

The Role of Project Management Skills in Achieving Project Success: Evidence from USAID Rwanda

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between project management skills and the success of development projects, focusing on the USAID Huguka Dukore Akazi Kanoze Project in Rwanda. Drawing from 170 respondents, including project managers, field officers, and other key stakeholders, the study evaluates the role of communication, organizational, risk management, and interpersonal skills in achieving project milestones. Findings indicate that communication skills are instrumental in aligning tasks and fostering stakeholder engagement, while organizational skills significantly enhance goal setting and on-time completion of activities. Risk management skills were critical for mitigating delays and budget overruns, and interpersonal skills proved vital for teamwork and stakeholder collaboration. The study concludes that integrating these skills is essential for optimizing project outcomes in resource-limited settings. It recommends strengthening training programs, leadership development, and structured risk management approaches while advocating for further research on the long-term impacts of management skills, comparative analysis across diverse contexts, and integrating digital tools to enhance project efficiency. The findings provide actionable insights for improving the design and implementation of development projects, ensuring their sustainability and alignment with socio-economic development goals.

Keywords: Project Management Skills, Project Success, USAID, Communication Skills, Risk Management, Rwanda

INTRODUCTION

Effective project management is a cornerstone of successful project execution, particularly in development contexts where resources are often constrained and the demands for tangible outcomes are high. Globally, project management has expanded from focusing on technical skills, such as planning, scheduling, and budgeting, to a broader emphasis on management skills, such as communication, organization, risk management, and interpersonal abilities that play a pivotal role in ensuring project success. As projects become increasingly complex and globalized, the need for managers to balance technical expertise with strong leadership and management capabilities has never been more critical (Petter and Randolph, 2009). However, despite their recognized importance, management skills often receive less attention in research and practice, leading to a gap in understanding how these skills directly impact project outcomes.

Research has consistently shown that poor management skills are a leading cause of project failure worldwide. For example, it was highlighted that while technical proficiency is necessary, neglecting management skills can undermine even the most well-planned projects (Alvarenga et al., 2019). In Kenya, it was reported that 55% of youth development projects failed to meet their objectives due to poor planning, weak communication, and inadequate organizational capacity among project managers (Chepkemoi-, 2019). Similarly, project failures globally are attributable to weak decision-making, insufficient problem-solving, and poor communication (Arora, 2023; Kunert and von der Weth, 2018). These findings highlight the global nature of the challenge and underscore the need to explore how project management skills can mitigate these shortcomings and drive success.

The challenge is particularly acute in developing countries, where limited resources and institutional capacity can exacerbate project risks. In Rwanda, for instance, USAID-funded projects have faced persistent challenges, including high failure rates due to inadequate planning, weak communication, and limited technical and management capacity. It was also found that some development projects in Rwanda failed due to the absence of clear project plans and well-defined goals, poor communication, weak organizational skills, and insufficient risk management strategies among project managers (Alpha et al., 2021; Iribagiza and Kirabo, 2024). These findings are alarming, given the critical role development projects play in advancing Rwanda's socio-economic development agenda. The USAID Huguka Dukore Akazi Kanoze Project is a flagship initiative to address youth unemployment in Rwanda by equipping young people with work-readiness skills, entrepreneurship training, and access to employment opportunities. The project also emphasizes gender equality, social inclusion, and health programming, making it a vital part of Rwanda's development strategy. While the project has achieved notable successes, its execution offers an opportunity to examine how project management skills, particularly communication, organizational, risk management, and interpersonal skills, contribute to its outcomes. This focus is essential for understanding the broader implications of management skills in development projects and identifying strategies to enhance their effectiveness.

Existing literature on project management has predominantly focused on technical skills, with limited attention to the practical application of management skills in real-world settings. For instance, Müller and Jugdev (2012) emphasized the importance of leadership and organizational skills in managing project teams but did not explore their direct impact on project outcomes (Müller and Jugdev, 2012). Similarly, the role of risk management in mitigating project failures was highlighted but noted that many managers lack the training and experience to apply these principles effectively (Dandage et al., 2018; Vanitha Sivasankaran et al., 2023). While these studies provide valuable insights, they do not adequately address the unique challenges development projects face in low-resource settings like Rwanda. This research seeks to fill this gap by providing empirical evidence on how specific management skills influence project success in a Rwandan context, thereby contributing to the growing body of knowledge on project management in developing countries.

This study examines the relationship between project management skills and project success within the USAID Huguka Dukore Akazi Kanoze Project. Specifically, it seeks to (1) Assess the effect of communication skills on task execution and stakeholder engagement. (2) Examine the role of organizational skills in achieving project milestones and meeting deadlines. (3) Analyze how risk management skills contribute to mitigating project delays and budget overruns. (4) Evaluate the impact of interpersonal skills on fostering collaboration, team cohesion, and stakeholder satisfaction. Hence, this study addresses a critical knowledge gap by exploring the role of management skills in enhancing project success, particularly in Rwanda and similar development contexts. Its emphasis on practical application contributes to improving the effectiveness and sustainability of development projects while advancing broader socio-economic goals. The findings have significant implications for policy and practice, guiding the development of targeted training programs for project managers and stakeholders. Additionally, the research enriches academic discourse by addressing the imbalance between technical and management skills in project management literature and offers practical strategies for improving project execution, particularly in resource-constrained settings where successful outcomes are essential.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the research design, study population, sampling techniques, data collection, validity and reliability testing, and data analysis methods.

