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Antecedents of Project Success and the Moderating Roles of Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution

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Abstract

In the prevailing technological era, firms must successfully launch new and innovative projects to remain competitive. However, its success depends on various antecedents. The study extended Social Exchange Theory to develop a new model with five antecedents (leadership, team dynamics, communication, collaboration, and agile project management). It also examined the effect of two moderators (i.e., emotional intelligence and conflict resolution). We focused on Pakistan's IT sector, which has had a significantly high growth rate in the last few years. According to an estimate, the IT market in Pakistan is about $3.5 billion, with a growth rate of about 20%. The study documents that leadership communication, collaboration, and agile project management positively affect the success of a project. However, the study concluded that team dynamics insignificantly affect project success. Moreover, it documented that emotional intelligence and conflict resolution insignificantly moderates project success.

Keywords: *Project success, team dynamics, leadership, communication, agile projects, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution.*

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Introduction

Project success is a goal and a gateway to many positive outcomes. It enhances the organization's reputation, trust, and credibility (Abbas & Ali, 2023). Timely completion of a project signifies the achievement of its intended goals, objectives, and desired outcomes (Merrow, 2024). Moreover, it leads to a positive Return on Investment (ROI) and justifies allocated time, resources, and budget (Waqar et al., 2023). Successful projects also allow management to learn from their mistakes. It enables a team to refine its process, skills, and knowledge, increasing efficiency and productivity (Pinto et al., 2022). Furthermore, firms that complete their projects successfully give them a competitive edge over other firms in the industry (Sajid et al., 2024). We argue that project success is a testament to a firm's ability to manage complex and innovative projects (Mubarak et al., 2023).

Many studies have used different antecedents of project success in different domains (Chacko et al., 2024). A study in China examined the antecedents and consequences of project success in the construction sector (Wu et al., 2023). The study documents that successful project planning and management positively affect project success. The study also cites that mimetic and normative isomorphism mediate successful project management. Another study in Malaysia examined the factors that affect project success (Fauzi et al., 2023). The study noted that project management, decision-making, coordination, and knowledge management significantly affect project success. The study recommended that providing autonomy to individuals would enhance the chances of the project's success. Compared to the above antecedents, the present study has examined the impact of leadership, team dynamics, communication, collaboration, and agile project management on project success.

Numerous studies have explored the impact of various moderators on project success in different sectors and countries (Fauzi et al., 2023). For instance, a study in the Portuguese IT sector found that project complexity positively moderates absorptive capacity and strategic agility. It also documented that project complexity insignificantly moderates the relationship between realized absorptive capacity and strategic agility (Mata et al., 2023). This underscores the need for further research on the role of project complexity in the IT sector (Mata et al., 2023). Another study on project success focused on managing public sector units in Pakistan (Fareed et al., 2023). The study documented that top management positively moderates transformational leadership and project success. It suggested that top management must share their goals and objectives with the project team. In addition, it recommended that public sector projects adopt a transformational leadership style (Fareed et al., 2023). Moreover, another study in Pakistan examined the moderating role of organizational support in determining project success. The study documents that organizational support positively moderates

(i) project cost and project success, (ii) project quality and project success, and (iii) project time and project success (Watanabe et al., 2024). Compared to the moderators used in past studies, this study has examined the moderating effect of emotional intelligence and conflict resolution on project success.

Given the above-discussed gaps, this study has examined:

1. The impact of leadership, team dynamics, communication, collaboration, and agile project management on project success.

2. The moderating effect of emotional intelligence and conflict resolution on project success.

Literature Review

Theoretical Underpinning

Social Exchange Theory (SET) is a psychological concept that explains how people form and maintain relationships based on exchanging resources, such as emotional support, companionship, or material goods (Tripp, 2023). In the context of project success, the theory posits that project success is contingent upon the reciprocal relationships and exchanges between team members, leadership, and stakeholders (Watanabe et al., 2024). In this context, effective leadership fosters a positive exchange climate, promoting team dynamics, communication, collaboration, and ultimately, project success (Waqar et al., 2023). When leaders facilitate open communication, empower team members, and encourage collaboration, team members reciprocate with increased motivation, commitment, and productivity (Chacko et al., 2024). Furthermore, adopting agile project management practices enhances this exchange by promoting flexibility, adaptability, and continuous improvement (Abbas & Ali, 2023). As team members experience a sense of value and satisfaction from these exchanges, they are more likely to invest their time, energy, and expertise in the project, ultimately contributing to its success. (Pinto et al., 2022).

SET has far-reaching applications in various fields, including organizational behavior, interpersonal relationships, marketing, and sociology (Kalra et al., 2024). It helps social media users understand social interaction dynamics, enabling them to improve relationships, teamwork, and overall well-being (Cortez & Johnston, 2020; Luqman et al., 2023).

Project Success

Researchers believe project success is the key indicator of an organization's efficiency and management capability (Watanabe et al., 2024). Project success has various outcomes (Pinto et al., 2022). Researchers measure it by the degree to which a project achieves its intended objectives and meets the needs of its stakeholders (Waqar et al., 2023). Chacko et al. (2024) assert that several key factors contribute to project success. Clear and effective communication among team members, stakeholders, and sponsors is critical (Chacko et al., 2024). This ensures that everyone is aligned with the project's goals, objectives, and timelines (Abbas & Ali, 2023). A well-defined scope is another essential factor for a project (Pinto et al., 2022). This ensures that the project stays focused and enables the team to deliver the expected outcomes (Waqar et al., 2023). Moreover, a successful project significantly depends on strong management (Chacko et al., 2024). It includes developing a comprehensive plan, realistic timelines, and milestones and identifying the potential risks (Abbas & Ali, 2023). Furthermore, project success depends on adapting to change and uncertainty (Pinto et al., 2022). This involves being flexible, responsive, and resilient in the face of unexpected challenges or shifts in project requirements (Waqar et al., 2023). Additionally, project success is about delivering value to the organization and its stakeholders. It requires a deep understanding of the project's goals, a clear vision, and the ability to execute the plan effectively (Chacko et al., 2024).

