client and the consultant gave the following responses:

Client: You need to take two things apart. On the one hand, you observe what you have pre-agreed in terms of the assignment. For that part, I am satisfied about it and what came out of it. The consultants delivered what we expected and we are satisfied about it. But with the outcome in the end, I am totally not satisfied. With all due respect, if you have to fight against that kind of idiots who are able to block things, that is sad. But I understand it though. If I was in the same position as my boss, I would do the same I guess ‘Yes, I can push this through, but shit hits the fan then and if it puts the whole organization down, then it is better not to do it’. {...} But I'm not satisfied with it. And what the consultants did, was just a part of the bigger picture. They collected, analyzed and came with an opinion. Nothing more than that. {after presenting the results of the case}. Yes indeed, you need to distinguish the result of the assignment and the result within the organization.

And that are those assessment factors exactly. That are two very different things with a separate satisfaction. {Consultancy firm} has fulfilled its task and I am satisfied about it. But about the overall project, I am not satisfied. We were unable to identify the benefits and convince people of these benefits so they would be more willing to change. Change management is simply the most important element.

Consultant: I am moderately satisfied. On the one hand, they said 'hey, we strive to one ERP system'. But there we are all kinds of snags at hand and in the end, nothing has changed. {...} All stakeholders had different interests. But I also think that the project has been successful because on the other hand, a conclusion was formed that all stakeholders agreed upon. It was the right conclusion rational wise. {...} But instinctively, this was perceived differently. {...} Everyone had their own interests and thereby had something like 'hey, the outcome is right and it is objectively constructed, but I don't agree to it'. So, I think that's good. However, we have not convinced them to use one ERP-system.

What becomes apparent is that the client and the consultant refer to the improvements that should have been realized within the client organizations. Although the pre-agreements have been fulfilled during this case, the client and the consultant are more dissatisfied than satisfied because the improvements are not realized. That emphasizes that the decisive factor is the realization of the improvements within the client organization. Both interviewees instantly refer to certain improvements that were not realized within the client organization. This suggests that this is the most influential factor that determines the level of success, which is similar to the previous cases.

Case 99: reorganizing a reproduction department

Case 99 is about the reorganization of a reproduction department within an organization. Due to the digital technology developments, the reproduction department experienced a significant decrease in workload. The repro department was becoming less profitable. The machine capacity was not utilized to its fullest anymore and costs remained high. In addition, the organization recently introduced a 'new way of work' (e.g. flexible workplaces). The department had to rethink its organization as well in order to fit in the new organizational structure. Since the reproduction department was becoming smaller and smaller, the idea was raised to centralize the reproduction department with two other organizations, which were similar. To investigate the possibilities and set the new direction for the reproduction department, an external consultant was hired to investigate it. The involved actors had different ideas about the direction. The manager wanted to outsource the whole department, the employees within the department wanted to 'keep the shop open' and the delegated principal was stuck in the middle. So, there was a continuous tension between these three stakeholders.

This case is chosen because the score on the priority of the project is relatively low and deviates from the scores of the other cases. However, the scores on the improvements variable and the pre-agreements variable remain high and thus the score on success as well. This might suggest that the priority is a ‘weak’ (indirect) influential factor on success. This was discussed during the interview. Due to time constraints, only the consultant could be interviewed.

Consultant: Placing the machines was pretty easy and that went very neat. The priority and speed were relevant in that part of the project. The other part of the project had less priority. Different things came at hand that drew the attention away. So, it took quite some time to finish the project.

If the others experienced the priority like this? I don’t know. {...} I always say that there has to be momentum to draw the attention. If there is no momentum, you can say what you want, but nobody is going to do something. So, if there was no momentum regarding the construction project, what forced us to choose what kind of machines had to be in place, then there would be no pressure to bring things up to speed.

The quote shows that the priority was focused on the simple part of the project, namely the replacement of the printers. But the metaphorical “proof of the pudding” was in the reorganization of the department. Unfortunately, that process lost its momentum and thus its priority. As the consultant illustrated, people were not cooperating as helpful as when the momentum was present. It slowed down the project, but the consultant did not mention that it affected the results. This indicates that the priority of the project is not a strong (indirect) influencer on the success of the project.

The personal benefits variable scored slightly above average. This would indicate that the involved stakeholders of the project, benefitted from the project:

Consultant: All people got a position due to my advice. These kinds of departments are always a mishmash of employees that were redundant somewhere else. {...} And I can provide them with a new position with my advice, due to my knowledge and ‘know-how’. And with a position, I mean a spot that is valued within the organization. It is possible that

people get a position outside the organization as well. {...} So, it is about people getting a position. That is the most important aspect.

And not a position that they want, but a position where they belong and add value to the organization. Ultimately, the people within this project got a strong position that was beneficial for them, that made them cooperate with the project and strive for the good result. They proceeded with the project then.

Interviewer: Are you satisfied with the project and the results because people got a position within the organization what caused the organization to function better?

Consultant: Yes. Because when people get a position, then there is acceptance about that position. And with that acceptance, people talk with them and not about them. That is what it is all about.

The quotes show that when a project is beneficial for the involved individuals, they are more willing to cooperate. They strive for a good result of the consulting project. This facilitates the work of the consultant and increases the chance to bring the project to a success.

The skills of the consultant scored slightly above average as well. The previous quotes show that the acceptance by the stakeholders plays an important role. During the interview, the question was asked why this project was such a success. He replied with the fact that a central stakeholder, the one who became redundant, eventually accepted the consultant as a consultant. He was a stakeholder with a huge informal power and was quite recalcitrant. Eventually, he was willing to cooperate and to do what was asked or told. Next, the interviewer asked what made this person change his mind:

Consultant: I think my skills as well, but more due to my graphic background. The knowledge that we had of the profession that he executed. {...} That was really important for him. Although I kept saying to him ‘Yes {order manager}, I think that there is no future in it anymore and that things have to change’. He accepted that from me or from my advice. He always thought that it was important that graphic people said something like that. I think it is less relevant, but it was important because I was a sparring partner, I knew what he was talking about. {...} But the more you move towards {the manager}, the process becomes

more important. So, I was the expert at the bottom, and at the top the process was more relevant.

Interviewer: So, your skills are very important then?

Consultant: Yes. Yes. Because how are you going to tell the story? What hurdles do you need to take? What are the pitfalls? {...} I could level with the different stakeholders; I could talk with them differently about the same problem. {...} And that creates trust.

Interviewer: But are you saying that your skills enable trust?

Consultant: Yes, definitely. You need to position yourself very clearly with a clear opinion.

Interviewer: How is that beneficial?

Consultant: That my expert role is never a discussion. That people think of advice like ‘well, he is probably right about it’ or ‘well, then I think we have to do it like that’.

The quotes show how the skills of the consultant contributed to the results of the project. Although the skills also created, among other things, trust, it also ensured that he and the results of the project were accepted. This relates to the improvement’s variable because a change in the people’s mindset was realized. As shown in the quotes, this made sure that people were striving to bring this project to a success. The quotes illustrate the mechanisms behind the effect of the skills of the consultant. Notice that due to the trust that was created within this project, the consultant benefitted from it because nobody doubted his thoughts or actions.

The quality reduction scored above average. During the interview, the consultant stated that no concessions were made. This was due to the mentality of the consultant, who did not allow himself to reduce the quality of the outcome due to certain factors. He strived for an optimal result.

The client mandate scored high as well within this case. But this was merely due to the fact that there was a clear assignment and a classic client – consultant situation as stated by the

consultant. The consultant was given a specific assignment and was given the mandate to come with an advice. He needed to make sure that the involved stakeholders supported his work.

The case has a high score on success. Both the improvements variable and pre-agreements variable scored high as well. It is interesting to see what determines the success. During the interviews, the question was asked why the project was such a success. Remember that the acceptance was already mentioned by the consultant as being an improvement. Without further suggestive indications, the consultant gave the following additional responses:

Consultant: Because a colleague of mine implemented my advice. I saw that they carried through the change. Partly by themselves. So that's important as well. But their position remained valid despite the dynamics within the organization. They got a position due to my advice.

What becomes apparent is that the consultant refers primarily to the improvements that have been realized within the client organizations. Since a colleague of the consultant could proceed where he was ended, namely with the start of the implementation, he could see that his advice was used and that the advice improved the organization to a certain degree. This suggests that the realized improvements are the dominant influencers that determine success.

5.3. A summary of the qualitative analyses

This chapter showed the results of the qualitative analyses within this study. The answers to the open questions of the questionnaires showed that some variables that were excluded in the primary analyses such as top management support, the knowledge of a consultant, client readiness to change, the approach, and mutual trust, are considered relevant during consulting projects. Respondents stated that the approach, mutual trust, the knowledge of the consultant, and top management support are important contributors to the success of a project (besides the skills of the consultant and the realized improvements). The respondents also stated that top management support, the realized improvements, and client readiness to change are important factors that could affect the success of a consulting project in a negative way as well.

The following table shows the conclusions that can be derived from the face-to-face interviews per case regarding the discussed variables and effects.

Table 28 : The conclusions of the face-to-face interviews per case.

Overview conclusions cases					
	Case 41	Case 50	Case 60	Case 96	Case 99
Personal benefits	Explicitly addressing the personal benefits is the decisive factor.	When a project is not beneficial for certain stakeholders, it could affect the project and the outcomes.	When a project includes stakeholders with opposing interests and therefore not beneficial for certain stakeholders, it affects the project and the outcomes.	When a project includes stakeholders with opposing interests and therefore not beneficial for certain stakeholders or groups, it affects the project and the outcomes.	When a project is beneficial for the stakeholders, it positively contributes to the project and the outcomes and thus success.
Skills	Knowledge is subordinate in comparison with skills. The skills are causing client members to cooperate.	It is inevitable that success is negatively affected when the skills of the consultant are underdeveloped. Even when the client tries to compensate for it.	Knowledge enables the consultant to utilize his or her skills to the fullest. Skills are essential to create trust.	To excel (instead of being average), consultants should strive to add (new) business value towards the client.	Skills create a certain acceptance, which is key during a consulting project.
Priority of a consulting project	Although it is important that a project has a certain level of priority, it is also important to maintain its priority.	Priority helps to carry out the intended tasks and achieve the intended goals.	Priority of a project enables the client and consultant to get things done.	Priority is related to the importance of a project. It helps to get things done. But it is not beneficial to rush things.	The priority of a consulting project influences success relatively weak compared to other factors, but it is beneficial due to its momentum.