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional design. This design was chosen to collect data simultaneously and provide a detailed snapshot of the studied phenomenon without manipulating any variables. This approach explored the relationship between project management skills (communication, organizational, risk management, and interpersonal skills) and project success in a resource-limited development context.

Study Population

The study population comprised stakeholders involved in the USAID Huguka Dukore Akazi Kanoze Project,

including project managers, employees, field officers, project coordinators, and members of the executive and monitoring teams. A total of 307 individuals made up the target population, drawn from all departments and project activities. These individuals were selected based on their involvement in and knowledge of project management processes and outcomes.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size (n) was determined to be 174 using Yamane’s (1967) formula for finite populations (Eq. 1). This sampling approach ensured that all relevant perspectives were captured, enabling a comprehensive analysis of the research objectives.

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

Where “N” represents the total population (307), “e” represents the margin of error (5%). A stratified sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across all stakeholder groups, with proportional allocation to each category, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Sample size

Category	Population	Sample size
Executive Directors	1	1
Finance Department	12	6
Human Resources & Logistics	10	5
Employees	108	80
Field Officers	120	66
Project Coordinators	30	3
Monitoring and Evaluation	16	3
Total	307	174

Data Collection

The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire designed to gather information on the four key project management skills and their impact on project success. The questionnaire included closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to capture quantitative. The key sections of the questionnaire were (1) demographic information, including gender, age, education level, and years of experience. (2) Project Management Skills such as questions on communication, organizational, risk management, and interpersonal skills. (3) Project Success Indicators include task execution, on-time completion, budget adherence, and stakeholder satisfaction. The questionnaires were distributed to 174 respondents, and 170 completed and returned the survey, yielding a 98% response rate.

Reliability test

Internal consistency of the instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha (α), as shown in Eq.2 (Cronbach, 1951). A value of 0.70 or higher indicates good internal consistency (Saunders et al., 2018). The reliability test produced a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.879 as shown in Table 2, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the items in the questionnaire. This confirmed that the instrument reliably measured the intended constructs.

$$\alpha = \frac{N \times C}{V + (N - 1) \times C} \quad (2)$$

Where “N” is equal to the number of items, “C” is the average inter-item covariance among the items and “V” equals the average variance.

Table 2 Reliability test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.879	10

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The analysis involved (1) Descriptive Statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, to summarize demographic data and respondents’ perceptions of project management skills and project success. (2) Inferential Statistics such as correlation Analysis to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between project management skills and project success; regression Analysis to evaluate the predictive power of the four management skills on project success and identify the most significant contributors as well as ANOVA to assess the statistical significance of the regression model. Results were presented in tables and figures for clarity, and key findings were interpreted to align with the study objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic characteristics of respondents

This section analyzes respondents' demographic characteristics across five key dimensions: gender, age, marital status, educational attainment, and professional experience within the USAID Huguka Dukore Akazi Kanoze Project. The gender distribution (Figure 1a) among respondents showed a relatively balanced composition, with males comprising 55.9% (n = 170) and females 44.1% (n = 170) of the sample population. This slight male predominance potentially reflects the broader gender distribution within the project's departmental structure.

Age distribution analysis (Figure 1b) revealed that most respondents (62.4%) fell within the 28–37-year age bracket, followed by 22.4% in the 38–47-year range. A smaller proportion (8.2%) represented the younger demographic of 18-27 years, with minimal representation in age groups above 48 years. This age distribution suggests a workforce predominantly in their early to mid-career stages, potentially advantageous for adaptability to evolving project demands. Regarding marital status, half of the respondents (50.0%) identified as single, while 25.3% were married (Figure 1c). The remaining participants were either divorced (15.3%) or widowed (9.4%). This distribution, particularly the high proportion of single respondents, appears consistent with the observed age demographics and may affect staff availability and project engagement patterns.

Educational qualifications among respondents were notably high (Figure 1d), with 58.2% holding bachelor's degrees and 25.9% having attained master's degrees. The remaining 15.9% reported secondary-level education as their highest qualification. This educational profile indicates a workforce well-equipped to engage with complex technical and managerial aspects of project implementation. Work experience within the project was also investigated and the results (Figure 1e) showed a remarkably uniform distribution across different tenure brackets: 0-5 years (25.3%), 6-10 years (24.7%), 11-15 years (24.7%), and more than 15 years (25.3%). This balanced distribution of experience levels suggests an optimal mix of fresh perspectives and institutional knowledge within the project team.

These demographic characteristics collectively indicate a diverse and well-qualified respondent pool, providing a robust foundation for examining the relationship between project management competencies and outcomes. The sample's heterogeneity across multiple demographic dimensions enhances the generalizability of subsequent findings regarding the influence of communication, organizational, risk management, and interpersonal skills on project success within the USAID Huguka Dukore Akazi Kanoze Project.