Leadership

Good leadership involves motivating individuals or teams to achieve a common goal or vision (Ekemezie & Digitemie, 2024). Ghorbani (2023) asserts that effective leaders possess skills and qualities that guide and direct others toward a shared objective. Moreover, they set a clear direction, communicate effectively, and empower others to take action (Abbas & Ali, 2023). Researchers believe that leaders possess strong communication and interpersonal skills, which enable them to build trust and rapport with their team members (Ukato et al., 2024). Besides other traits, emotional intelligence and empathy are essential traits of leaders. These traits help leaders to understand and respond to their team's needs and concerns (Fareed et al., 2022). Moreover, researchers believe effective leaders are strategic thinkers who make informed decisions that align with the organization's mission and vision (Ghorbani,2023). Furthermore, such leaders are flexible and adaptable. They navigate complex and rapidly changing environments (Ekemezie & Digitemie, 2024). Additionally, integrity, accountability, and a strong sense of ethics are essential for effective leaders. These are essential ingredients to promote and foster a culture of trust and respect within the organization (Abbas & Ali, 2023). Ukato et al. (2024) assert that effective leadership is about creating a positive and productive work environment, fostering collaboration and innovation, and guiding individuals and

teams toward achieving their full potential. Thus, we argue that leaders can inspire and motivate others to succeed by possessing the right skills, traits, and qualities (Fareed et al., 2022).

Team Dynamics

Harris et al. (2024) assert that team dynamics refer to organizational interactions, relationships, and behaviors. It includes how team members communicate, collaborate, and work together to achieve common goals (Shaukat et al., 2022). Researchers believe effective team dynamics are crucial for a team's success as they foster a positive and productive work environment (Benjamin et al., 2024). Moreover, positive team dynamics increase the sense of belonging of the team members (Licorish et al., 2024). As a result, their motivation increases profoundly (Zaman et al., 2023). Contrarily, negative team dynamics lead to conflict, mistrust, and a lack of productivity (Blak-Bernat et al., 2023). Radhakrishnan et al. (2022) assert that besides other factors, important ingredients of team dynamics are communication styles, leadership, trust, and diversity. Moreover, effective team communication helps team members better understand each other's perspectives and work together toward a common goal (Abbas & Ali, 2023). Furthermore, effective leadership is essential for team dynamics (Harris et al. 2024). It establishes a clear vision, provides guidance, and fosters a positive team culture (Shaukat et al., 2022). Benjamin et al. (2024) assert that trust and diversity are other critical elements of positive team dynamics. When team members trust each other, they are more likely to share ideas, take risks, and work collaboratively (Zaman et al., 2023). Similarly, diversity within a team brings different perspectives and ideas, leading to more innovative and effective solutions (Blak-Bernat et al., 2023).

Communication

Communication is the foundation of any successful relationship, whether personal or professional. It involves exchanging information, ideas, and messages between individuals or groups (Daramola et al., 2024). Moreover, effective communication is critical in conveying thoughts, opinions, and intentions clearly and concisely (Muneer et al., 2022). Good communication skills involve several key elements, including verbal and nonverbal communication, active listening, and clarity of message (Blak-Bernat, 2023). Verbal communication refers to sharing ideas and information through spoken words to convey meaning, while nonverbal communication involves using body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice (Kala-Kamdjoug, 2024). Active listening refers to concentrating on what others say, understanding their perspective, and responding thoughtfully (Radhakrishnan et al., 2024).

Clear and effective communication can help build trust, prevent misunderstandings,

and resolve conflicts (Muneer et al., 2022). Good communication skills can help foster a positive and productive work environment, improve collaboration and teamwork, and enhance customer relationships in a professional setting (Kala-Kamdjoug, 2024). In contrast, poor communication can lead to confusion, misinterpretation, and conflict. It can also result in missed opportunities, errors, and decreased productivity (Muneer et al., 2022). Therefore, developing and practicing effective communication skills in all aspects of life is essential (Daramola et al., 2024).

Collaboration

Vaez-Alaei et al. (2024) argue that collaboration is working together to achieve common goals and objectives. As a result, it improves a firm's existing process (Swart et al., 2022). Extant literature suggests that collaboration within a team benefits an organization (Naseer et al., 2022). It improves creativity, knowledge sharing, and problem-solving (Kudyba & Cruz,2023). Besides other factors, effective collaboration depends on clear communication, trust, and respect between team members (Blak-Bernat et al., 2023). Working as a team, individuals can leverage each other's strengths to achieve greater success and make a more significant impact (Rehan et al., 2024). In contrast, a non-collaboration attitude within a team reduces the chances of a project's success (Radhakrishnan et al., 2024).