The quality reduction of the outcome	Only concessions that affect essential elements in a project, affect success.	Concessions are 'killing' in delicate projects.	Striving for excellence causes the deliverables to be well received, due to the quality of the deliverables/outcomes.	N/A	The goal for every consultant must be to never reduce the quality of the project or outcome.
Client mandate	Client mandate helps to remain the pace and to hold on to the objectives.	Client mandate helps to carry out the intended tasks without being disturbed or hindered by others.	Client mandate can be beneficial, but it is not essential. A project can be successful, even when there is no client mandate (which can be beneficial as well).	When a certain mandate is given, it is important to meet the expectations. Otherwise, the client mandate will be reduced instantly.	When a project is not beneficial for certain stakeholders, it could affect the project and the outcomes.
Improvements within client organization	Realizing improvements within the client organization due to a consulting project is essential.	Realizing improvements within the client organization due to a consulting project is essential.	Realizing improvements within the client organization due to a consulting project is essential.	Realizing improvements within the client organization due to a consulting project is essential.	N/A
Fulfillment of pre-agreements	Fulfilling the pre-agreements such as timeframe, budget, and assignment, is essential as well.	N/A	Fulfilling the pre-agreements is subordinate in comparison with the realization of improvements.	Fulfilling the pre-agreements after a consulting project is essential.	N/A
Success (i.e. perceives)	Respondents consider a project a	Respondents consider a project a	Respondents consider a project a	Respondents consider a project a success, due to	Respondents consider a project a

satisfaction	success, dominantly due to the realized improvements.	success, dominantly due to the realized improvements.	success, dominantly due to the realized improvements.	the realization of improvements and the fulfillment of pre-agreements.	success, dominantly due to the realized improvements.
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During the interviews, it became clear that the success of a consulting project is largely determined by the realized improvements. In other words, a consulting project is mostly considered successful when the client organization is improved due to the consulting project. The results of the interviews also suggest that the personal benefits are a dominant influencer as well. If a consulting project is beneficial for the involved stakeholders, it is likely that the project will become a success.

Involved client members who benefit from a project, are likely to put effort into the project to make it a success. Thus, it is important to realize improvements on the organizational level where the organization benefits from and it is important to realize improvements on a personal level (e.g. individual or group) where the client members or groups benefit from. Both ‘types of improvements’ must be realized to finish a consulting project successfully.

Now that all analyses, quantitative and qualitative, have been executed and the results have been discussed, the next chapter presents the answers of the research questions. An examination of the hypotheses will be used to answer the research questions. Note that the reflection of and the relation with the theory, as described in chapter 3.

CHAPTER SIX

6. CONCLUSIONS

This chapter entails the conclusions and interpretations of the results found in the previous chapters. There are some remarks that have to be addressed before continuing with this chapter:

- Remember that the analyses of the data are executed in different phases: phase 1 – testing the conceptual model with the help of the so-called primary quantitative analyses; phase 2 – revealing inter-group and intra- group effects (e.g. respectively between and within the client, consultant, context, relationship, and assessment group) with the help of the so-called exploratory quantitative analyses; phase 3 – examining the qualitative data of the conceptual model (answers of the open questions in the questionnaires and the face-to-face interviews)
- The analyses concern factors that influence success directly or indirectly. The exploratory analyses concern factors that indirectly-indirectly influence success as discussed in section 6.10. Hypotheses that include factors that influence the process and outcome of consulting projects indirectly-indirectly, are neither rejected nor accepted. Further research is required to determine the significant relevance of these factors.
- A reflection of the theory, as presented in chapter 3, will be discussed in the next chapter.

The sub research questions will be answered one by one, using the hypotheses to formulate the appropriate answers. Afterwards, the main research question will be discussed. The main research question ‘why are certain consulting projects more successful than others under the same circumstances?’ will be answered, using the answers of the sub research questions. Notice that the subsections are titled with the sub research questions as formulated in chapter 2. This chapter reflects on the found results where the use of statistical terms and technical names will be avoided as much as possible.

6.1. The hypotheses and the sub research question under the magnifying glass

This section discusses the hypotheses as formulated in the theoretical framework and why they can be rejected or accepted. When all hypotheses are checked, an answer is given to the main research question that relates to the hypotheses.

6.1.1. What is consulting success?

As discussed in chapter 3, there is a two-sided stream of literature regarding success. One stream state that success is built upon several assessment factors of which satisfaction is one of them. The other stream states that success is all about the degree of perceived satisfaction and that satisfaction results from several assessment factors. This study proves how useful Van Aken's approach is. The quantitative analyses show, and the correlation matrix in particular, fulfilling the pre-agreements, realizing improvements within the client organization, and success are strongly correlated. The analyses also show that fulfilling the pre-agreements and improving the client organization strongly influence success. They also explain, for the greater part, the differences in success between consulting projects (if they exist). Although the quantitative analyses could not exclude any causal options between these variables, it is assumed, based on the findings of this study, that the reasoning and empirical studies of Van Aken (1996) and Albers (2010) about success are true, namely that success is equivalent to the perceived satisfaction of the client and the consultant. Therefore, the ultimate goal within consulting projects is to maximize the satisfaction of the involved actors. In other words, when a consulting project is considered successful by the client and the consultant, it means that the client and the consultant are satisfied about the execution and the outcome.

6.1.2. Is success of a consulting project influenced by the execution and outcome of a consulting project, the client, the consultant, the context, and the client-consultant relationship?

This sub-research question is related to hypothesis 1. It is hypothesized that certain assessment factors about the execution and outcome of consulting projects, influence the success of consulting projects. The corresponding hypothesis is:

H1: The more a consulting project meets the assessment factors that measure the execution and outcomes of consulting projects, the higher the success of a consulting project.

This hypothesis is quite broad and it is plausible to assume that it is obvious and straightforward that the hypothesis is true. But this study reveals some nuances to this hypothesis. The quantitative analyses show that the level of success is determined by assessment factors such as the extent in which improvements within the client organizations (e.g. more efficiency, more energetic, more consensus, better collaboration) are realized and the extent in which the pre-agreements between the client and the consultant (e.g. stayed within budget, no delay, utilizing the required resources, executing the promised activities) are fulfilled at the end of consulting projects. The nuance is that these two assessment factors influence success only and that the other assessment factors do not influence success directly. The analyses also show that these two assessment factors absorbed the effects that clients, consultants, the context, and the relationship have on success. In other words, without the inclusion of the assessment factors in the conceptual model, it seemed that the consultant's skills, the priority of a consulting project, and the client's mandate, influence success directly. However, when the assessment factors were included in the conceptual model, these effects were gone. The analyses show that all the differences in success between the 140 projects can be explained by the conceptual model. 77% of the variance in success, can be explained by the extent in which improvements within the client organizations are realized and the extent in which the pre-agreements between the client and the consultant are fulfilled at the end of consulting projects. This is quite high and confirms that success is dominantly influenced by these two assessment factors. The interviews revealed that the level of satisfaction is dominantly influenced by the two assessment factors as well. In addition, the interviews revealed that the realized improvements are much more influential than fulfilling the pre-agreements. Interviewees instantly referred to improvements within the client organization when they were asked why a consulting project was such a success. The improvements are therefore the most important elements to focus on within consulting projects. The interviewees made a clearer distinction between realizing improvements and fulfilling the pre-agreements. They stated that the pre-agreements are concerned with the assignment per se, such as whether the consultants fulfilled their assignment, stayed within

budget, delivered on time and so on. The improvements are concerned with all the improvements that have been realized within the organization, such as whether the assignment created or realized the improvements as desired, whether the client is more efficient due to the project and so on.

The exploratory part of the quantitative analyses shows that when clients and consultants collectively participate during consulting projects (e.g. ongoing communication between the client and the consultant throughout the project, continuous involvement of the client and the consultants towards the project, support/guidance from the consultant from the beginning till the end) stimulates the realization of the improvements and the fulfillment of the pre-agreements. The communication element of the collective participation is mentioned specifically by many respondents and interviewees because it creates transparency by which the involved stakeholders can act upon.

Collective participation, as a whole, is less mentioned than the approach as a success factor during consulting projects. During the interviews, the approach was often named as being an important factor in a consulting project. Besides the interviews, the open answers in the questionnaires show a similar result. The interviewees state that the use of a clear approach (e.g. the use of a certain method, a management model, a strict planning, a strong result-driven focus) is good. However, the quantitative analyses show that a strict use of a pre-determined approach of a consulting project negatively influences the realization of improvements and that is an interesting effect. So, the quantitative results and the qualitative results are contradictory in principle. The interviewees illustrated that the effect of the approach on the realization of the improvements within the client organization has a delicate tipping point. The most interviewees stated that the use of a method or a certain other approach is beneficial when the outline of the approach is applied. But when there is no room to deviate from it or to adjust the approach, then it immediately becomes a burden.

This is due to the fact that the approach loses its effectiveness and efficiency. Thus, a too strict usage of an approach or method, leads to less or no improvements within the client organization. A solution to prevent the approach to become a burden is to make sure that the client and the consultant equally contribute to the project (e.g. a balance between the client

and the consultant of bringing in knowledge, ideas, creativity, effort, capacity). Then both parties have a saying in the approach that enables them to maintain an effective and efficient approach that is beneficial for both the client and the consultant. That makes it more or less a measure to apply when the approach seems to be ineffective or inefficient.

The effects found in the quantitative analyses are supported by the qualitative analyses. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted. To answer the sub research question, success is directly influenced by the improvements that consulting projects realize within client organizations and by achieving the goals of the assignments within consulting projects as pre-agreed.

6.1.3. To what extent do consultants influence consulting projects?

This sub research question is broad and two-folded. On the one hand, the sub research question refers to the knowledge that a consultant possesses and applies within consulting projects. As described in chapter 3, knowledge is divided in 3 dimensions: (1) general knowledge about the macro environment of the client organization (e.g. think of the elements within the commonly known management model: PESTEL-model); (2) specific knowledge about the client organization, the industry and the functional knowledge domain (e.g. process optimization (six sigma), due diligence); (3) knowledge about the consultancy profession such as types of interventions, consultancy processes and so on. On the other hand, the research question refers to the specific basic competencies consultants use during consulting projects (e.g. flexibility, analytical skills, conceptual thinking, creativity, balanced judgment, awareness of external environment, generating vision, listening, sensitivity communication, presentation, persuasion, integrity, reliability, creating a favorable atmosphere). The bundling of competencies is labeled as the skills of the consultant within this research.

The following hypothesis relates to the contribution of knowledge to the success of consulting projects:

H2: The execution and outcome of consulting projects are positively influenced by the knowledge possessed and applied by consultants.

The consultant is a much-discussed topic in the consultancy literature. A question that is often discussed by consultants themselves is whether the skills or the knowledge of the consultant is a decisive factor. Despite the fact some may state that knowledge is also a basic competence, it has been a deliberate choice to separate the knowledge aspect from the basic skills or competencies in this study as described in chapter 3. A reason is that this study tries to provide some clarification around this debate. Initially, both aspects are considered significant contributors to success of consulting projects.