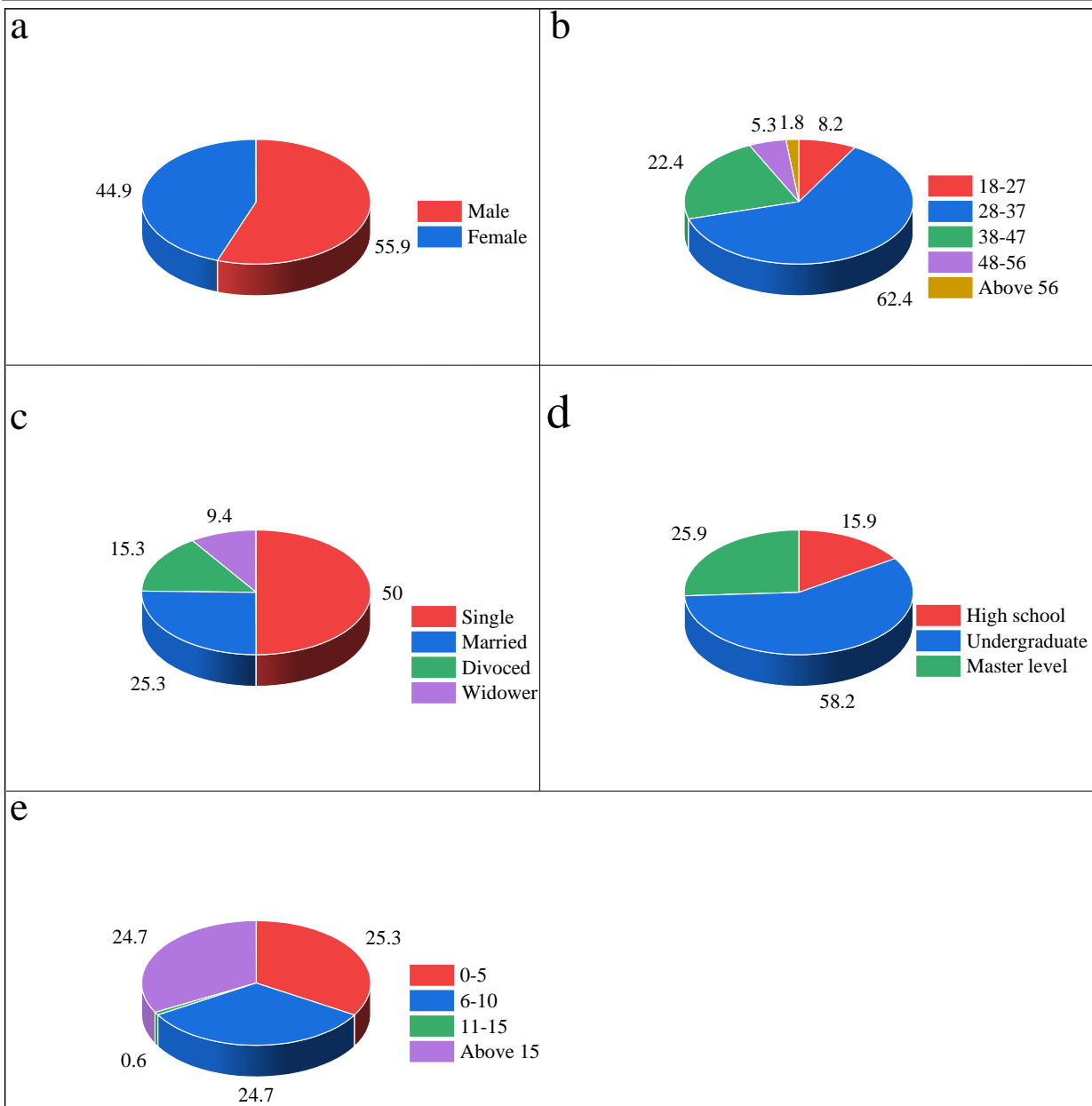


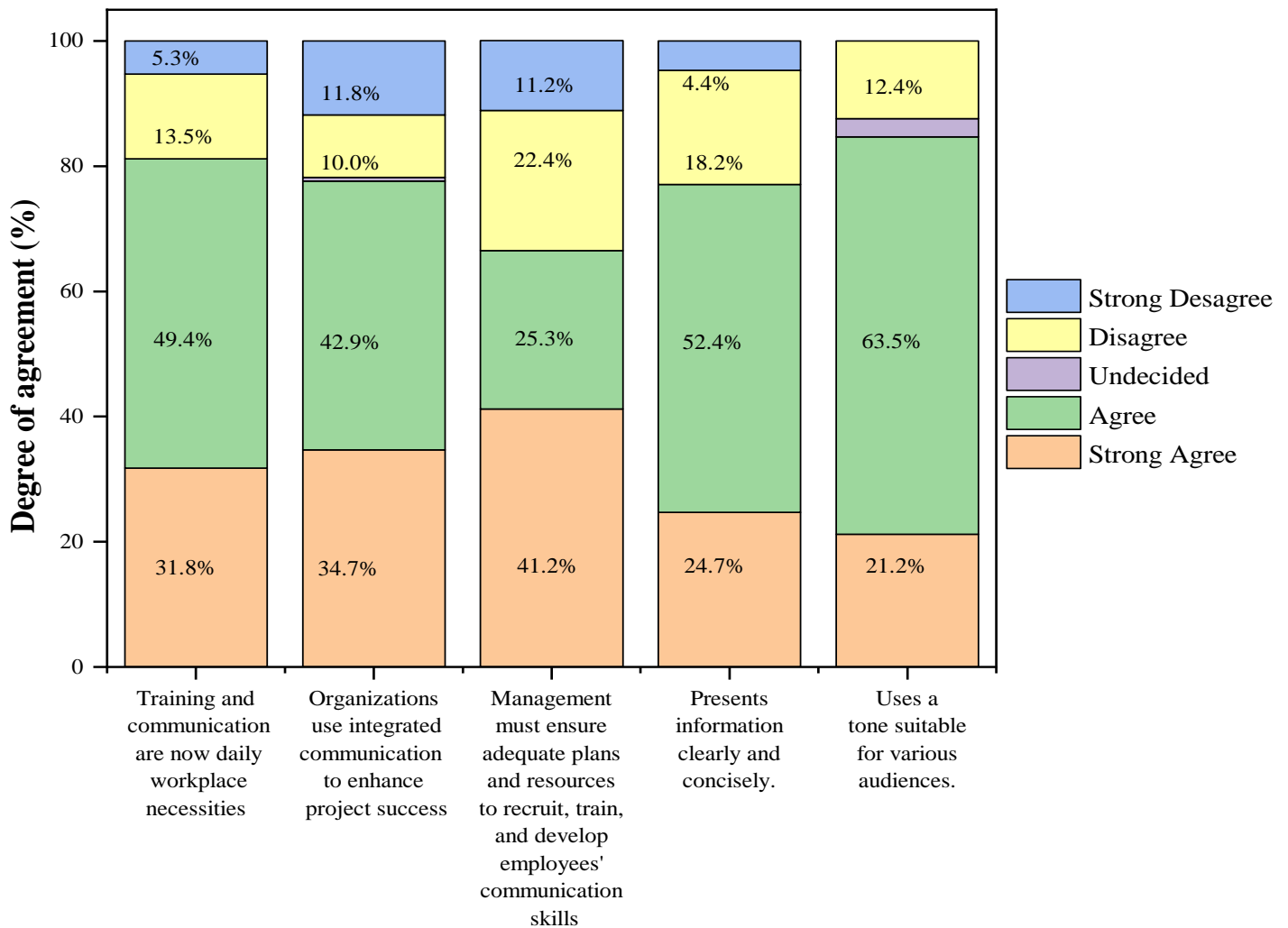
Figure 1 Demographic characteristics of respondents in percentage (%). (a) Gender, (b) Age, (c) Martial Status, (d) Education level, (e) Work Experience

Contributions of key skills to project outcomes

Project Communication Skills.

Figure 2 shows the evaluation focuses on five key aspects of communication skills, including training and communication as daily workplace necessities, integrated communication programs, management’s support for communication development, clarity in presenting information, and adaptability of tone for diverse audiences. The survey revealed that 81.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that training and communication are vital in daily workplace activities. This finding underscores the importance of professional development in equipping team members with practical communication skills, which aligns with the previous assertion that continuous training fosters better teamwork and minimizes errors in project execution (Aririguzoh, 2022). Integrated communication programs were also rated highly, with 77.6% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that such initiatives enhance project success. Structured communication frameworks are particularly critical in complex, multi-stakeholder environments, as they streamline communication flows and reduce potential conflicts. Schraeder et al. (2023) similarly emphasized the benefits of these programs in improving decision-making efficiency (Schraeder, 2023).

Management’s prioritization of communication skill development received slightly lower support, with 66.5% of respondents agreeing that adequate resources are allocated to this area. This gap highlights the need for stronger leadership emphasizing empowering employees with practical communication tools. Bowen (2018) suggests that communication skill investments contribute significantly to project outcomes by improving team alignment and stakeholder engagement (Bowen, 2018). Clarity and tone adaptability were identified as essential for effective communication. 77.1% of respondents agreed that presenting information reduces ambiguities and enhances task accountability. Furthermore, 84.7% emphasized the importance of tailoring communication tone to diverse audiences, an indispensable skill in development projects involving multicultural and interdisciplinary teams. This finding aligns with Derven’s (2014) observation that adaptive communication fosters trust and inclusivity (Derven, 2014). The findings underscore the critical role of communication skills in ensuring project success. Clear, adaptable, and well-structured communication fosters collaboration, mitigates conflicts and aligns team members toward common goals. However, the relatively lower emphasis on management’s support for communication training suggests an area for improvement. Implementing regular training programs and feedback mechanisms could further enhance the effectiveness of communication strategies in future projects.



