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Influence of Communication Systems on Performance of Contractors in Building Public Projects in Pokot Central Sub-County, West Pokot County, Kenya

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Abstract:

This study determined the influence of Communication Systems on Performance of Contractors in Building Public Projects in Pokot Central Sub-County, West Pokot County, Kenya. The study was anchored on the Theory of Constraints as proposed by Goldratt in 1984. The study adopted descriptive survey research design, which considered the use of structured questionnaires and interview schedules. The Target population was estimated to be 1500 (contractors and officials from regulatory agency) while the sample size was determined using Mora and Kloeit formula and was 315. Stratified and random sampling was used to identify contractors. Purposive sampling was used to identify officials from the regulatory agency. Data collection was done by administering questionnaires to contractors in building public projects while officials from regulatory agencies responded to interviews. Quantitative data from questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS software version 22 to determine frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data from interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis where responses were organized in themes and sub-themes as they relate to objectives and indicators respectively. From the study, 89.7%, 85.0%, 84.7% and 83.0% of the respondents stated that communication systems, influenced performance of building contractors. Further, 90.0% respondents stated that effective communication from clients influenced performance of building contractors. The study concludes that Building Contractors (BCs) from Pokot Central and its environs suffers the challenge of poor communication network and infrastructural challenges, which have negatively influenced their performance. Contract suppliers might be failing to enhance communication with contractors because of waiting for approval from authorities to dispatch information to contractors, which largely influence performance. Performance of BCs rely on the cooperation between all stakeholders in the building and construction industry. It was recommended that the County Government should work closely with the National Government to build network masts and transmitters to enhance communication.

Keywords: Building contractors, contract suppliers, communication, performance

1. Background

Performance of building and construction contractors determines Infrastructural development in any given institution, region or country. However, performance of many contractors in building public projects suffers a myriad of challenges that compromise the practice. According to Dunne and Dunne (2011) communication refers to the movement of information from one point of an organization to the other. The author goes ahead stating that, communication systems includes the use of mobile phones, circulars, emails, letters, and memos among others.

In the United Kingdom, the relationship between the supply chain (procurement), main contractors and the subcontractors have always influenced the quality of performance of building contracts (Obafemi and Morledge, 2013). According to the authors, long and bureaucratic procurement procedures restrict sharing of responsibilities, creates rivalry, compromises project coordination and it inhibits contribution of value ideas.

As Tengan, Appiah-Kubi, Anzagira, and Balaara (2014) observed in Ghana, the majority of contracts are executed by small-scale contractors who are usually sub-contracted by big contracting firms, which have the capacity and qualification to secure tenders. Small-scale contractors in Ghana are associated with producing poor quality work because of lack of skills, low funding, and poor coordination, which influence their work.

In Kenya, Procurement procedures are based on Public Procurement and Disposal Act, PPDA of 2005, which has evolved since pre-independence period. Until then, the system of procurement was determined by issuance circulars from the Ministry of Treasury. According to Akali (2018), most contractors lacked management skills and therefore the capacity to evaluate projects with an aim of ensuring quality work. The rationale behind it was that the construction technique adopted were archaic and most lacked modern tools and equipment needed to complete tasks. Challenges continue to face building contractors of Public Projects and it for this reason that this study seeks to determine organizational factors influencing performance of Building Contractors of Public Projects in Pokot Central Sub-County

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Contractors in building public projects performance according to Westerberg and Erickson (2015) faces criticisms that range from delays in completion of projects, customer satisfaction, cost and schedule overruns. For example, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics report of 2017 in West Pokot County indicated that most infrastructural development projects in the areas suffered from contractors' related problems, which included lack of skills, poor coordination, poor communication, lack of enough funds, increased overrun costs, complicated and bureaucratic procurement procedures and lack of necessary equipment meant to complete their projects. Only Chelimo (2018) conducted a study in West Pokot, which was related to this study; nevertheless, Chelimo's (2018) study focused on factors influencing completion of water projects and did not consider factors influencing performance of Building Contractors, BCs. Based on that, this study seeks to investigate organizational factors influencing performance of contractors in building public projects in Pokot Central Sub-County of West Pokot County, Kenya.

1.2. Objective of the Study

To establish influence of communication systems on performance of contractors in building public projects in Pokot Central Sub-County West Pokot County

2. Literature Review

2.1. Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design because of the descriptive nature of the study. Descriptive survey was used to gather, summarize, present and interpret information for the purpose of clarification (Orodho, 2003). The rationale behind the adoption of this research design was attributed to the fact that this method was convenient because a small geographical area could be study and findings could be inferred for a larger population. Further, this method is less costly and does not need expertise of any scientific nature

3.1. Target Population

The target population of contractors in building public projects and officials from government especially from the National Construction Authority and a few from the County Government of West Pokot County who were estimated to be 1500.