However, the quantitative analyses show something else. The analyses show that the knowledge of a consultant does not influence the success of a consulting project directly, nor that it influences the realization of improvements or the fulfillment of pre-agreements. Nonetheless, the knowledge of the consultant is mentioned quite often in the answers of the questionnaires. In the exploratory analyses, the knowledge of the consultant seems to influence the skills of the consultant positively and thus success indirectly. Some interviewees stated that it all begins with the knowledge of a consultant and that it goes hand in hand with the skills of a consultant. If a consultant is not ‘loaded’ with the proper knowledge, he or she has to put a lot of effort and attention in obtaining the necessary knowledge.

Otherwise, his credibility will be lost quickly and has no added value within the consulting project. As a consequence, the consultant cannot focus himself or herself on putting the skills to use or to develop his or her skills towards the required level. A consultant that has the proper knowledge, is able to ‘play’ with the matter and can focus him- or herself on putting his or her skills to use. The latter refers to enabling him- or herself to persuade individuals of their thoughts, to grasp and analyze the complex client problems, to apply the right interventions, to retrieve the right information and so on.

The following hypothesis relates to the contribution of skills to the success of consulting projects:

H3: The execution and outcome of consulting projects are positively influenced by the basic competencies of consultants.

The quantitative analyses show that the skills variable is the decisive factor of the two consultant aspects, since it influences success indirectly. The analyses show that the skills influence the realization of client improvements and the fulfillment of the pre-agreements positively. The qualitative analyses show that the skills of a consultant are indeed an important factor when it comes to the success of a consulting project. Interviewees stated that skills are required to put certain knowledge to use and to get things done. They also stated that the skills of the consultant enable important aspects such as ‘trust’ and ‘acceptance’, which is beneficial.

The analyses show that skills of consultants are related to many other aspects within consulting projects, which underlines how influential the skills can be. It is important to highlight the words ‘can be’. One of the five cases in the qualitative examination, explicitly shows that the client can compensate the skills of the consultant, which fell short, in order to realize a successful project. This occurred in other cases as well, although less explicit. This explains why skills of the consultant, and the knowledge as well, are mentioned often as a positive factor and almost never as a negative factor in the answers of the open questions in the questionnaires. This slightly nuances the influence of skills. It shows that skills can be of a great help for the consultant and the project to be successful, but when the consultant scores poorly on the skills aspect, it is most likely that other factors compensate for it.

The title of this sub-section is ‘to what extent do consultants influence consulting projects?’. The answer is that consultants do influence consulting projects, primarily due to their skills. The better developed the skills of the consultant, the more likely that improvements will be realized and the more likely that the pre-determined agreements are fulfilled at the end of consulting projects and thus the more successful the consulting project. The knowledge of the consultant plays an indirect-indirect role towards success and can be beneficial in consulting projects. This is due its influences on other variables ‘behind the scenes’. These mechanisms are not investigated during this research. As a result, hypothesis 3 is accepted and hypothesis 2 is neither rejected nor accepted. Technically seen, this hypothesis is true. But the effect is so indirect, that further investigation is needed to see how strong the influence is.

6.1.4. Do clients influence consulting projects?

Initially, this sub research question is related to five client hypotheses as discussed in chapter 3. Below, each hypothesis will be discussed. The first hypothesis is about top management support (TMS):

H4: The more the top management supports the consulting project, the better the execution and outcome of consulting projects.

The quantitative analyses show that TMS does not influence the success of a consulting project directly. However, they show that TMS positively influences the collaboration of client team members and the team diversity. The analyses also show that TMS influences many other variables. Ultimately, TMS influences success indirectly-indirectly. Thus, via many different client, consultant, context, or relationship factors. Therefore, TMS plays a pivotal role in consulting projects. The qualitative analyses show that TMS is considered one of the most influential factors that either contributes to the success of a consulting project or harms the success of a consulting project. It is one of the most mentioned factors by the respondents. It can ease the process a lot, as was shown in the interview quotes. Top management can break down all kinds of barriers and can decide quickly, so that the project can move on to the next phase.

This strengthens the argument that TMS is a great facilitator to realize the intended process and intended outcome of consulting projects. Active TMS can be seen as an element that can help, if present, during consulting projects in order to realize the intended process and outcome. Hypothesis 4 is thus neither rejected nor accepted, by the same reasons as in hypothesis 2. Although TMS influences the execution and outcome of consulting projects indirectly-indirectly, it is necessary to further examine the significant influence of this factor towards success.

The second client hypothesis is about the active presence of a client leader/sponsor during consulting projects:

H5: Active presence of a client leader/sponsor has a positive influence on the execution and the outcome of consulting projects.

The active presence of a client leader/sponsor is often referred to as a client factor that plays a beneficial role during consulting projects. This is a 'spider in the web' within the client organization and has the necessary power to execute the consulting project. However, the quantitative analyses show otherwise. The analyses show that active presence of a client leader/sponsor does not influence success directly.

They show that the presence of a client leader/sponsor only affects the personal benefits of the client team members in a positive way. So, an active client leader is more likely to create a consulting project that is beneficial for involved client members. In addition, active presence of a client leader/sponsor is barely mentioned in the questionnaires as being a success factor. Answers were given such as 'The role of the client leader', 'He picked up the role of internal project leader and played a very good and razor sharp (political) game in response to the many changes along the way.

As a result, he had a great ability to get things done', 'There was a clear internal project leader', 'the role of the client project leader', 'the commitment and devotion of internal project leader', and 'the power of the client project leader'. The answers show that the client leader can be beneficial. The qualitative part shows the same tendencies. The exploratory analyses might explain why: in consulting projects where a client team is heterogeneous and client members are working together, assigned or unassigned, it is likely that a client leader will be assigned to manage the client members. Especially when the priority of the project is high and the client leader and the team is given the mandate to execute the project.

The client leader is likely to direct the project in such a matter that the results become beneficial for the client members. A strong client leader demands a skillful consultant and vice versa. The more trust the client leader gains, the better he or she will fulfill the role of a client leader. It is assumed that the added value of a client leader is higher as consulting projects become larger. Active presence of a client leader can thus be beneficial during

consulting projects, but indirectly-indirectly. Therefore, hypothesis 5 is rejected nor accepted.

Initially, the client factors included the commitment of client members. The corresponding hypothesis is:

H6: Strong commitment of client team members positively influences the execution and outcome of consulting projects.

The three questions that should measure the commitment of client members, were not measuring commitment. The factor analyses showed that the commitment questions were actually measuring the ‘personal involvement’, ‘the collaboration’, and the ‘personal benefits’ of client members. One might ask what the difference is between personal involvement and collaboration. The former concerns the extent in which client team members feel personally involved towards the client team and have a personal drive to remain involved throughout the consulting project in order to collectively finish a consulting project successfully. The latter concerns the extent in which client team members are working together to finish a consulting project successfully. The three factors bring forth an interesting perspective on the client’s influence in consulting projects.

The quantitative analyses show that personal involvement does not influence success directly. They show that personal involvement negatively influences the collective participation. The relations with other factors might explain this effect. It seems that mutual trust between the client and consultant and client mandate positively influence personal involvement. In other words, when mandate is given to the client members and there is mutual trust, client members feel the urge to finish consulting projects.

They want to stay involved from the beginning till the end. However, since they have the mandate and are trusted, their dominance can grow to such a height, that it is disadvantageous for the consultant. He or she will be less likely to participate in the consulting project. The qualitative part shows that personal involvement of client members is often mentioned as a client factor that plays a positive role in consulting projects. Respondents gave answers such as ‘the active contribution of all the client team members’, ‘the personal involvement of the client team members’, ‘the belief (drive) in the added value

of the output of the project group among the client team members’, and ‘showing interest in the consulting project’. Although personal involvement is often mentioned in a broader context, the role it plays in the conceptual model is less obvious. Nonetheless, the analyses indicate that personal involvement is good. However, when the involvement becomes too intense, it becomes unfavorable for the results of the consulting project. The mechanisms behind this statement cannot be distilled from the answers provided by the respondents or interviewees.

The quantitative analyses show that the collaboration of client members does not influence the success of consulting projects directly. The analyses show that the collaboration positively influences the active presence of a client leader/sponsor. This is also discussed in the paragraph about the active presence of the client leader/sponsor. Thus, the more client members collaborate, the greater the need for a client leader who manages the collaboration. It is interesting to see that top management support and client readiness positively influence the collaboration of client team members. The analyses confirm this logic: when the client has a certain positive attitude about the project, that they want the project to take place for instance, they are more willing to collaborate with others. In addition, when the top management communicates and actively supports the project, it is likely that client members are collaborate, whether the client members are assigned or not. The qualitative part showed the same tendencies. The collaboration is mentioned just a few times by the respondents as being an important factor, positively and negatively. Interesting is that the collaboration is seen more as a negative factor. This might indicate that it can do more ‘damage’ when there is no collaboration than it is beneficial when the client members collaborate. However, collaboration of client members can be beneficial in consulting projects, although this is not a strong influencer.

The personal benefits for the client members are a different story. The quantitative analyses show that personal benefits positively influence the realization of improvements within the client organization and thus indirectly influence success. The analyses also show that active presence of the client leader/sponsor influences the personal benefits. As mentioned before, the client leader is likely to finish the project in a way that it becomes beneficial for every client team member because he or she forces him- or herself to, due to the given mandate, trust, and so on. The analyses also show that personal benefits are positively related to all other factors (consultant, context and relationship), except to the timing of a consulting

project. This confirms the importance of making a project beneficial for client members. When client members acknowledge that a project will be beneficial for them, they put effort into the project to realize the proposed improvements and make the project a success. The qualitative analyses show the same image. However, it is quite remarkable that this factor is mentioned only a few times in the questionnaires whereas the interviews showed that this is perhaps the most important indirect influencer for success.

The realized improvements within the client organization are the dominant direct influencer of success. The interviews show that the personal benefits are the dominant direct influencer of the realization of the improvements. A consulting project comes with certain changes that need to be realized within the client organization and people are often involved in changes, either in their work activities, or in their behavior and so on. Many people do not like changes. This may result in resistance that disturbs the progression or direction of the project. This could affect the realization of certain improvements. When it is made explicit in the project that people benefit from the proposed changes, they are likely to stop being resistant and even going to embrace the change. So, it is important to listen to the client and understand what the needs are.

Although the three new factors include elements of commitment, it is considered that the three new factors are different. As a result, hypothesis 6 cannot be rejected nor accepted because commitment is not measured during this study.