Agile Project Management

Palopak and Huang (2024) assert that agile project management is an iterative and incremental approach emphasizing flexibility, collaboration, and rapid delivery. Agile management uses different methods to achieve its goals (Ciric Lalic et al., 2022). It includes extreme programming (XP) and Scrum (Ansari et al., 2024). XP emphasizes technical practices like pair programming, continuous integration, and refactoring (Bilir, 2022). Scrum is a framework for managing and completing complex projects using iterative and incremental practices (Radhakrishnan et al., 2022.) Extant literature suggests agile practices include sprint planning, daily stand-ups, and continuous integration and delivery (Moedt-van-Bolhuis et al., 2023). Sprint planning involves planning and prioritizing work for a specific iteration or sprint (Bilir, 2022). Daily stand-ups are perpetual meetings to discuss progress, plans, and obstacles (Ciric Lalic et al., 2022). Continuous integration and delivery ensure that working software is integrated and delivered regularly, allowing for rapid feedback and adaptation (Bilir, 2022).

Radhakrishnan et al. (2022) assert that agile project management has many benefits and challenges. The benefits include faster time-to-market, improved collaboration, increased flexibility, and enhanced quality (Ansari et al., 2024). Moreover, agile management allows teams to deliver working software quickly and respond to change

(Ciric Lalic et al., 2022). As a result, it promotes teamwork, communication, and customer involvement (Palopak & Huang 2024).

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is important for individuals as it enhances relationships and communication and improves decision-making and problem-solving (Watanabe et al., 2024). Highly emotionally intelligent persons can understand their and others' emotions (Ahmad et al., 2022). This allows them to control emotions and solve problematic issues (Shahzad et al., 2023). Moreover, emotional intelligence increases self-awareness and personal growth. As a result, it allows individuals to have an adequate work-life balance, leading to mental health and well-being (Rahul, 2024). Furthermore, researchers believe it promotes effective leadership and teamwork and enhances adaptability and resilience (Saeed et al., 2023). Not all individuals have the same level of emotional intelligence. Researchers believe individuals can improve it by practicing self-reflection, introspection, empathy, and active listening (Sposito et al., 2024). Moreover, we argue that individuals can improve their personal and professional relationships by increasing emotional intelligence. As a result, they can achieve greater success and enhance their overall well-being, leading to a more fulfilling and purposeful life (Shahzad et al., 2023).

Conflict Resolution

Moedt-van-Bolhuis et al. (2023) assert that conflict resolution is resolving individual, group, or organization disputes or disagreements. It involves identifying the root causes of the conflict, addressing the needs and concerns of all parties involved, and finding a mutually acceptable solution (Bilir, 2022). Moreover, effective conflict resolution requires communication, active listening, empathy, and problem-solving skills (Radhakrishnan et al., 2022). Ansari et al. (2024) suggest that individuals must remain calm and composed when conflict arises. This prevents escalation and creates a more constructive environment for resolving the issue (Ciric-Lalic et al., 2022). Another important aspect of conflict resolution is avoiding blame and defensiveness. Instead of focusing on who is right or wrong, seeking common ground and areas of agreement is more productive (Ciric-Lalic et al., 2022). Being willing to compromise and find mutually acceptable solutions is also key. This might involve finding creative solutions that meet the needs of all parties involved (Palopak & Huang, 2024).

Hypothesis Development

Leadership and Project Success

Researchers believe effective leadership is an important precursor to project success (Abbas & Ali, 2023). Moreover, researchers highlighted that a leader with a clear vision

and strong communication skills motivates the team members to achieve the project objectives (Ahmad et al., 2022). Furthermore, Ukato et al. (2024) assert that good leaders develop a conducive organizational culture that promotes teamwork and builds employee trust and confidence. As a result, they fully participate in achieving organizational goals (Khan et al., 2024). Additionally, effective leaders prioritize risk management and quality assurance and ensure employee project deliverables are as per their expectations (Ghorbani, 2023). Extending the above arguments, Fareed and Su (2022) argue that effective leaders contribute to project success by enhancing team productivity and improving communication and collaboration (Ekemezie & Digitemie, 2024). As a result, these measures increase the satisfaction of all the stakeholders (Almashhadani & Almashhadani., 2023). Thus, we argue that effective leadership is the foundation for successful projects (Fareed et al., 2022).

H1: Leadership "positively affects project success."

Team Dynamics and Project Success

Besides other antecedents, team dynamics is an important precursor of project success (Blak-Bernat et al., 2023). Ekemezie et al. (2024) assert that a team with positive dynamism can overcome obstacles, innovate, and deliver high-quality results (Radhakrishnan et al., 2022). Moreover, for project success, the team members must possess effective communication and conflict-resolution skills, as they foster a conducive environment of trust and open communication. As a result, such a conducive environment improves team dynamism and chances of project success (Blak-Bernat et al., 2023). Moreover, researchers assert that adaptability and flexibility enable teams to adjust their projects to changing requirements (Benjamin et al., 2024). Furthermore, clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability promote ownership and commitment in a team, while effective leadership provides guidance, support, and empowerment (Zaman et al., 2023). All these factors of team dynamism, individually and collectively, positively affect project success (Licorish et al., 2024). Extending the above arguments, we believe positive team dynamics promote productivity, creativity, job satisfaction, and engagement (Shaukat et al., 2022). We also believe poor team dynamics can lead to communication breakdowns, lack of trust, and decreased motivation, ultimately jeopardizing project success. Moreover, by fostering positive team dynamics, project managers can create an environment that supports collaboration, innovation, and success (Harris et al., 2024).

H2: Team "dynamics positively affect project success."

Communication and Project Success

Effective communication is the backbone of project success, profoundly affecting various aspects of project management (Hans, 2024). Researchers believe it promotes trust, understanding, and cooperation among team members (Almashhadani & Almashhadani,2023). As a result, all team members work towards common goals (Daramola et al., 2024). Elaborating on the above, we argue that effective communication promotes a relationship of trust and respect between leaders and team members (Ezeigweneme et al., 2023). Moreover, researchers believe timely and clear communication reduces the adverse effects of delay (Zhang et al., 2022).