Communication Skills

Figure 2 Project Communication Skills

Organization skills

Figure 3 highlights respondents’ perceptions of project managers’ organizational skills across four key areas (goal setting, empowerment, encouraging staff to apply skills, and promoting staff development). Among respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed, "Encourage staff development" emerged as the strongest aspect, with a combined agreement rate of 98.2% (18.8% strongly agreeing and 79.4% agreeing). This reflects a significant emphasis on fostering team members' long-term growth and learning, aligning with findings from studies that emphasize the importance of continuous staff development for organizational resilience and

adaptability (Bush and Balven, 2021; Park and Park, 2021). The second strongest area, empowerment, received a 94.7% agreement rate, illustrating that project managers are perceived to be proficient in enabling employees to take ownership of their roles, a critical factor for fostering engagement and innovation (Ye et al., 2022). Encouraging staff to apply their skills is followed closely by 89.4% agreement, underlining the value of effectively utilizing employee capabilities in achieving organizational goals (Braun et al., 2024). While still strong at 77.6%, goal setting ranked the lowest, suggesting room for improvement in clearly defining objectives, a factor known to influence team alignment and performance significantly (van der Hoek et al., 2018). These findings affirm that while project managers exhibit strong organizational skills overall, prioritizing goal-setting clarity and empowerment strategies can further enhance team dynamics and project outcomes.

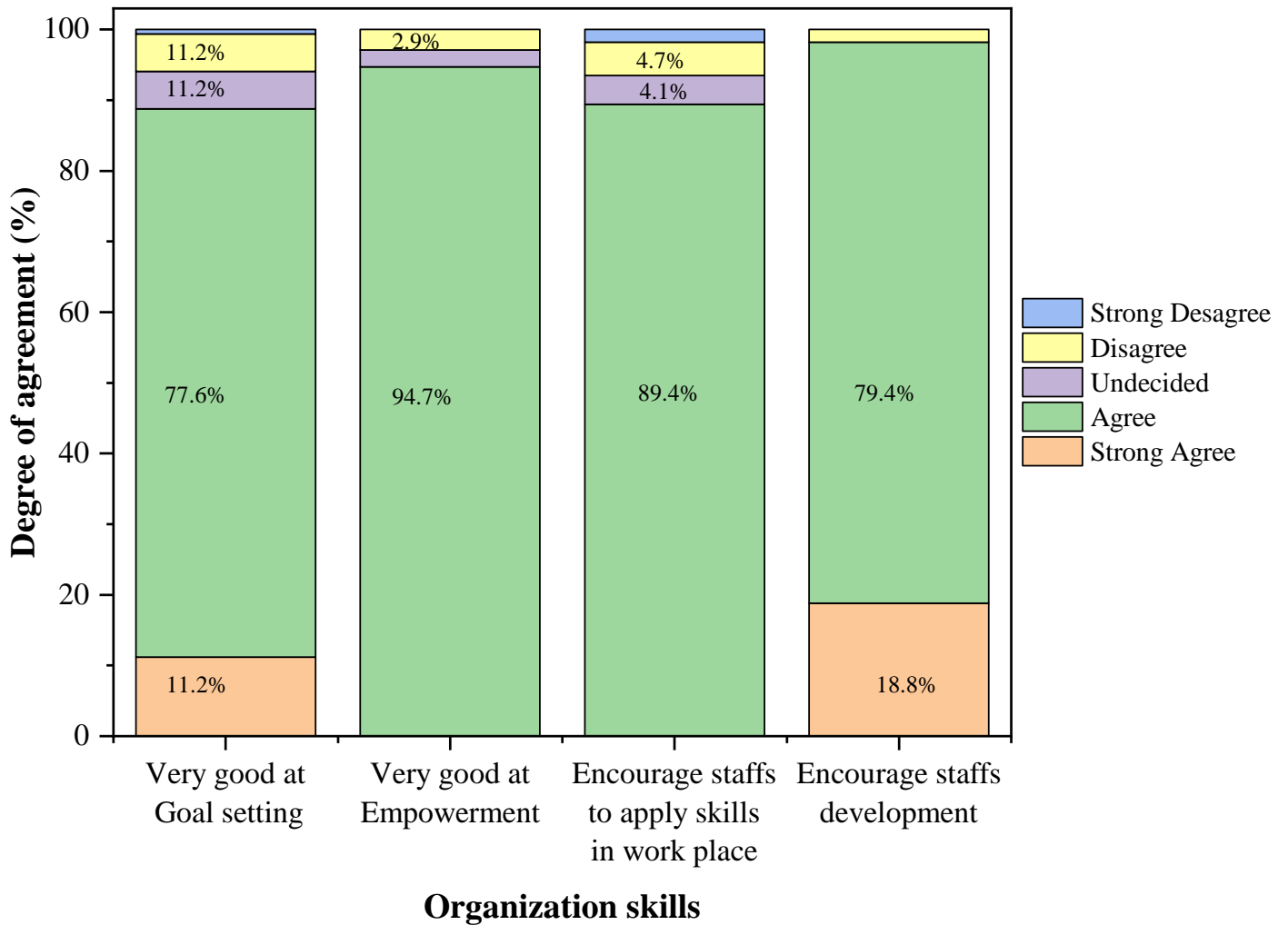


Figure 3 Project manager's organization skills

Risk management skills

Figure 4 illustrates the degree of agreement among respondents on project managers' proficiency in essential risk management skills, specifically analytical, identifying, assessing, monitoring, and controlling competencies. The results highlight that most respondents either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" that project managers possess these skills, emphasizing their importance in ensuring effective risk management. Analytical and assessing skills stand out, with the highest levels of "Strongly Agree" responses, underscoring their critical role in evaluating and understanding project risks. Monitoring and controlling skills also receive strong agreement, reflecting confidence in project managers' ability to maintain oversight and implement corrective measures during the project lifecycle. However, a small but notable proportion of respondents remains "Undecided" regarding identifying skills, potentially indicating a gap in training or emphasis on early-stage risk identification. Minimal "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" responses across all skills suggest an overall positive perception of project managers' capabilities in risk management. These findings align with previous studies emphasizing the need for comprehensive risk management frameworks and skills development (Aven, 2016).