Hypothesis 7 is about the team diversity of the client team:

[**H7:** The more heterogeneous the client team, the better the execution and outcome of consulting projects.]

The quantitative analyses show that team diversity does not influence the success directly. The analyses also show that team diversity is positively influenced by TMS. An explanation might be that when top management finds a project very important, it is likely that different expertise will be involved to ensure the quality, the relevance, the support and so on of a consulting project within the client organization. When the client team is heterogeneous, it needs to be managed due to the different expertise and people involved from the whole organization. The qualitative findings show the same results. However, team diversity is

barely mentioned as an important factor that plays a beneficial role during consulting projects. A reason might be that it is of less importance to involve a diverse number of people, but to involve the right people. Since the analyses show that team diversity does influence the outcome and execution of a consulting project indirectly-indirectly, hypothesis 7 cannot be rejected or accepted.

Hypothesis 8 relates to the client readiness variable:

H8: Client readiness positively influences the execution and the outcome of consulting projects

The quantitative analyses show that client readiness does not influence success directly. The variable is not influencing the assessment factors as well. However, the exploratory analyses show that, as far as it concerns the client, everything starts with client readiness, just like TMS. In other words, client readiness can be seen as an element that needs to be present. Although it is not essential, it can ease the process and contribute to the outcome. Client readiness positively influences the collaboration of client members, which is also discussed in the collaboration paragraph. What is interesting is that client readiness is positively influenced by the skills of the consultant, the mandate that is given to the client team and trust. The qualitative analyses showed that client readiness is mentioned quite often in the answers of the questionnaires. Interesting is that client readiness is seen more as a negative factor, since it is mentioned more often as a negative factor. This might indicate that it can do more ‘damage’ when there is no client readiness than it is beneficial when client members have a positive attitude about the consulting project. So, the qualitative analyses and the exploratory analyses indicate that client readiness can be a beneficial factor in consulting projects and therefore indirectly-indirectly influences the process and the outcome of consulting projects. Therefore, hypothesis 8 is neither rejected nor accepted.

The explanation in this section gives an answer to the sub research question “to what extent do clients influence consulting projects?”. It seems that clients do influence consulting projects when the project is beneficial for them individually or as a group. Client members will put the necessary (personal) effort into a project to realize the improvements that are

beneficial for them. So exaggeratedly speaking, whenever the benefits for the client are made explicit within a project and the client acknowledges them, the client will do whatever it takes to make the project a success and realize the improvements. The personal benefits variable is the most influential factor for consulting success. In addition, there are two factors that seem to have a strong influence in consulting projects. The exact mechanisms are relatively unknown, but it seems that TMS and client readiness play a pivotal and beneficial role in consulting projects, given their relations with other variables.

6.1.5. Does the context influence consulting projects?

Initially, the context factors included a factor about time pressure. The questions that should measure time pressure, were not measuring time pressure but three different aspects. The factor analyses showed that the questions were actually measuring ‘the quality reduction of the outcome’, ‘the timing of a consulting project’, and ‘the priority of a consulting project’. Although these three factors contain elements of time pressure, it was concluded that the three factors are different. As a result, hypothesis 9 cannot be rejected nor accepted because time pressure is not measured during this study:

H9: A high level of time pressure during consulting projects negatively influences the execution and the outcome.

Although no statements can be made regarding the time pressure of consulting projects, the three factors bring forth an interesting perspective on the context in consulting projects.

The quantitative analyses show that when the quality of the outcome is reduced during consulting projects (e.g. when concessions have been made), the less likely that pre-agreements will be fulfilled at the end of a project. Thus, quality reduction influences success indirectly. When less concessions are made during a project, it is more likely that the project is executed within budget, planning, conform assignment and so on. The analyses also show that quality reduction is influenced by other factors such as TMS and the skills of a consultant. For instance, the stronger the support or the better the skills, the less concessions are made during a project. The qualitative analyses show that quality reduction is of less importance. Quality reduction was mentioned just a few times in the answers of the questionnaires. During the interviews, concessions on the quality seemed of less importance

as well, because it is likely that it will be picked up when it threatens to occur. Nonetheless, quality reduction can be an unfortunate factor in consulting projects.

The quantitative analyses show that the timing of consulting projects does not influence the success of consulting projects directly but indirectly-indirectly. In addition, the correlation matrix shows that the timing of a consulting project is correlated with just a few other factors such as the approach. The exploratory analyses show that the timing factor negatively influences the approach. The sooner a consulting project had to be executed, which includes a certain urgency, the less likely that an approach has been developed during the consulting project. In other words, the approach is rather pre-determined at the start of a project, when the urgency is high. The exploratory analyses show that timing is positively influenced by TMS and by the knowledge of a consultant. This is interesting because it suggests that when top management supports the project, this is perceived as being important and thus urgent. The other effect might be explained by the fact that when a consultant possesses the proper knowledge, he or she is able to estimate what is required during the project. That may cause a certain level of urgency to be generated. The qualitative part shows that timing is of less importance. It is mentioned a few times by respondents as being an important positive factor. Interesting is that timing is seen more as a negative factor. This indicates that it can do more 'damage' when there is no urgency than it is beneficial when there is a sense of urgency.

The quantitative analyses show that the priority of consulting projects positively influences the realization of client improvements and thus success indirectly. Priority is considered as something different than timing. Priority is more related to the importance of a project whereas timing is more related to the urgency. When a consulting project is given a high priority within the client organization, client members are likely to put effort into the project to realize the improvements. The exploratory analyses show that priority is related to other factors such as personal benefits of client members and active presence of a client leader/sponsor. The qualitative part shows a similar image. Priority is mentioned a few times by the respondents as being an important positive factor. Interesting is that priority is more seen as a negative factor. This indicates that it can do more 'damage' when the project is not considered as important than it is beneficial when it is found important. However, interviewees stated that is relevant in consulting projects because priority generates a sort of

‘momentum’. Client members put effort into a project because priority positively influences the personal benefits of client members.

Client mandate is a factor that remained its initial form. The corresponding hypothesis is:

H10: A high level of client mandate within the client team positively influences the execution and the outcome of consulting projects.

The quantitative analyses show that the client mandate positively influences the realization of improvements and the fulfillment of pre-agreements directly. The analyses also show that the client mandate of team members influence success indirectly, via the assessment factors (i.e. realized improvements and fulfillment of pre-agreements). This is a nuance that needs some attention. The analyses show that the direct effect of client mandate on success is absorbed by the inclusion of the two assessment factors into the conceptual model. That does not mean that success, or the perceived satisfaction, is one-to-one affected by the client mandate which is quite assumable. It means that the two assessment factors influence the perceived level of satisfaction and that the client mandate influences the two assessment factors. The exploratory analyses show that client mandate also influences the collective participation positively. In addition, client mandate relates to almost all other client, consultant and relationship factors. This indicates that it is important in consulting projects that client members who are directly involved in consulting projects, have the proper mandate to execute their tasks within the project. The qualitative analyses show that client mandate is of less importance. It is remarkable that client mandate is barely mentioned in the answers of the questionnaires. The interviewees stated that enough client mandate can be beneficial during consulting projects. Although it is considered as a smaller influencer than for instance personal benefits, hypothesis 10 is hereby accepted.

The explanation in this section gives an answer to the sub research question “to what extent does the context influence consulting projects?”. The context does influence consulting projects. When the project is considered important for instance, this creates momentum and that contributes to the realization of client improvements. It is also beneficial when the client members who work with the consultant(s), have the proper mandate to execute the consulting project. The larger the mandate, the better the client members are able to positively influence, correct, and execute the project to achieve specific goals or improvements. Therefore, the client mandate contributes to the realization of client

improvements and the fulfillment of pre-agreements. What seems to be relevant as well, is that consultants and clients must try to reject every form of concessions during the project. The results indicate that concessions have a negative effect on fulfilling the pre-agreements.

6.1.6. Does the client-consultant relationship influence consulting projects?

Trust is often mentioned as being the most important variable during a consulting project. Some researchers and practitioners state that it all begins with trust and that trust is the basis of a successful engagement and consulting project. But trust must be granted at the start of or during an engagement or project. Although some firms have a certain status or reputation that gives the consultant a certain trust or credit in advance, this has to be fulfilled by the consultant. Trust has to be earned. In addition, trust grows (or decreases of course) over time. The following hypothesis is constructed that relates to trust:

H11: Strong mutual trust between the client and the consultant leads to more successful outcomes and executions of consulting projects.

The quantitative analyses show that mutual trust does not contribute to the success of consulting projects directly. In other words, success (i.e. the perceived satisfaction) is not one-to-one affected by the mutual trust between the client and the consultant. However, the exploratory analyses show that trust positively influences collective participation. So, via multiple 'paths' mutual trust influences success, but more research is required to determine how strong that influence exactly is. Collective participation is one of the five assessment factors that measure the outcome and process of consulting projects. When there is trust between the client and the consultant, it is likely that they stay involved during the project and that they communicate with each other and that a certain threshold, if present, will vanish when there is mutual trust. Not only show the exploratory analyses that trust is related to collective participation, they also show that trust is related to all the client, consultant, and context factors except for the timing factor. This indicates that mutual trust is a strong influencer to realize the intended process and intended outcome. The qualitative analyses show that trust is mentioned as an important factor on an average basis. Interesting is that trust is more often mentioned as a positive factor. This confirms the suggestion that mutual trust is a strong influencer to get things done. The interviewees confirmed that mutual trust is beneficial when it is present during a consulting project. Because mutual trust influences

collective participation and thus the process and the outcome of consulting projects, hypothesis 11 is accepted.

6.1.7. The types of projects

As discussed in chapter 3, it is interesting to see if the differences in success between the types of consultancies can be explained by the factors that are included in the conceptual model. The analyses show that the differences in success, in the realization of client improvements and the fulfillment of pre-agreements between consulting projects can be explained by the factors that are included in the conceptual model. One might wonder if there are any differences to be explained by these factors. Therefore, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of the types of projects on the factors that are included in the conceptual model. There was only a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level in equal contribution ($F(3, 136) = 3.8, p = .01$) and quality reduction ($F(3, 136) = 3.0, p = .03$). Despite reaching statistical significance, the actual differences in mean scores between the types of projects are quite small. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, is .08 and .06 for respectively quality reduction and equal contribution. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for expert consulting projects is significantly different from facilitating (or guiding) consulting projects, regarding the quality reduction. This shows that the quality is reduced more often during facilitating projects than in expert consulting projects. This might be due to the fact that facilitating projects normally last longer and are subject to more contingencies what could result in making concessions to the outcome. The post-hoc comparisons indicated that the mean score for expert consulting projects is significantly different from expert consulting projects with process steps, regarding equal contribution. This shows that within consulting projects with process steps, the consultant and the client are more equal than in expert consulting projects.