Furthermore, it identifies risks and reduces project uncertainty (Ahmed et al., 2024). Thus, clear communication helps firms adapt to changes and keep the project on track. Siddiqui et al. (2023) highlight that effective communication ensures that the team members understand all the required quality standards and strive to achieve them (Radhakrishnan et al., 2024). This results in high-quality deliverables (Siddiqui et al., 2023). Researchers also argue that accurate communication in a firm has several advantages, including managing timelines and budgets and preventing costly delays and overruns (Kala-Kamdjoug, 2024). Moreover, open communication boosts team morale, motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity (Blak-Bernat., 2023). In contrast, poor communication can lead to misunderstandings, delays, team conflicts, and project failure (Muneer et al., 2022). Based on the above discussions, project managers can significantly enhance project outcomes by prioritizing effective communication. (Daramola et al., 2024).

H3: Communication "positively affects project success."

Collaboration and Project Success

Collaboration among team members improves communication, increases productivity, and positively affects project success (Bradley et al., 2023). Radhakrishnan et al. (2022) assert that when team members and stakeholders work together, they share knowledge, expertise, and diverse perspectives, leading to innovative solutions and better decision-making (Pinto et al., 2022). Extending the above, we argue that collaboration has several advantages (Rehan et al., 2024). For example, it streamlines processes, reduces duplication of effort, and enhances efficiency. As a result, it enables teams to achieve project objectives (Blak-Bernat et al., 2023). Moreover, strong interpersonal relations, trust, and productive engagement between team members are needed to achieve better outcomes (Swart et al., 2022). Additionally, Vaez-Alaei et al. (2024) assert that team collaboration helps achieve higher standards for project-related tasks. Thus, we argue that by promoting collaboration, project managers can create

an environment that supports teamwork, leading to outstanding project outcomes (Naseer et al., 2022).

H4: Collaboration "positively affects project success."

Agile Project Management and Project Success

Agile project management enhances flexibility, fosters collaboration, and promotes project success (Sulá et al., 2024). This approach empowers managers to equip their teams with the necessary software at the right time to increase efficiency and effectiveness (Kudyba & Cruz, 2023). Moreover, it cultivates a culture of teamwork, open communication, and stakeholder involvement (Palopak & Huang, 2024). Thereby increasing customer and stakeholder satisfaction (Ciric Lalic et al., 2022). The iterative approach allows the team to identify and address the issues and problems early. As a result, it improves quality outcomes and reduces the risk of project failure (Ansari et al., 2024). We argue that agile project management allows firms to monitor project progress and make informed decision-making (Radhakrishnan et al., 2022). We also assert that firms adopting agile project management face challenges, including increased initial overhead and scaling complexities (Bilir, 2022). However, despite these challenges, its overall benefits are valuable for organizations seeking to improve their project management capabilities (Moedt-van-Bolhuis et al., 2023).

H5: Agile "project management positively affects project success."

Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, and Project Success

Past studies document that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in the complex relationship between leadership, emotional intelligence, and project success (Watanabe et al., 2024). When leaders possess high emotional intelligence, their leadership style becomes more effective, improving project outcomes. Emotional intelligence enables leaders to understand their team members' emotions, needs, and concerns. This is essential to promote a conducive environment in an organization and increase the chances of project success (Shahzad et al., 2023). Extending this argument, Sposito et al. (2024) assert that high emotional intelligence is a precursor of relationships between leaders and team members and project success (Ishfaq & Abbasi, 2022). On the contrary, leaders with low emotional intelligence need to understand team members' emotional needs and concerns. If they do not, it may adversely affect project success (Kukah et al., 2023).

H6: Emotional intelligence "moderates the relationship between leadership and project success."

Agile Project Management, Conflict Resolution, and Project Success

Conflict resolution is a critical component of agile project management, and its impact on project success cannot be overstated (Ansari et al., 2024). Past studies document that conflict resolution directly and indirectly affects the project's success (Saxena et al., 2023). When conflicts are resolved in an organization, the agile team can focus on delivering high value and meeting customers' needs (Amani et al., 2022). As a result, it enhances the relationship between agile projects and project success (Haider et al., 2024). Conversely, unresolved conflict can lead to delays, decreased morale, and compromised project success (Kudyba & Dcruz 2023). As a result, it negatively affects the association between agile project management and project success (Bilir, 2022).

H7: Conflict resolution "moderates the relationship between agile project and project success."

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a theoretical structure that allows researchers to understand the key relationship between the variables used in a study (Solarino & Buckley, 2023). This study has extended the social exchange theory to develop the conceptual framework. Figure 1 shows five direct and two moderating relationships.
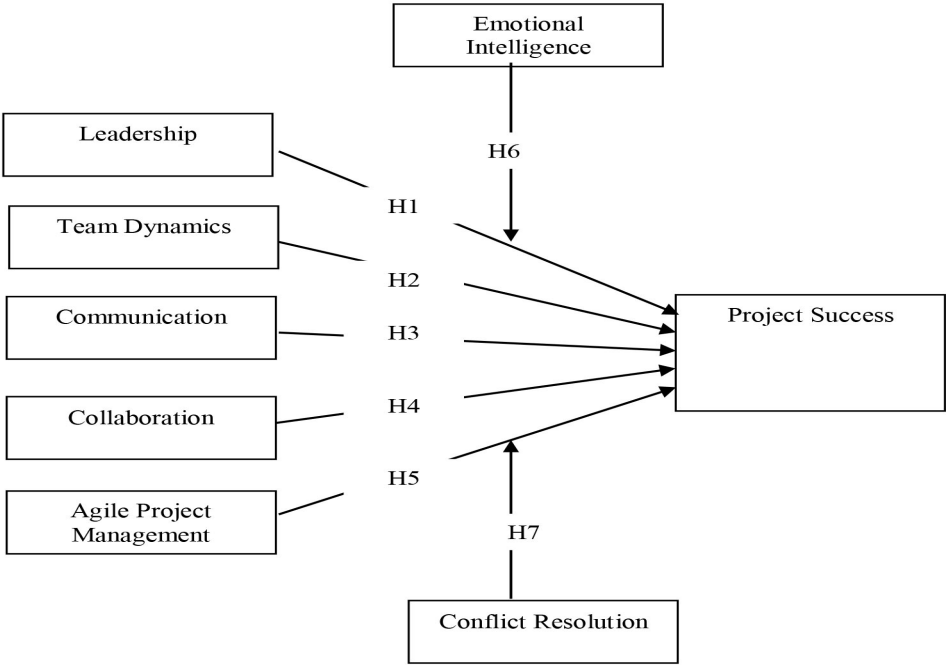