3.2. Sampling Procedure

The sampling frame was contractors in building public projects and the regulating authority in Pokot Central Sub-County.

Respondents	Target population	Sample
Building contractors	1469	300
Officials from NCA	8	8
Officials from Ministry of Public Works, and Housing	13	13
Officials from NEMA, and Public Health	10	10
Total	1500	351

Table 1: Sampling Design

3.3. Sample Size and Sampling Technique

In order to sample the required number of units from the target population, the researcher used stratified sampling, which considered contractors in building public projects based on their "classes," length of experience, their

distribution and even level of training and knowledge to ensure representation. This was followed by simple random sampling that was used to refine the search in order to give an equal opportunity to all sampling units to take part in the study. Sampling of the officials from the County Government, Ministry of Public Works and National Construction Authority was done using purposive sampling because the researcher only considered those officials who have information relevant to this study. The sample size for this study were obtained using Mora and Kloet (2010) formula for finite population as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + Ne^2)}$$

Where,

n = the sample size

N = the size of population=1500

e= the error of 5 percentage= 0.05

substitution of the value of N and e brings the sample size to be 315.

4. Research Findings and Discussion

To establish influence of communication systems on performance of contractors in building public projects in Pokot Central Sub-County, descriptive analysis was computed. The finding is presented in Table 2.

Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Access to information from client helps contractors to plan and work diligently	13	4.3	12	4.0	7	2.3	142	47.3	126	42.0
Effective communication from suppliers and clients determines performance	7	2.3	7	2.3	16	5.3	125	41.7	145	48.3
Clients take long before giving feedback on an issue of urgency	6	2.0	14	4.7	11	3.7	140	46.7	129	43.0
Whoever controls the flow of information determines the performance of building contractors	6	2.0	2	0.7	38	12.7	128	42.7	126	42.0

Table 2: Extent of Agreeing or Disagreeing with Statements That Relate to Communication Systems and Performance of Building Contractors

From the findings presented, the majority of respondents overwhelmingly asserted that communication systems influenced performance of Building Contractors (BCs). Notably, in Table 2, 269 (89.7%) of the respondents stated that communication systems influenced performance of BCs. Regarding to access to information, in table 7, 188 (89.3%) respondents indicated that access to information helped BCs to plan and execute their work diligently. Further, 270 (90.0%) respondents stated that effective communication from clients influenced performance of BCs. In the same table 7, 169 (89.7%) asserted that clients took long before giving feedback on issues of emergency. In terms of control of the flow of information, 254 (84.7%) respondents stated that whoever controlled the flow of information influenced performance of BCs. Effective communication, and immediate feedback determined the performance of BCs largely because through communication, BCs are able to get clear instructions, respond to changes from clients regarding work schedules, project designs and working environment. Maintaining a constant link with clients help BCs to enhance customer satisfaction, complete their projects timely and reduce overhead costs associated with poor communication systems.

Descriptive findings presented were in line with qualitative findings from interview responses regarding communication systems and its influence on performance of BCs. In the interviews, the officials from Officials the Ministry of Public Works and Housing stated

"..... Access to information is problematic because of poor network, remoteness and topographical situation of the study area. It takes long before written circulars and memos regarding projects reach the contractor...."

Officials from NCA echoed the sentiments by the Officials from the Ministry of Public Works and Housing who stated,

".....Travelling to meet the client and/or supplier takes long, is costly though is the only reliable way of communication when phone communication fails...."

From the interviews, it was evident that poor communication network encouraged BCs to travel long distances at the headquarters or to the client in order to get updated information, receive changes in project plans or any related information, which was costly, time consuming and therefore influence performance of BCs negatively.

According to Saud (2015) building construction in Saudi Arabia has been marred with challenges related to communication whereby contractors have been exposed to different site conditions other than previous agreed, extra works and delays in feedbacks all of which led to claims and disputes hence compromising the performance contractors. In Nigeria, Affare (2016) asserted that, conflicts and claims is common in building and construction and as such, effective communication have been used by contractors to alleviate the situation. Contractors in building public projects with poor listening skills, poor leadership, stereotyping, unclear objectives and language difficulties lack clear and effective

communication, which causes delays in project completion, increases overrun costs, and above all it leads to customer dissatisfaction.

5. Conclusions

BCs from Pokot Central and its environs suffers the challenge of poor communication network and infrastructural challenges, which have negatively influenced their performance. Contract suppliers might be failing to enhance communication with contractors because of waiting for approval from authorities to dispatch information to contractors, which largely influence performance. Performance of BCs rely on the cooperation between all stakeholders in the building and construction industry.

5.1. Recommendations for Policy and Practice

The study recommends that:

- The County Government in partnership with the National Government should work on modalities of installing network boosters and transmitters in Pokot Central and its environs to ensure that communication is enhanced.
- The County Government should prioritize improvement of the status of infrastructure to ensure that movement from one point to the other within the area is efficient and does not suffer any inconveniences.

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