The explanation is rather straightforward since an expert project mostly involves an expert, which is an external consultant, who is given the responsibility to deliver the pre-determined outcome. Therefore, the contribution is not equal because the expert determines the approach, process and result for instance. The other types of projects did not differ significantly. To conclude this subsection, the differences that occur between the types of projects as discussed, can be explained by the factors and their effects of the conceptual model.

6.1.8. An overview of all the hypotheses tested

To conclude the section with the sub research questions and the hypotheses tested, an overview is presented in table 33. In the table, all the hypotheses are noted and it is mentioned whether or not the hypotheses are rejected or accepted.

Table 29 : Summary of all the hypotheses tested

Hypotheses	Significant	Accepted/ Rejected	Direction
H1: The more a consulting project meets the assessment factors that measure the execution and outcomes of consulting projects, the higher the success of a consulting project.	Yes	Accepted	Positive
H2: The execution and outcome of consulting projects are positively influenced by the knowledge possessed and applied by consultants.	Yes	Accepted nor rejected	Positive
H3: The execution and outcome of consulting projects are positively influenced by the basic competencies of consultants.	Yes	Accepted	Positive
H4: The more the top management supports the consulting project, the better the execution and outcome of consulting projects.	Yes	Accepted nor rejected	Positive
H5: Active presence of a client leader/sponsor has a positive influence on the execution and the outcome of consulting projects.	Yes	Accepted nor rejected	Positive
H6: Strong commitment of client team members positively influences the execution and outcome of consulting projects.	-	Not tested	-
H7: The more heterogeneous the client team, the better the execution and outcome of consulting projects.	Yes	Accepted nor rejected	Positive
H8: Client readiness positively influences the execution and the outcome of consulting projects.	Yes	Accepted nor rejected	Positive
H9: A high level of time pressure during consulting projects negatively influences the execution and the outcome.	-	Not tested	-
H10: A high level of client mandate within the client team positively influences the execution and the outcome of consulting projects.	Yes	Accepted	Positive
H11: Strong mutual trust between the client and the consultant leads to more successful outcomes and executions of consulting projects.	Yes	Accepted	Positive

This table summarizes the section and is also the prelude to the answer to the main research question. This will be discussed in the next section.

6.1.9. The crux: Why are certain consulting projects more successful than others under the same circumstances?

This study started by stating that it is essential to investigate why certain projects are more successful than others under the same circumstances. Four groups of factors were distinguished that could influence the outcome and execution of consulting projects: context factors, client factors, relationship factors, and consultant factors. Initially, the four groups included 10 independent variables in total. The execution and outcome of consulting projects were ‘measured’ by 19 assessment factors that indicated how the execution and the outcome of consulting projects was perceived by clients and consultants. It was stated that the assessment factors determine the level of success of consulting projects, where success is synonymous with the perceived level of satisfaction of the client and the consultant. Figure shows the initial conceptual model that was intended to be analyzed in this study.

6.2. The Significance of this Study in the Ethiopian Context – Reflections on Theory

This study is rooted in a fascination with the contemporary landscape of management consultancy in Ethiopia. The industry here is vibrant and rapidly expanding, yet it's notable that many organizational change endeavours falter over time, despite the increasing presence of external consultants. This doesn't necessarily blame consultants for the failures but rather raises the intriguing question: What distinguishes successful consulting projects from unsuccessful ones, given similar circumstances?

A deep dive into the management consultancy literature sparked the need for empirical investigation, as existing literature lacked sufficient insights into the core research question. It was striking that while numerous authors analyzed the traits or skills essential for successful consultants, few delineated what successes itself means. Additionally, there was a noticeable gap in focusing on the client's perspective, despite their pivotal role. The scarcity of empirical data on factors contributing to consulting success, coupled with the ongoing debate on subjective versus objective success measures, necessitated a robust empirical inquiry. How does this study align with these literature gaps? This will be explored in this section.

Addressing the first gap, many authors discussed factors contributing to consulting success, but most didn't define or specify how these factors contribute. While some authors mentioned 'success' or 'effectiveness,' they didn't define these terms. Only a couple of authors provided a definition of success, emphasizing satisfaction with project outcomes. This aligns with this study's findings, where success largely correlates with realized client improvements and meeting pre-agreed targets. This insight resolves the ongoing debate about what constitutes consulting success.

Moving to the second gap, this study sheds light on the neglected client focus in current literature. By empirically analysing client contributions to success, it validates prior theories and adds new dimensions, such as the significant influence of top management support and personal benefits on project success.

Regarding contextual factors, this study unveils indirect influences on project success, such as trust, client readiness, and team diversity. It also dissects assessment factors' impacts on success, contributing to a nuanced understanding of success criteria.

Lastly, this study's quantitative approach contributes to the empirical dearth in consultancy literature, presenting a comprehensive analysis of diverse consulting projects and their determinants of success. It also reconciles the objective-subjective debate by amalgamating subjective observations into an objective framework.

In essence, this research holds significance in the Ethiopian context by addressing critical gaps in consultancy literature, offering insights into client-consultant dynamics, and delineating success criteria in consulting projects.

6.3. Practical Lessons for Ethiopian Consultancy Practice

This section delves into the practical implications of the study, offering nine crucial recommendations for consultancy practitioners in Ethiopia. These lessons are derived from the study's findings and can significantly contribute to reducing project failures and enhancing success rates.

1. **Maximize Client and Consultant Satisfaction:** Define clear satisfaction criteria for both clients and consultants at the project's onset, manage expectations, and address unrealistic expectations early on.
2. **Focus on Realized Improvements:** Measure the success of consulting projects by the tangible improvements achieved within the client organization, emphasizing added value and benefits.
3. **Fulfil Project Objectives:** Ensure that consulting projects meet the agreed-upon objectives, timelines, deliverables, resources, approach, responsibilities, and client involvement.
4. **Benefit Client Individuals:** Identify and communicate personal benefits for each involved client member or group, aligning consulting efforts with individual and group needs.
5. **Engage Skilled Consultants:** Prioritize consultants with a strong skill set, including flexibility, analytical thinking, creativity, communication, and integrity, to enhance project success.
6. **Ensure Client Mandate and Participation:** Involve client members with decision-making authority and active participation throughout the project to facilitate smooth decision-making and implementation.
7. **Maintain Quality at All Times:** Avoid compromising project quality due to time pressure or other constraints, ensuring thoroughness and excellence in deliverables and processes.
8. **Prioritize Projects within the Organization:** Start consulting projects that address critical organizational needs and have high priority, ensuring stakeholder awareness and commitment.
9. **Leverage Positive Influencing Elements:** Acknowledge and utilize elements such as top management support, client readiness, mutual trust, and consultant knowledge to positively influence project outcomes.

These lessons provide actionable insights for consultants to enhance project success, manage client relationships effectively, and deliver tangible value to organizations. Integrating these lessons into consulting practices can contribute to reducing project failures and improving overall client satisfaction.

6.4. Limitations of this study

1. **Literature Gaps and Focus Constraints:** The study acknowledges existing gaps in the literature regarding universal factors for consulting success. It emphasizes the need for a broader investigation that considers factors like external party introduction, organizational politics, client-system perspective, consultant roles, and organizational contexts. However, due to time constraints and focus, the study had to make selective choices in what to investigate.
2. **External Validity and Sample Size:** The study's results may not be fully representative of the broader population due to the sample size limitations. While efforts were made to include a diverse range of consulting projects, expanding the sample size could enhance the generalizability of the findings.
3. **Causal Interpretation and Exploratory Analyses:** The study warns against misinterpreting the exploratory analyses' findings as causal effects. Readers should exercise caution in attributing causality based solely on the observed relationships.
4. **Construct Validity and Questionnaire Design:** Some questionnaire items may have overlapping constructs or ambiguities that could lead to multicollinearity or respondent misinterpretation. Future studies should refine questionnaire items to improve construct clarity and validity.
5. **Process Focus Over Content Evaluation:** The study primarily focuses on the process aspects of consulting projects and lacks in-depth evaluation of project content. Analysing content documents or outcomes could provide a more comprehensive understanding of project success.
6. **Retro-perspective Opinions and Longitudinal Design:** Respondents' retrospective opinions may be influenced by changing perceptions over time. A longitudinal approach, capturing multiple points during a project, could mitigate biases and provide a more dynamic view of project success factors.

These limitations highlight areas for improvement and refinement in future research endeavours within the consultancy field. Addressing these limitations can enhance the robustness and applicability of findings in real-world consultancy practices.

What to do next?

1. Causal vs. Statistical Effect:

- **Causal Relationships:** Conduct longitudinal studies or experimental designs to establish causal relationships between variables. For example, design interventions that manipulate trust or top management support to observe their impact on project success.
- **Bidirectional Effects:** Use advanced statistical techniques such as structural equation modelling (SEM) or path analysis to explore bidirectional effects between independent and assessment variables. This can help uncover causal mechanisms and feedback loops within consulting projects.

2. Skills and Knowledge of Client Members:

- **Impact Assessment:** Administer surveys or interviews to assess the skills and knowledge of client members and correlate these with project outcomes. Identify specific skills (e.g., decision-making ability, domain expertise) that significantly contribute to project success.
- **Learning and Development:** Investigate how client members' learning skills and knowledge acquisition during the project impact project progress and success. Consider longitudinal studies to track skill development over time.

3. Zooming in on Consultant Skills and Knowledge:

- **Project Type Analysis:** Analyze how different types of consultant skills (e.g., general, specific, consulting-related) align with various project approaches (e.g., expert vs. process approach). Determine if certain skills are more beneficial for specific project types.
- **Professional Identity:** Utilize Janes' model or similar frameworks to study the evolution of consultants' knowledge and skills. Explore how changes in their professional identity impact project outcomes and client satisfaction.

4. **Client Commitment & Time Pressure:**

- **Commitment Measurement:** Develop comprehensive scales or questionnaires to measure client commitment in a broader context, encompassing factors like collaboration, support, and effort allocation.
- **Time Pressure Impact:** Conduct controlled studies or case analyses to examine the direct and indirect effects of time pressure on project priorities, quality, and overall success. Assess how time constraints influence decision-making and resource allocation.

5. **Personal Benefits Influence:**

- **Benefit Differentiation:** Distinguish between individual, group, and organizational benefits in consulting projects. Use qualitative methods like interviews or focus groups to understand how these benefits impact project stakeholders and outcomes differently.
- **Mechanism Exploration:** Investigate the underlying mechanisms through which personal benefits influence project success. Explore motivational theories or behaviour models to gain insights into why and how personal benefits drive project performance.