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Research Design

A research design helps researchers outline the procedures to achieve the research objectives (Ratten, 2023). It includes types of research, methods to collect the data, and data analysis techniques (Zikmund et al., 2020). This study has adopted a quantitative and deductive approach. A quantitative approach systematically collects and statistically analyzes the numerical data to identify the trends, correlations, and relationships (Wilkinson, 2017). Deductive research begins with theory or theory building, then collecting numerical data and testing the proposed hypotheses (Saunders et al., 2019). Bell and Alexander (2022) assert that the deductive approach allows researchers to draw reliable conclusions and make informed decisions based on empirical evidence.

Population and Sampling

The study has focused on Pakistan's IT sector, which contributes significantly to GDP and employment (Aslam & Ali, 2022). According to an estimate, the IT market in Pakistan is about $3.5 billion, with a growth rate of about 20%. Researchers believe it will increase significantly in the next few years (Zia & Ali, 2022). Moreover, researchers estimate that Pakistan has a large workforce of about 200,000 IT professionals (Institute of Policies Studies. 2024). Given this population, we used the Rao soft web page to calculate the minimum sample size and found that a sample of 387 would be appropriate. The study collected the data by displaying the link in online IT forums. About 435 IT professionals responded. After dropping the incomplete questionnaires, our valid sample size was 405.

Statistical Analysis

Smart PLS is a popular statistical analysis software. Many researchers use it in their studies because of its ease of use, advanced algorithms, and compressive output (Bell & Alexander, 2022). Moreover, it allows researchers to solve complex relationships (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, it gives a detailed output, including path coefficients, loadings, and quality criteria.

Scale and Measures

The study collected the data using a five-point Likert Scale questionnaire. Five suggests a high agreement, and one suggests a low agreement. A close-ended questionnaire has several limitations. However, we have used it because it is more efficient to collect data from a large population (Bell & Alexander, 2022). Table 1 depicts the constructs and number of items used in the questionnaire. It also shows the sources from where we adapted the constructs.

Table 1: Scale and Measures

Constructs	Sources	Items	Reliability
Agile Project	Shameem et al. (2024)	10	0.710 to 0. 875
Collaboration	Haaskjold and Andersen, 2020)	12	0/783 to 0.893
Communication	Daramola et al. 2024	10	0795 to 0.856
Conflict Resolution	Saxena et al. (2023)	10	0.805 to 0.884
Emotional Intelligence	Saeed et al. (2023)	15	0.781 to 0.786
Leadership	Rehan et al.(2024)	10	0.779 to 0.895
Project Success	Iriarte and Bayona (2020)	10	0787 to 0. 873
Team Dynamics	Harris et al. (2024)	10	0.801 to 0.895

Results

Respondents Profile

Demographic profiles help understand the respondents' trends and patterns and help firms develop appropriate marketing strategies. Table 2 shows the profile of the target population.

Table:2 Demographic Profile

Demographic	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	53%
	Female	47%
Age	20-30 years	37%
	30-40-years	33%
	40-50 years	20%
	Above 50 years	10%
Education level	Martic	12%
	Inter	35%
	Bachelors	45%
	Master	8%
Marital Status	Single	57%
	Married	43%
Income	Up to Rs.50,000	7%
	Rs.51,000 to Rs.100,000	18%
	Rs.101,000 to Rs.150,000	39%
	Rs.151,000 to Rs.200,000	19%
	Rs.200,000 Plus	17%

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis simplifies complex data and lays the groundwork for predictive modeling. Table 3 shows the constructs' internal consistency, mean standard deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis values.

Table 3: Descriptive Analysis

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Agile Project	0.815	3.663	2.620	2.360	-2.026
Collaboration	0.822	4.129	1.986	1.870	1.975
Communication	0.805	3.914	2.080	2.018	1.845
Conflict Resolution	0.744	3.708	2.572	-2.425	2.378
Emotional Intelligence	0.871	3.525	2.108	2.366	-1.540
Leadership	0.843	3.574	1.997	2.141	1.833
Project Success	0.785	3.849	1.626	1.770	1.693
Team Dynamics	0.870	3.915	2.198	2.534	1.621

Our results show that conflict resolution ($\alpha=0.744$) "has the lowest internal consistency, and emotional intelligence ($\alpha=0.871$) has the highest. The results "suggest the constructs have adequate internal consistency." Moreover, the constructs' "Skewness and Kurtosis values are in the range of $\pm$ 3.5, suggesting they fulfill the requirement of univariate normality" (Saunders et al., 2019).