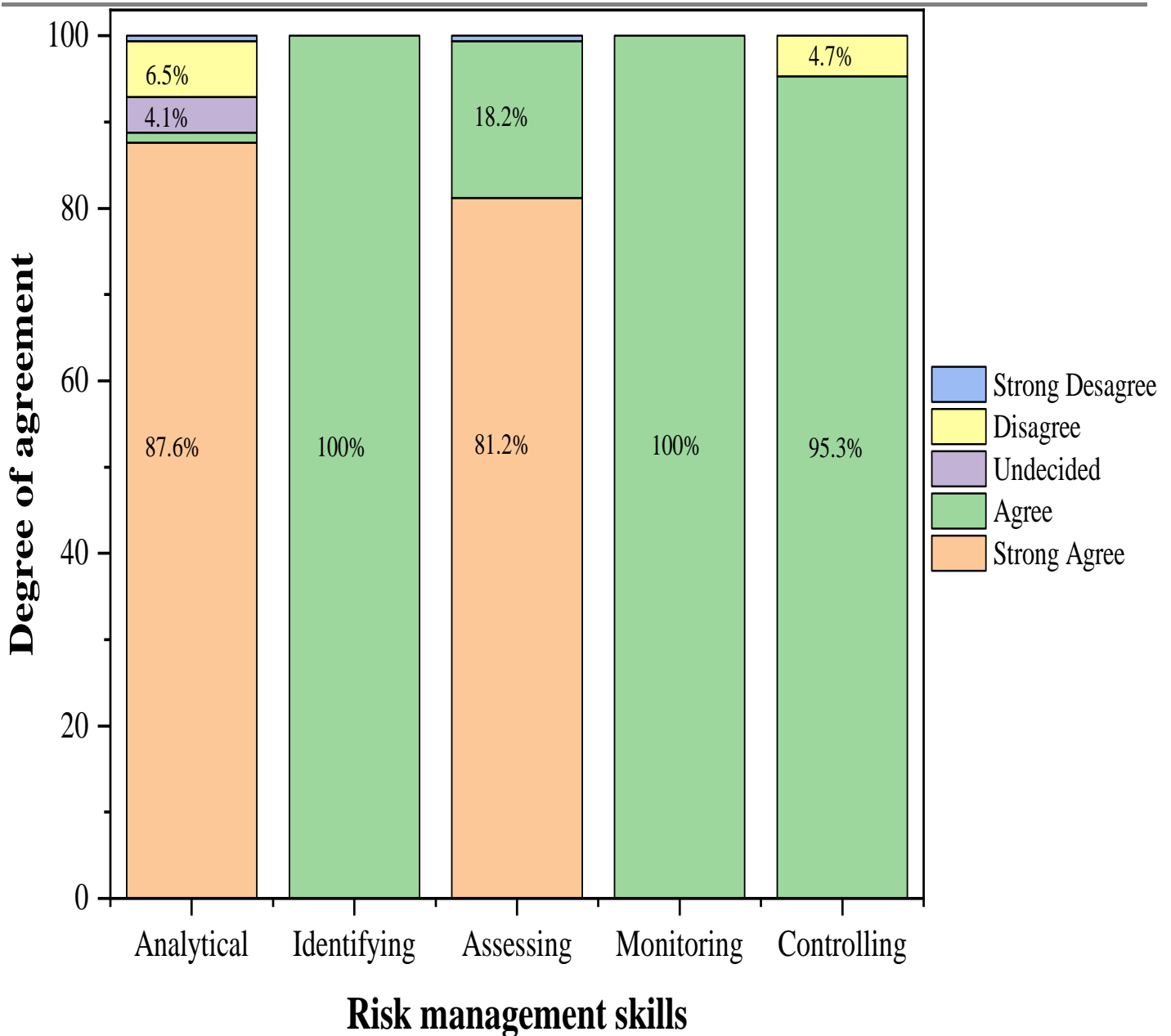


Figure 4 Project manager's risk management skills

Interpersonal Skills.

Interpersonal skills are critical for project managers, enabling them to plan, organize, and execute projects effectively while maintaining positive relationships with their teams. Figure 5 highlights key aspects of interpersonal skills, emphasizing their importance and the degree to which project managers exhibit proficiency. Notably, 87.6% of respondents strongly agree or agree that they are "very good at creating a daily plan," demonstrating high competence in organizational planning. However, "timeboxing" appears less widespread, with only 37.1% strongly agreeing and 43.5% agreeing, leaving a significant portion either undecided or expressing disagreement. This suggests that while time management is valuable, adopting specific techniques like timeboxing may still require further promotion or training. Interestingly, all respondents unanimously agree on the ability to "block out distractions," reflecting a universal acknowledgment of focus and attention management as essential skills for effective project leadership. The distribution of agreement levels across these categories underscores a gap in adopting structured time management techniques compared to broader planning and focus skills. These findings suggest that while project managers are confident in their planning and focus abilities, targeted training in advanced time management methodologies, such as timeboxing, could enhance their interpersonal skills. Encouraging the adoption of these techniques through workshops or mentorship programs may empower project managers to optimize their performance and team collaboration further.