6. **Focus on Client and Consultant Expectations:**

- **Expectation Dynamics:** Use surveys, interviews, or diary studies to capture evolving expectations of clients and consultants throughout the project lifecycle. Analyze how changes in expectations correlate with project satisfaction and success.
- **Contradiction Exploration:** Investigate contradictions or discrepancies between client demands (e.g., risk-sharing, implementation support) and consultant hesitancy. Conduct qualitative research to understand the reasons behind such contradictions and their impact on project outcomes.

7. Path Modelling and Interaction Effects:

- **Path Analysis:** Utilize path modelling techniques such as SEM to model complex relationships and pathways between variables in the consulting project context. Explore direct, indirect, and mediated effects to gain a holistic understanding of the impact factors.
- **Interaction Studies:** Design studies to explicitly test interaction effects between different groups of factors (e.g., client characteristics and consultant skills). Use factorial designs or moderation analyses to identify synergistic or antagonistic effects between variables.

By addressing these research areas in more detail, you can generate actionable insights and practical recommendations that contribute significantly to the field of consultancy practice and project management.

GLOSSARY

Advice (i.e. result): Traditionally and in this context, advice is an opinion from a paid external entity that includes a suggestion for a beneficial course of action. However, this study speaks in terms of a result because a consulting project can also end with a realized implementation, presentation, document/report, a certain change, a solution, and so on. Advice or multiple advices are intertwined in such results.

Approach: Approach refers to the extent a commonly accepted method/approach is used, which has been determined at the start of the consulting project.

Assessment factors: Assessment factors represent specific indicators that characterize the quality of the project outcomes and how a consulting project is executed.

Client: The client refers to an individual, a workgroup, a department, or a whole organization that receives the advice and is the entity the consultant tries to influence without possessing direct authority.

Client mandate: Client mandate refers to the extent to which the involved client members can make important decisions without ‘disturbing’ the consulting project.

Client readiness: Readiness to change refers to the client team member involvement in the sense of an attitude about the need for change and the degree to which they are supportive and enthusiastic towards the consultants, committed to the consulting project, and willing to diagnose and experiment.

Collaboration of client members: Collaboration refers to the extent to which the client team members cooperated during a consulting project to make the consulting project a success.

Collective participation: Collective participation refers to the extent to which the consultant and the client were involved actively, communicated back and forth, and whether the consultant guided the project during the entire consulting project.

Consultant: A (management) consultant is an external independent professional who provides an advisory service assisting managers and organizations on a mutual voluntary basis to achieve organizational purposes and objectives by providing an independent and

objective opinion to solve management and business problems, identifying and seizing new opportunities, enhancing learning, implementing changes, and guiding the transformation process where he or she has no formal authority within the client's organization.

Consulting: Consulting (or management consulting/consultancy) is an independent professional advisory service assisting managers and organizations on a mutual voluntary basis to achieve organizational purposes and objectives by providing an independent and objective opinion to solve management and business problems, identifying and seizing new opportunities, enhancing learning, implementing changes, and guiding the transformation process where the consultant has no formal authority within the client's organization.

Consulting project: A consulting project is a commitment of an external consultant towards the client to provide opinions and recommendations to enable the client to identify and solve entrepreneurial problems. It is a one-time, finite activity. It is a temporary project, with a beginning and an end, in which a set of interrelated activities is executed over time (i.e., consulting process) to achieve the predetermined goals with defined resources, such as manpower. As a temporary professional service, the consultant tries to influence the behaviour of the client system towards a desired outcome from his or her perspective, possibly based on certain observations and analyses. The consultant produces advice, puts a specific change in motion, and/or implements the proposal or a range of ideas.

Elements: Elements refer to subordinate factors such as active top management support, possessed knowledge of the consultant, and mutual trust that can be very influential during consulting projects. Although they are subordinate compared to the factors that influence success directly, they can be beneficial during consulting projects because they influence many other factors that contribute to success more directly. The exact mechanisms and influences are not examined, but they seem relevant during consulting projects.

Equal contribution: Equal contribution refers to the extent to which the client and the consultant contributed equivalently during the project (e.g., effort, time, input, etc.).

Fulfilment of pre-agreements: Fulfilment of the pre-agreements refers to the extent to which the predetermined goals, objectives, and agreements between the client and consultant are achieved (e.g., budget, planning, deliverables, etc.).

Improvements within the client organization: Improvements refer to the extent to which the client organization has improved, in retrospect, due to the consulting project (e.g., more efficient, more consensus, better collaboration, more energetic, etc.).

Indirect-indirect effects/variables: Indirect-indirect variables concern the variables that influence success via variables that influence success as found in the primary analyses. The effects are called 'indirect-indirect effects and the variables are called 'indirect-indirect variables.

Inter-group analyses: Inter-group analyses refer to the analyses that are carried out to reveal the effects between the groups of variables (e.g., client, consultant, relationship, context, and assessment variables).

Intra-group analyses: Intra-group analyses refer to the analyses that are carried out to reveal the effects within the groups of variables (e.g., client, consultant, relationship, context, and assessment variables).

Knowledge of the consultant: Knowledge of a consultant refers to the body of knowledge a consultant possesses regarding background information relevant for consulting interventions, the object of consulting, and consulting per se.

Mutual trust: Mutual trust reflects the breadth of business issues to deal with and the depth of personal relationships between the consultant and the client. It refers to the extent to which the client and the consultant trust each other's expertise and effort, for instance. But also, the extent to which they trust each other to discuss difficult matters.

Personal benefits: Personal benefits refer to the extent to which the consulting project has brought personal benefits for client team members.

Personal involvement: Personal involvement refers to the extent to which the client team members were personally involved with each other, regarding the consulting project.

Presence of a client leader/sponsor: The presence of a client leader/sponsor refers to the extent to which a client individual is present during a consulting project, who strongly believes in the proposed change/advice and has the necessary power, respect, leadership, and

effective interpersonal skills to coach and protect the consulting project to retrieve a positive outcome.

Primary analyses: The primary analyses refer to the analyses that are carried out to test the conceptual model as described in chapter 3. The primary analyses concern the variables and the underlying effects only (which form the basic model – figure 47), that directly or indirectly affect success as described in chapter 3.

Priority of a consulting project: Priority refers to the extent to which the consulting project had a priority in the client organization. This relates to the importance of the project within the client organization.

Quality reduction of the outcome: Quality reduction refers to the extent to which the quality of the consulting project has been reduced. In other words, it refers to the extent to which concessions have been made towards the process and/or outcome of the consulting project.

Skills of the consultant: Skills of a consultant are learned abilities that a consultant possesses or develops, or ‘things’ that a consultant can do very well to carry out pre-determined assignments or results.

Success: Success is the degree of perceived satisfaction by the involved actors, such as the client and the consultant, as a result of the process and outcomes of a consulting project.

Team diversity: Team diversity refers to the extent to which the client team in a consulting project is heterogeneous. It is the mix of different personal backgrounds, functions, and expertise of client team members.

Timing of a consulting project: Timing of a consulting project refers to the extent to which the consulting project was started at the right moment in the client organization. This relates to the urgency of the project within the client organization.

Top management support: Top management support refers to the willingness of top management to provide necessary resources, power, and authority to enable the consulting project to be a success.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A : Questionnaires used during this study

A1. The client questionnaire

Dear ...,

Recently, you were approached by ... (name of organization) with the request to participate in my doctoral research on success factors within consulting projects. You have indicated that you are willing to participate in the survey concerning ... within ... where ... was involved. Therefore, you are receiving this questionnaire with the kind request to fill it out and return it as soon as possible. It will take a maximum of 20 minutes of your time.

I want to emphasize that your personal data will only be used within this study and will not be disclosed to third parties. Individual responses and names will not be reported back to your organization nor mentioned in my report. Your responses will be converted into anonymous data that cannot be traced back to you as an individual.

At the end of the study, you will receive the results that are relevant to you. These include both general and practical results that you can use in your daily practice as well as a benchmark in which you can see how your consulting project scores compared to other similar consulting projects.

If you have any questions/comments or would like to know more about my research, please call or email me. Both supervisors are also willing to answer your questions.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Best regards,

Birhanu Rodas

PhD Candidate

Introduction to the questionnaire

Explanation of terms in this questionnaire, I ask for your individual opinion and personal experiences with the completed ... within ... with the involvement of Several terms are used, which I briefly explain below:

- **Consulting project (also: the project)** = this is always Hereafter referred to as 'the consulting project.'
- **Consulting (also: the result)** = this is the paid external support in delivering, for example, a solution, presentation, document, advice, implementation, change, etc.
- **Consultant** = this is the external person who provided the advice. There may have been multiple consultants involved in this consulting project. In such cases, please interpret 'the consultant' as all members of the relevant consulting organization.
- **Consulting organization** = the company that provides the consultants.
- **Client organization (also: the client)** = the organization that commissions the consulting project and where the consulting project primarily takes place.

Instructions for filling out the questionnaire Generally, the response options are pre-structured. You indicate your choice by filling in the corresponding circle. For most questions, you can only give one answer. If you make a mistake when answering a question, you can correct it by drawing a large cross through the circle and filling in the correct circle. The questionnaire also includes some 'open questions.' For these questions, you can write your answer in your own words in the space provided.

If you cannot answer a question, for example, if the question does not apply to you or because you do not know the answer, you can fill in 'no idea / not applicable.'

Questions and/or comments If you have questions about the research, filling out the questionnaire, or returning it, please contact me at +251(0)912166579 or brshlink@gmail.com

I. General Questions

1. What is the name of the client organization and within which department/business unit was the consulting project primarily carried out?
2. What is the name of the consulting firm?

3. What was the reason for starting the consulting project?
4. What was the assignment/question of the consulting project?
5. What was the result of the consulting project?
6. What was your primary role during the consulting project?

Client Delegated Client Project leader Project team member Member of a sounding board group Other, namely

7. In which year did the consulting project come to an end? 2010 2011 2012 Other, namely

II. The following statements apply ONLY to the (members of the) client organization in the consulting project. Several 'roles' are used, which are briefly explained:

- **Senior management:** these are the directors and/or members of the management team within the client organization.
- **Project leader:** this is the individual from the client organization who can be labeled as the 'driving force' of the consulting project on behalf of the client organization.
- **Project team (also: client project team):** these are the members from the client organization who worked on the consulting project (including the project leader). If no formal team was assembled, then these are the individuals who worked together with the consultants during the consulting project.