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is a "theoretical association between a construct and its indicators." The study has used composite reliability and AVE values to assess convergent validity. Table 4 shows that the AVE values are greater than 0.676, and the composite reliability validity values are greater than 0.747. These results suggest that the constructs meet the requirement of convergent validity.

Table 4: Convergent Validity

Constructs	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Agile Project	0.843	0.889	0.729
Collaboration	0.823	0.918	0.849
Communication	0.829	0.885	0.721
Conflict Resolution	0.747	0.842	0.728
Emotional Intelligence	0.888	0.911	0.719
Leadership	0.874	0.893	0.676
Project Success	0.785	0.903	0.823
Team Dynamics	0.877	0.920	0.794

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity allows researchers to ensure that a construct or variable "is truly distinct from other related variables." It also allows the researchers to determine whether the used measures are distinct and are not overlapping or reductant." (Zhang& Chen, 2022). Several techniques are available for assessing discriminant validity, including correlation analysis, factor analysis, structural equation modeling, and multi-trait multi-method matrix. The study used Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criteria for discriminant validity. The results presented in Table 5 show the constructs are unique and distinct. Because "Correlation values are less than the square root of AVG values" (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 5: Discriminant Validity

Constructs	AP	CL	CM	CR	EI	LD	PS	TD
Agile Project	0.854							
Collaboration	0.418	0.921						
Communication	0.547	0.628	0.849					
Conflict Resolution	0.756	0.679	0.892	0.853				
Emotional Intelligence	0.388	0.700	0.662	0.711	0.848			
Leadership	0.299	0.293	0.359	0.429	0.293	0.822		
Project Success	0.409	0.689	0.656	0.690	0.751	0.310	0.907	
Team Dynamics	0.489	0.520	0.578	0.618	0.567	0.353	0.546	0.891

Structural Model

A structural model depicts "the relationships between latent variables and their strength and direction." Figure 2 represents the structural model.
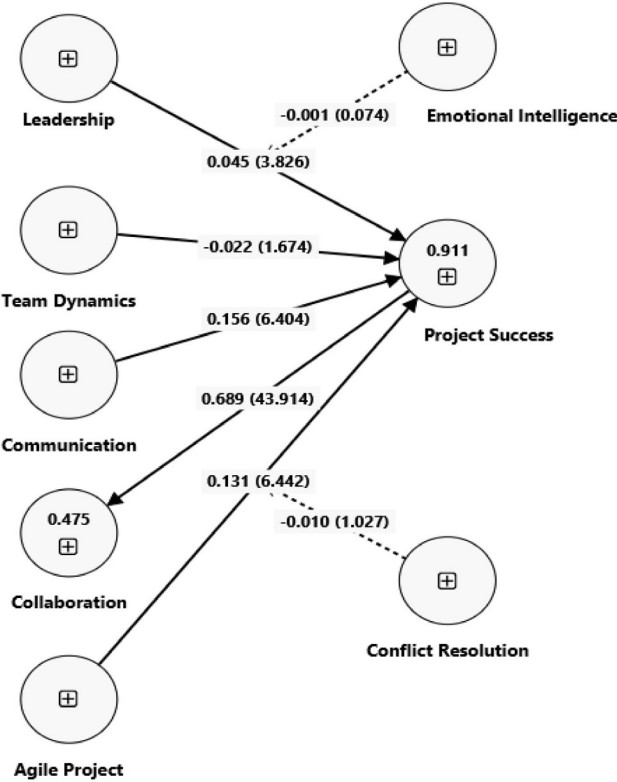
Figure 2 Structural Model

Hypothesis Results

We have extended Social Exchange Theory and "developed a new model containing five direct and two moderating relationships." Table 6 depicts the results.

Table 6: Results

Relationships	β	T stat.	P values	Results
Leadership -> Project Success (H1)	0.045	3.826	0.000	Accepted
Team Dynamics -> Project Success (H2)	-0.022	1.674	0.074	Rejected
Communication -> Project Success (H3)	0.156	6.404	0.000	Accepted
Collaboration -> Project Success (H4)	0.689	43.914	0.000	Accepted
Agile Project -> Project Success (H5)	0.131	6.442	0.000	Accepted
Emotional Intelligence x Leadership -> Project Success (H6)	-0.001	0.074	0.470	Rejected
Conflict Resolution x Agile Project -> Project Success (H7)	-0.010	1.027	0.152	Rejected

We found support for four direct hypotheses (H1, H3, H4, and H5) but not for Hypothesis 2. Moreover, we did not find support for two moderating hypotheses (H6 and H7).

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The study supported Hypothesis 1: "Leadership positively affects project success." Researchers believe effective leadership is an important precursor to project success (Abbas & Ali, 2023). Moreover, researchers highlighted that a leader with a clear vision and strong communication skills motivates the team members to achieve the project objectives (Ahmad et al., 2022). Furthermore, Ukato et al. (2024) assert that good leaders develop a conducive organizational culture that promotes teamwork and builds employees' trust and confidence. As a result, they fully participate in achieving organizational goals (Khan et al., 2024). Additionally, effective leaders prioritize risk management and quality assurance and ensure employee project deliverables are as per their expectations (Ghorbani, 2023).

We did not find support for Hypothesis 2: "Team dynamics positively affects project success." Ekemezie et al. (2024) assert that a team with positive dynamism can overcome obstacles, innovate, and deliver high-quality results (Radhakrishnan et al., 2022). Moreover, for project success, the team members must possess effective communication and conflict-resolution skills, as they foster a conducive environment of trust and open communication. As a result, such a conducive environment improves team dynamism and chances of project success (Blak-Bernat et al., 2023). Moreover, researchers assert that adaptability and flexibility enable teams to adjust their projects to changing requirements (Benjamin et al., 2024). Furthermore, clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability promote ownership and commitment in a team, while effective leadership provides guidance, support, and empowerment (Zaman et al., 2023). All these factors of team dynamism, individually and collectively, positively affect project success (Licorish et al., 2024).

The study supported Hypothesis 3: "Communication positively affects project success." Effective communication is the backbone of project success, profoundly affecting various aspects of project management (Hans, 2024). Researchers believe it promotes trust, understanding, and cooperation among team members (Almashhadani & Almashhadani,2023). As a result, all team members work towards common goals (Daramola et al., 2024). Elaborating on the above, we argue that effective communication promotes a relationship of trust and respect between leaders and team

members (Ezeigweneme et al., 2023). Moreover, researchers believe timely and clear communication reduces the adverse effects of delay (Zhang et al., 2022).

We found that "collaboration positively affects project success (H4)." Collaboration among team members improves communication, promotes creativity, increases productivity, and positively affects project success (Bradley et al., 2023). Radhakrishnan et al. (2022) assert that when team members and stakeholders work together, they share knowledge, expertise, and diverse perspectives, leading to innovative solutions and better decision-making (Pinto et al., 2022). Extending the above, we argue that collaboration has several advantages (Rehan et al., 2024). For example, it streamlines processes, reduces duplication of effort, and enhances efficiency, enabling teams to achieve project objectives (Blak-Bernat et al., 2023). Moreover, strong interpersonal relations, trust, and productive engagement between team members are needed to achieve better outcomes (Swart et al., 2022).

The study supported Hypothesis 5: "Agile projects management positively affect project success." Agile project management enhances flexibility, fosters collaboration, and promotes project success (Sulá et al., 2024). This approach empowers managers to equip their teams with the necessary software at the right time to increase efficiency and effectiveness (Kudyba & Cruz, 2023). Moreover, it cultivates a culture of teamwork, open communication, and stakeholder involvement (Palopak & Huang, 2024). Thereby increasing customer and stakeholder satisfaction (Ciric-Lalic et al., 2022). The iterative approach allows the team to identify and address the issues and problems early. As a result, it improves quality outcomes and reduces the risk of project failure (Ansari et al., 2024).

The study "rejected Hypothesis 6: Emotional Intelligence moderates the relationship between leadership and project success." Past studies document that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in the complex relationship between leadership and project success (Watanabe et al., 2024). When leaders possess high emotional intelligence, their leadership style becomes more effective, improving project outcomes. Emotional intelligence enables leaders to understand better their team members' emotions, needs, and concerns, fostering a positive team culture, encouraging collaboration, and facilitating open communication (Shahzad et al., 2023). Extending this argument, Sposito et al. (2024) assert that high emotional intelligence amplifies the positive effect on the relationship between leadership and project success (Ishfaq & Abbasi, 2022). On the contrary, leaders with low emotional intelligence do not understand team members' emotional needs and concerns. As a result, low emotional intelligence negatively affects the relationship between leadership and project success

(Kukah et al., 2023).

The study "rejected Hypothesis 7: Conflict resolution moderates the relationship between agile project management and project success." Conflict resolution is a critical component of agile project management, and its impact on project success cannot be overstated (Ansari et al., 2024). Past studies document that conflict resolution directly and indirectly affects the project's success (Saxena et al., 2023). When conflicts are resolved in an organization, the agile team can focus on delivering high value and meeting customers' needs (Amani et al., 2022). As a result, it enhances the relationship between agile project management and project success (Haider et al., 2024). Conversely, unresolved conflict can lead to delays, decreased morale, and compromised project success (Kudyba & Dcruz, 2023). As a result, it negatively affects the association between agile project management and project success (Bilir, 2022).

Conclusion

Project success is important for a firm's reputation. It increases employees' motivation, satisfaction, and productivity. Given its importance, the study extended the Social Theory and developed a new model with five direct and two moderating relationships." We focused on Pakistan's IT sector, which has had a significantly high growth rate in the last few years. A talented workforce and government support have contributed to the growth of the IT sector (Aslam & Ali, 2022). According to an estimate, the IT market in Pakistan is about $3.5 billion, with a growth rate of about 20%, and it appears to increase significantly in the next few years (Zia & Ali, 2022). The study documents that leadership, communication, collaboration, and agile project management positively affect the success of a project. However, the study found that team dynamics insignificantly affect project success. Moreover, it documented that emotional intelligence insignificantly moderates the relationship between leadership and project success. The study also found that conflict resolution insignificantly moderates the relationship between agile project management and project success.

Implications

Effective leadership is essential for project success, which our study also validates. Effective leaders cultivate a conducive environment in an organization. They also motivate and share vision and objectives with team members. As a result, a team's motivation and productivity increase, contributing to a project's success.

Our study found that team dynamics insignificantly affect project success. Despite this, team dynamics are crucial for project success. We suggest that Pakistani firms cultivate positive team dynamics, which benefits a project. Leaders must also establish

clear goals and share them with the team members to cultivate positive team dynamics. Moreover, we recommend that firms encourage the team members to share and discuss project-related issues with each other. As a result, the team members' engagement will increase significantly, leading to project satisfaction.

Extant literature highlights that effective communication is essential for a project's success, which our study also validates. Thus, firms must promote an effective communication environment. For this, the leaders must develop clear protocols and encourage employees to share their ideas without fear. This enhances team engagement and satisfaction.