Here are the statements formatted into a table:

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No idea / N.A.
8) The higher management emphasized the importance of the consulting project within the client organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9) The higher management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

personally exerted effort to achieve the final result.						
10) The higher management provided sufficient resources.	O	O	O	O	O	O
11) The higher management believed in the usefulness of the consulting project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
12) The project leader within the client organization was appreciated for his or her interpersonal skills.	O	O	O	O	O	O
13) The project leader within the client organization was appreciated for his or her substantive knowledge about the consulting project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
14) The project leader had a significant influence on the consulting project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
15) The project leader believed in the usefulness of the consulting project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
16) There was good collaboration within the project team of the consulting project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
17) I did not feel personally involved with the project team.	O	O	O	O	O	O
18) This consulting project has personally benefited me a lot.	O	O	O	O	O	O
19) The project team consisted of members with different	O	O	O	O	O	O

backgrounds (e.g., origin, gender, religion, etc.).						
20) The project team consisted of members with different roles (e.g., director, manager, project leader, operational staff, etc.).	O	O	O	O	O	O
21) The project team consisted of members with different expertise/knowledge areas.	O	O	O	O	O	O
22) The project team was enthusiastic when the consulting project started.	O	O	O	O	O	O
23) The external assistance was well received by the project team.	O	O	O	O	O	O
24) The members of the project team were not pleased to work on the consulting project.	O	O	O	O	O	O

III. The following statements relate to the external advisor

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No idea / N.A.
25) The advisor was aware of developments relevant to the client organization.	O	O	O	O	O	O
26) The advisor took into account developments	O	O	O	O	O	O

relevant to the client organization.						
27) The advisor possessed the necessary industry and functional knowledge.	O	O	O	O	O	O
28) The advisor knew how to apply his/her expertise and knowledge during the consulting project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
29) The advisor knew the client organization well.	O	O	O	O	O	O
30) The advisor knew how to apply his/her knowledge about the client organization during the consulting project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
31) The advisor could adapt to changing circumstances during the consulting project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
32) The advisor was able to analyze relevant information, backgrounds, and structures.	O	O	O	O	O	O
33) The advisor could place the problems of the client organization in a broader context.	O	O	O	O	O	O
34) The advisor was able to come up with innovative ideas.	O	O	O	O	O	O
35) The advisor was not able to make realistic assessments and choices.	O	O	O	O	O	O
36) The advisor could	O	O	O	O	O	O

effectively support the decision-making process within the project team.						
37) The advisor could broadly indicate the direction in which the client organization was moving.	O	O	O	O	O	O
38) The advisor did not listen well to others.	O	O	O	O	O	O
39) The advisor acknowledged the feelings of others.	O	O	O	O	O	O
40) The advisor was well understood.	O	O	O	O	O	O
41) The advisor could clearly communicate his/her positions, ideas, and plans.	O	O	O	O	O	O
42) The advisor inspired confidence in his/her interlocutors.	O	O	O	O	O	O
43) The advisor kept his/her appointments.	O	O	O	O	O	O
44) The advisor could positively influence the mood within the project team.	O	O	O	O	O	O

"IV. The following statements are about relational and context-related characteristics of the advisory project."

Statement	Completely Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Completely Agree	No Idea / N.A.
45) The advisory project had a high priority within the client organization.	O	O	O	O	O	O
46) The advisory project should have been executed earlier within the client organization.	O	O	O	O	O	O
47) Concessions were made to the quality of the advisory project during the process.	O	O	O	O	O	O
48) The project leader had sufficient mandate to carry out the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
49) The members of the project team lacked sufficient mandate to carry out the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
50) I had confidence in the expertise of the advisor.	O	O	O	O	O	O
51) I felt free to discuss difficult issues with the	O	O	O	O	O	O

advisor.						
52) A good rapport developed between the advisor and me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
53) The advisor proved to be worthy of my trust.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

V. The following statements pertain to the process and outcome of the advisory project.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No idea / N/A
54) The assignment was not fulfilled.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
55) Predefined tasks were carried out during the advisory project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
56) The required resources and tools were used during the advisory project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
57) The agreed-upon timeline was followed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
58) The advisory project stayed within budget.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
59) A pre-existing method was used.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
60) The approach to the issue/problem was developed along the way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
61) The advisor and the project team contributed	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

equally.						
62) The advisor guided the advisory project from start to finish.	O	O	O	O	O	O
63) There was communication between the advisor and the client organization throughout the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
64) The project team and advisor remained involved until the end of the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
65) The client organization did not learn from the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
66) More consensus was reached within the client organization regarding the subject of the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
67) Collaboration within the client organization improved thanks to the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
68) The client organization became more efficient thanks to the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
69) The client organization is more energetic than before.	O	O	O	O	O	O
70) The usefulness of the advice was good.	O	O	O	O	O	O

71) I am satisfied with the outcome of the advisory project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
72) I am satisfied with the timing of the delivery of the advisory project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
73) The advisory project was too expensive in relation to the quality of the outcome.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
74) The quality of the outcome was high.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
75) What was intended with the outcome was achieved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
76) The outcome justified the investment (time, money, effort, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

VI. Conclusion

77. According to you, what were the most important factors in this advisory project that positively contributed to the project outcome?
78. In your opinion, what were the biggest threats to the project outcome in this advisory project?
79. Do you have any final comments about this advisory project and/or research?

Would you recommend someone else to participate in this research? This could be another involved advisor or someone from the client organization.

Name:

Email:

Do you agree to share your results with the advisor for their development? YES NO Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview about the advisory project? YES NO

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

A2: The consultant questionnaire

Dear [Name],

Recently, you were contacted by [organization name] with a request to participate in my doctoral research on success factors in advisory projects. You expressed your willingness to participate in the survey related to [specific topic] within [specific context] where you were involved. Therefore, I am sending you the questionnaire with a kind request to fill it out as soon as possible and return it. It should take a maximum of 20 minutes of your time.

I want to emphasize that your personal data will only be used for this research and will not be shared with third parties. Individual responses and names will not be linked back to your organization or mentioned in my report. Your answers will be anonymized and cannot be traced back to you as an individual.

Upon completion of the research, you will receive the relevant results. These include both general and practical outcomes that you can apply in your daily practice, as well as a benchmark to compare your advisory project's performance with others in a similar context.

If you have any questions or comments, or if you would like more information about my research, please feel free to call or email me. Both supervisors are also available to answer your questions.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Best regards,

Birhanu Rodas

Doctoral Candidate

Introduction to the questionnaire

Explanation of terms in this survey, I ask for your individual opinion and personal experiences regarding the completed [specific aspect] within [specific context] with the involvement of [specific method/tool]. There are several terms used that I'll briefly explain:

- Advisory project (also: the project) = this refers to the [specific aspect] each time. It will be referred to as 'the advisory project.'
- Advice (also: the result) = this is the paid external support in delivering, for example, a solution, presentation, document, advice, implementation, change, etc.
- Consultant = this is the external person hired by the client for the project. There may have been multiple consultants involved in this advisory project. I ask you to interpret 'the consultant' as all members of the respective advisory organization, considering the weighted average.
- Advisory organization = the company that provides the consultants.
- Client organization (also: the client) = the organization that commissions the advisory project and where the advisory project takes place (primarily).

Instructions for filling out Generally, the answer options are pre-structured. You indicate your choice by filling in the respective circle. For most questions, only one answer is possible. If you make a mistake when filling out a question, you can correct it by putting a large cross through the circle and filling in the correct circle. The questionnaire also includes some 'open questions.' For these questions, you can write down your answer in your own words in the space provided.

If you cannot answer a question, for example, when the question does not apply to you or because you do not know the answer, you can fill in 'no idea / n.a.'

Questions and/or comments If you have any questions about the research, filling out the questionnaire, or returning it, please feel free to contact me at [contact information].

I. General questions

1. What is the name of the client organization and in which department/business unit was the advisory project primarily carried out?

2. What is the name of the advisory firm?
3. What was the reason for initiating the advisory project?
4. What was the assignment/questioning of the advisory project?
5. What was the outcome of the advisory project?
6. What was your main role during the advisory project?

O Supporter (primarily provides support to the client; the problem is known) O Partner (client and consultant share responsibility for the outcome) O Expert (mostly sought for their substantive expertise) O Director (leads a group or change process) O Facilitator (assists in the change process) O Other, namely

7. In which year did the advisory project come to an end? O 2021 O 2022 O 2023 O Other, namely

II. The following statements are ONLY about the (members of the) client organization in the advisory project. Several 'roles' are used and briefly explained:

- Top management: These are the executives and/or members of the management team within the client organization, division, department, BU, etc., where the project took place.
- Project leader: This is the individual from the client organization who can be identified as the 'driver' of the advisory project on behalf of the client organization.
- Project team (also: client project team): These are the members from the client organization who worked on the advisory project (including the project leader). If no formal team was formed, these are the individuals who collaborated with the consultant(s) during the advisory project.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No idea / N.a.
8) The senior management emphasized the importance of the advisory project within the client organization.	O	O	O	O	O	O

9) The senior management personally made efforts to achieve the final results.	O	O	O	O	O	O
10) The senior management provided sufficient resources for the project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
11) The senior management believed in the usefulness of the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
12) The project leader was valued within the client organization for their interpersonal skills.	O	O	O	O	O	O
13) The project leader was valued within the client organization for their expertise on the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
14) The project leader had a significant impact on the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
15) The project leader believed in the usefulness of the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
16) There was good collaboration within the project team of the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
17) The members of the project team were not personally involved with each other.	O	O	O	O	O	O
18) This advisory project personally benefited the	O	O	O	O	O	O

members of the project team significantly.						
19) The project team consisted of members with different backgrounds (e.g., origin, gender, religion, etc.)	O	O	O	O	O	O
20) The project team consisted of members with different roles (e.g., director, manager, project leader, operational employee, etc.)	O	O	O	O	O	O
21) The project team consisted of members with different expertise/knowledge areas.	O	O	O	O	O	O
22) The project team was enthusiastic when the advisory project started.	O	O	O	O	O	O
23) The external assistance was well received by the project team.	O	O	O	O	O	O
24) The members of the project team were not pleased to work on the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O

"III. The following statements pertain to you as an external advisor."

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No idea / N.a.
25) I was aware of the developments relevant to the client organization.	O	O	O	O	O	O
26) I took into account the developments relevant to the client organization.	O	O	O	O	O	O
27) I possessed the necessary industry and functional knowledge.	O	O	O	O	O	O
28) I was able to apply my expertise and professional knowledge during the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
29) I knew the client organization well.	O	O	O	O	O	O
30) I was able to apply my knowledge about the client organization during the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
31) I was able to adapt to changing circumstances during the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O	O
32) I was able to analyze relevant information, backgrounds, and structures.	O	O	O	O	O	O
33) I was able to place	O	O	O	O	O	O

problems of the client organization in a broader context.						
34) I was able to come up with innovative ideas.	O	O	O	O	O	O
35) I was unable to come up with realistic assessments and choices.	O	O	O	O	O	O
36) I was able to support the decision-making process within the project team effectively.	O	O	O	O	O	O
37) I was able to outline the direction in which the client organization was moving in broad terms.	O	O	O	O	O	O
38) I did not listen well to others.	O	O	O	O	O	O
39) I recognized the feelings of others.	O	O	O	O	O	O
40) I was understood well.	O	O	O	O	O	O
41) I was able to clearly articulate my positions, ideas, and plans.	O	O	O	O	O	O
42) I inspired confidence in the conversation partners.	O	O	O	O	O	O
43) I kept my commitments.	O	O	O	O	O	O
44) I was able to positively influence the mood within the project team.	O	O	O	O	O	O

IV. The following statements relate to relational and context-related characteristics of the advisory project.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Idea / N/A
45) The advisory project had a high priority within the client organization.	O	O	O	O	O
46) The advisory project should have been carried out earlier within the client organization.	O	O	O	O	O
47) During the process, concessions were made to the quality of the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O
48) The project leader had sufficient authority to carry out the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O
49) The members of the project team had insufficient authority to carry out the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O
50) I had confidence in the expertise of the project team.	O	O	O	O	O
51) I felt free to talk with the project team about difficult issues.	O	O	O	O	O
52) A good relationship developed between the project team and me.	O	O	O	O	O
53) The project team proved to be worthy of my trust.	O	O	O	O	O

V. The following statements are about the process and the outcome of the advisory project.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	No Idea / N/A
54) The assignment was not fulfilled.	O	O	O	O	O
55) The tasks set beforehand were carried out during the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O
56) The required resources and means were used during the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O
57) The agreed timeline was followed.	O	O	O	O	O
58) The advisory project stayed within budget.	O	O	O	O	O
59) An existing method was used.	O	O	O	O	O
60) The approach to the problem was developed along the way.	O	O	O	O	O
61) The consultant and the project team were equal in terms of contribution.	O	O	O	O	O
62) The consultant guided the advisory project from start to finish.	O	O	O	O	O
63) There was communication between the consultant and the client organization throughout the entire advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O
64) The project team and the consultant remained involved in the advisory project until the end.	O	O	O	O	O
65) The client organization did not learn from the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O
66) More consensus was reached within the client organization on the subject of the advisory project.	O	O	O	O	O
67) The collaboration within the client organization improved thanks to the	O	O	O	O	O

advisory project.					
68) The client organization became more efficient thanks to the advisory project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
69) The client organization is more energetic than before.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
70) The usability of the advice was good.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
71) I am satisfied with the result of the advisory project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
72) I am satisfied with the timing of the delivery of the advisory project.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
73) The advisory project was too expensive in relation to the quality of the result.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
74) The quality of the result was high.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
75) What was intended with the result was achieved.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
76) The result was worth the investment (time, money, effort, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	

VI. In Conclusion

77) According to you, what were the most important factors in this advisory project that positively contributed to the project result?

78) According to you, what were the greatest threats to the project result in this advisory project?

79) Finally, do you have any comments about this advisory project and/or research?

Can you recommend someone to participate in this research? This could be another involved consultant or someone from the client organization.

| Name: | Email: | Phone: |

Do you agree to have your results shared with the client organization for evaluation purposes?

| YES | O | NO | O |

Would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview about the advisory project?

| YES | O | NO | O |

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix B

Dear ...,

My name is Birhanu Rodas and I am a PhD candidate. The question I am trying to answer is why one advisory project is more successful than another. Substantively, we can usually answer this question. Opinions differ greatly when we look at the precise effect of conditions such as: the contribution of the client; the contribution of the consultant; the influence of the context in which an advisory project is carried out; the degree of trust between the consultant and the client.

Discussions in the consulting world about the nature of the above conditions, as well as the discussion about what success actually is, do not lead to consensus. Scientifically sound research is limited. It is therefore important to thoroughly investigate how we can explain success. That is why my supervisors and I have started an ambitious PhD research project. We have developed measurement tools and already have a database of approximately 100 projects that we have 'measured' integrally. We are now looking for clients and consultants to include more advisory projects in the research. That is why I am contacting you.

The ambition is to investigate at least 100 advisory projects of various kinds on the mentioned characteristics. The criteria we use for "suitable" projects are:

- The projects must be completed (in 2021, 2022 or 2023);
- Suitable projects include governance, organizational and/or management issues, change management questions, or implementation questions;
- Suitable projects have been carried out with external consultants;
- Coaching or training projects, niche projects (such as subsidies, quality audits, construction advice, etc.), implementation projects, and/or interim projects are not suitable;
- The respondents must have insight into the work of the client and the consultant throughout the entire process;
- It is important that for each project, both the client and the consultant participate by filling out a questionnaire (in Amahric).

My question is whether there is interest from ... to participate? This means that ... proposes one or more projects to be studied. They do not have to be spectacular projects. I am also interested in projects that may not have been spectacular or successful in all respects.

The burden is limited. All I ask is that for each 'suitable' project, at least 1 consultant and 1 client representative complete an online questionnaire. This takes a maximum of 20 minutes per person. Everything will be processed anonymously in the publications, and it will not be disclosed which firms have participated.

After the research, the respondents will receive summarized results. These are general and pragmatic insights that they can use in everyday practice, as well as a benchmark where they can see how their own advisory project scores compared to other similar advisory projects. Due to confidentiality, the respondent will only see their own benchmark.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Birhanu Rodas

PhD Candidate

M: 09 -12166579

E: brshlink@gmail.com

Appendix C : Management & Consulting

Online: What are the success criteria for a consultancy project?

After completing a consultancy project, both the client and the consultant always ask the same question: “How successful was the consultancy project?” Because consultancy firms each have their own evaluation methodologies, criteria, and checklists, there is no 'standard' approach or definition within the consulting industry. Additionally, scientific evidence is still limited because consultancy success is difficult to research.

Two schools of thought

Studies from home and abroad show that there are two schools of thought. One idea suggests that success is equivalent to a set of criteria that must be met. These include staying within budget, timely delivery, mutual learning, improving the organization, and ensuring client satisfaction. The other school of thought suggests that the satisfaction of the client and consultant is the ultimate measure of success and that this satisfaction is determined by similar criteria.

Consultancy success?

Birhanu Rodas a consultant at Excellence Consultancy and training Center PLC in Ethiopia and PhD student will conduct independent research into the secret behind consultancy success. Birhanu aims to analyze 100 diverse consultancy projects, including advisory, change, and implementation projects. His PhD research is supported by Excellence Consultancy and training center PLC .Birhanu bringing his research to the attention of consultants and clients. In addition, after the research is completed, we will publish the main findings together with the university.

Participate

Are you a management consultant or client? Then you can participate in the research on this page – your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Participants will receive a report with the main findings after the research is completed.

Online: What makes a good management consultant?

Within the consultancy world, much value is placed on good consultants. But what makes a consultant good?

Triple ladder concept

Many consultancy firms develop a consultant's competencies by using the 'triple ladder' concept. This means that a consultant must develop in three areas: the management ladder, the professional ladder, and the commercial ladder. This can create a T-profile when a consultant develops their competencies to an exceptional level in a particular ladder, for example, by being an expert/guru in a specific field or having exceptional commercial skills that lead to many assignments.

Which competencies?

A large survey was recently conducted among consultants to identify which competencies are considered important during consultancy projects. This shows that, among other things, a consultant's observational skills or the ability to create trust with the client are important. However, the relationship between competencies and the success of a consultancy project has not yet been extensively researched.

Birhanu Rodas a consultant at Excellence Consultancy and training Center PLC in Ethiopia and PhD student, will conduct independent research to determine which competencies truly contribute to the success of a consultancy project. This will answer the question of which competencies a good consultant should possess. Birhanu aims to analyze 100 diverse consultancy projects, including advisory, change, and implementation projects. His PhD research is supported by Excellence Consultancy and training Center PLC in Ethiopia. After the research is completed, we will publish the main findings together with university.

Participate

Are you a management consultant or client? Then you can participate in the research on this page – your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Participants will receive a report with the main findings after the research is completed.

Call to consultants and clients to participate in a thorough and in-depth PhD research into success factors within consultancy projects.

Offline: Call

Bart Albers calls on consultants and clients to participate in a thorough and in-depth PhD research into success factors within consultancy projects.

In the past, you have likely experienced both successful and less successful consultancy projects. Can you explain why that is? Substantively, this is usually possible. However, opinions differ greatly when we look at conditions such as the client's contribution, the consultant's contribution, the influence of the context in which a consultancy project is carried out, and the degree of trust between the consultant and the client.

Discussions in the consultancy world about the nature of the above conditions, as well as the discussion about what success actually is, do not lead to consensus. Scientific evidence is still limited. It is therefore important to thoroughly investigate how we can increase the chances of success.

That is why I, Birhanu Rodas have started an independent PhD research in which your help is essential. My ambition is to investigate one hundred diverse consultancy projects on these characteristics. Consultancy projects also include change and implementation projects.

You will then receive an email from me with a link that leads to the questionnaire. Filling out the questionnaire takes about twenty minutes of your time. Your data will be processed anonymously and confidentially and will not be shared with third parties. I will also ask if you can provide potential respondents from both the consultancy and client sides. I want to include both perspectives in the research.

After the research is completed, you will receive the results that are relevant to you and your company. These include both the general and pragmatic results that you can use in your daily practice, as well as a benchmark showing how the consultancy project scores compared to other similar consultancy projects.

If you have any questions/comments or want to know more about my research, please call or email me. Both supervisors are also willing to answer your questions.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Appendix D : The Interview Scheme and Questions

The interviews are structured in several phases:

Phase 1: Open question about the dependent variable

- You scored 'satisfied': can you further qualify that?

Phase 2: Open questions regarding the independent variables (without guidance)

- First, an explanation is given of what is meant by the independent variables investigated in the model.
- Then, for each independent variable, participants are asked to what extent it contributed to the success of the respective advisory project they participated in.
- The answers are examined for references to the criteria.

Phase 3: Open questions regarding the intervening variables (without guidance)

- First, an explanation is given of what is meant by the intervening variables investigated in the model.
- Then, for each intervening variable, participants are asked to what extent it determined the success of the respective advisory project they participated in.
- The answers are examined for references to the research's definition of success (= satisfaction).

Phase 4: Feedback of the results

- In this phase, the results of the research are brought up and discussed.
- Deviations are addressed, and specific questions are asked about why the low score still resulted in a good or bad score on the subsequent variable (independent --> corresponding intervening --> dependent).
- This process validates the model and provides deeper insight into why the effects occur.