Collaboration is vital for project success, which our study also validates. To improve collaboration within an organization, leaders must establish clear goals and objectives, which they share with all employees. The firms must also encourage the employees to share their views and perspectives on the project. Additionally, the leaders must listen to the employees' problems and issues with empathy. Diverse views improve an organization's objectives and goals. However, conflicts between two or more members adversely affect the project's success. Therefore, managers should improve their conflict-resolution skills and use these skills to resolve the conflict immediately.

Agile project management is an essential precursor for project success, which our study has also validated. To improve agile project management, firms must focus on iterative development. Management must continuously improve processes and develop a cross-functional team. Scrum, Kanban, and Dynamic Systems Development are other strategies they can adopt.

Limitations and Future Research

We have focused on the IT sector of Pakistan because it has a significant growth rate and huge export potential. Other studies may explore other sectors, such as textile and chemical, as they contribute significantly toward GDP and employment generation. We have used only five antecedents in the study. Future studies may add more antecedents to their framework, such as project management maturity, decision-making, coordination, and knowledge management. The study used emotional intelligence and conflict resolution as moderators. We recommend that other studies use different moderators in their studies, such as project complexity, agile projects, and top management. Cultural values are essential aspects of project success. Future studies may examine their direct and indirect effect on the project's success.

Annexure 1

Construct and Items Used in the Questionnaire

Agile Project Management

AP1. The project team uses Agile methodologies (e.g., Scrum, Kanban).

AP2. The project has a clear and concise product vision.

AP3. The project has a prioritized product backlog.

AP4. The project team has a dedicated Product Owner.

AP5. The project team has a dedicated Scrum Master (if Scrum is used).

AP6. Sprint planning is conducted regularly.

AP7. Daily stand-ups are conducted regularly.

AP8. Sprint retrospectives are conducted regularly.

AP9. The project team uses continuous integration and delivery.

AP10. The project team measures velocity and tracks progress.

Collaboration

CL1. Team members openly share information and ideas.

CL2. We actively listen to each other's perspectives.

CL3. Our communication is clear and concise.

CL4. Team members trust each other to do their jobs.

CL5. We respect each other's opinions and expertise.

CL6. We resolved conflicts constructively.

CL7. Our team members support each other.

CL8. We share resources and expertise.

CL9. We work together to achieve common goals.

CL10. Our team members are flexible and adaptable.

CL11. We adjust plans when necessary.

CL12. We are open to new ideas and approaches.

Communication

CM1. I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts and opinions with others.

CM2. I actively listen to others when they speak.

CM3. I clearly articulate my ideas and needs.

CM4. I ask questions to clarify understanding.

CM5. I provide regular updates on my work progress.

CM6. I am approachable and open to feedback.

CM7. I use appropriate tone and language in my communication.

CM8. I am aware of nonverbal cues and body language.

CM9. I adapt my communication style to suit different audiences.

CM10. I follow up to ensure understanding and resolution.

Conflict Resolution

CR1. I address conflicts directly and openly.

CR2. I listen actively to understand the other person's perspective.

CR3. I remain calm and composed in conflict situations.

CR4. I focus on finding a mutually beneficial solution.

CR5. I am willing to compromise to resolve the conflict.

CR6. I clarify expectations and needs to avoid misunderstandings.

CR7. I seek common ground and shared interests.

CR8. I use "I" statements to express feelings and avoid blame.

CR9. I take a break if my emotions become too intense.

CR9. I follow up to ensure the conflict is fully resolved.

CR10. My project output was of high quality

Emotional Intelligence

EI1. I am aware of my emotions and how they impact my behavior.

EI2. I can recognize and understand my strengths and weaknesses.

EI3. I am aware of my values and beliefs.

E14. I can control my emotions and impulses.

EI5. I can manage stress and anxiety.

EI6. I can adapt to changing situations.

EI7. I am driven to achieve my goals.

E18. I am committed to my personal and professional development.

EI9. I am motivated to help others.

EI10. I can understand and appreciate the feelings of others.

EI11. I am sensitive to the needs and emotions of others.

EI12. I can see things from another person's perspective.

EI13. I am effective in communicating my emotions and needs.

EI14. I can build and maintain strong relationships.

EI5. I can manage conflict and disagreements.

Leadership

LS1. I inspire and motivate others to achieve their best.

LS2. I provide clear direction and vision for my team.

LS3. I lead by example and demonstrate ethical behavior.

LS4. I empower others to make decisions and take ownership.

LS5. I communicate effectively and provide regular feedback.

LS6. I build and maintain strong relationships with my team.

LS7.I adapt to changing situations and lead with flexibility.

LS8. I prioritize and manage tasks effectively.

LS9. I develop and support the growth of my team members.

LS10. I make informed and timely decisions.

Project Success

PS1. The project was completed within the planned timeframe.

PS2. The project was delivered within the approved budget.

PS3. The project met all its intended objectives.

PS4. The project's quality standards were met or exceeded.

PS5. Stakeholders were satisfied with the project's outcome.

PS6. Team members were satisfied with their roles and responsibilities.

PS7. Communication among team members was effective.

PS8. Project risks were identified and managed effectively.

PS9. The project's benefits were realized as planned.

PS10. Lessons learned were documented and applied to future projects

Team Dynamics

TD1. Team members share a common goal and vision.

TD2. Communication among team members is open and honest.

TD3. Team members respect and trust each other.

TD4. Conflicts are resolved constructively and promptly.

TD5. Team members are committed to the team's success.

TD6. Roles and responsibilities are clear and defined.

TD7. Team members are accountable for their actions.

TD8. Feedback is shared regularly and constructively.

TD9. Team members support and encourage each other.

TD10. Decisions are made collaboratively and inclusively.

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