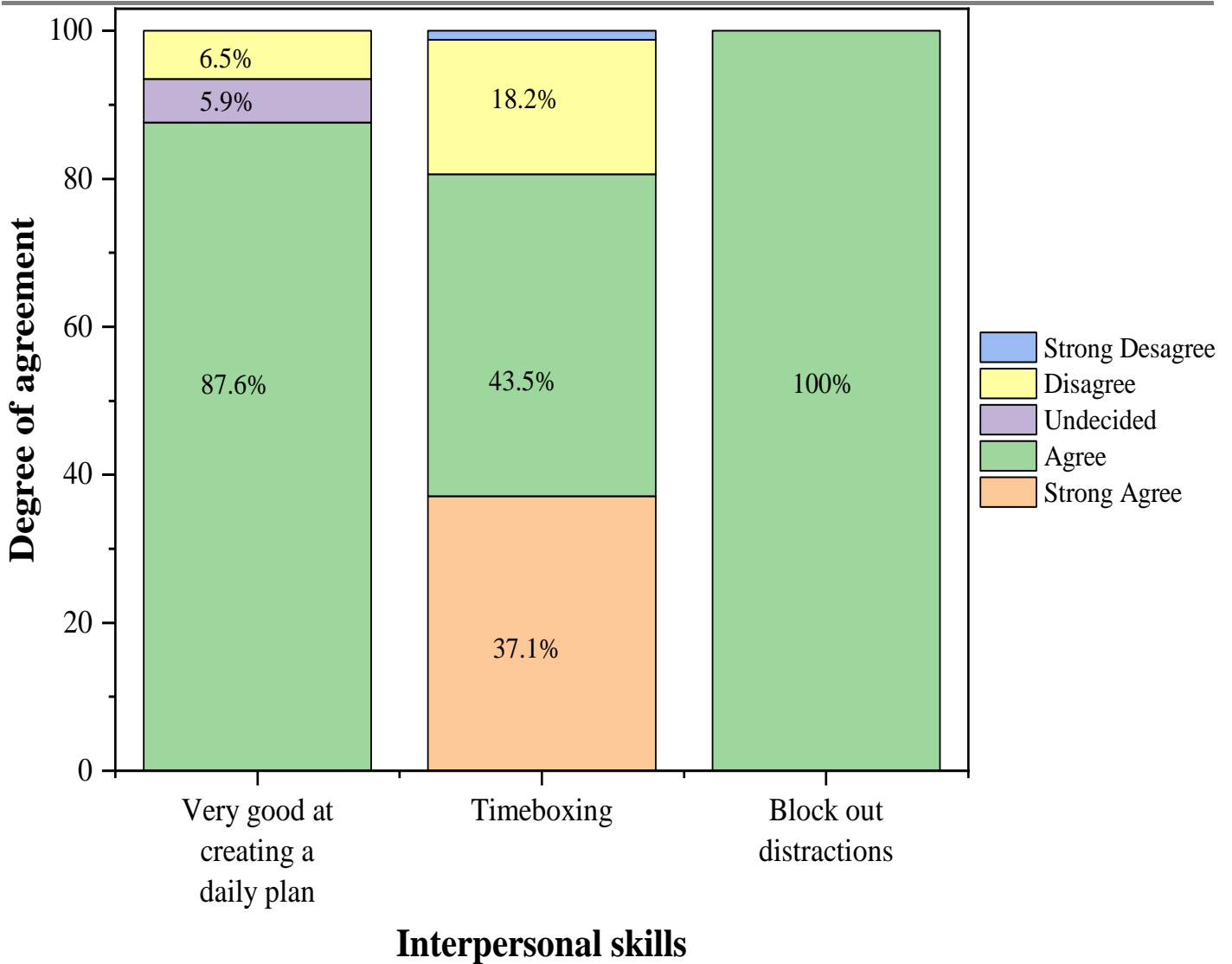


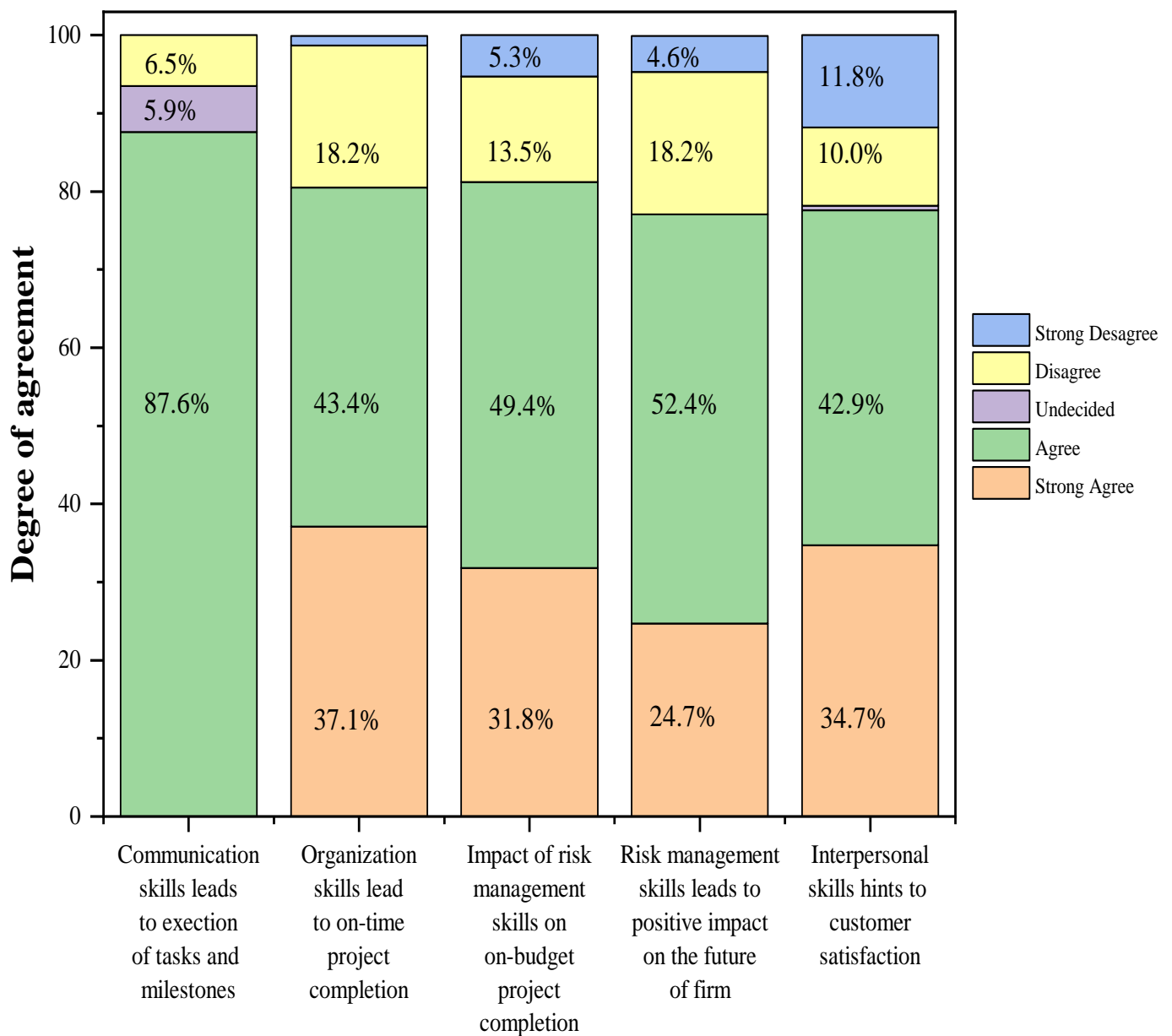
Figure 5 Interpersonal skills for project managers

Effect of project management skills on project success

Figure 6 and Table 3 collectively illustrate the intricate interplay between various project management skills and their impact on project success. From Figure 6, communication skills stand out as the most critical, with 87.6% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that they drive the execution of tasks and milestones. This finding is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the role of communication in aligning team efforts and mitigating misunderstandings (Zulch, 2014). Organizational skills follow, with 43.4% agreeing and 37.1% strongly agreeing that they enable on-time project completion, highlighting their significance in ensuring structured workflows and time management (Ayyaz et al., 2021). Risk management skills show a nuanced perception, as 49.4% agree and 31.8% strongly agree that these skills support on-budget project completion. However, only 24.7% strongly agree that risk management positively impacts the firm's future, suggesting that its influence is often limited to short-term project outcomes rather than long-term organizational benefits. Interpersonal skills exhibit mixed responses, with 42.9% agreeing and 34.7% strongly agreeing that they enhance customer satisfaction. Nonetheless, the combined neutrality and disagreement levels (22.8%) imply that the perceived importance of interpersonal skills may vary depending on the project scope or client interaction needs. This underscores the interplay of technical, managerial, and interpersonal skills in achieving comprehensive project success.

Table 3 further confirms this interplay through correlation analysis, demonstrating strong positive relationships among the skills and project success factors. For example, project management skills are highly correlated with communication skills (0.985), organizational skills (0.912), and interpersonal skills (0.927), emphasizing their

central role in integrating and enhancing other skills. Similarly, communication skills exhibit strong correlations with organizational skills (0.934) and interpersonal skills (0.945) and moderate correlations with risk management skills (0.758), suggesting their foundational role in ensuring effective collaboration and project success. Organizational skills, with strong correlations to project management (0.912) and communication (0.934), highlight their role in structured execution, while their moderate correlation with risk management (0.810) indicates their adaptability to mitigate uncertainties. Risk management skills show moderate correlations with other skills and project success factors, confirming their role in complementing other capabilities to ensure resilience against uncertainties. Interpersonal skills, with strong correlations to communication (0.945) and organizational skills (0.902), underscore their contribution to stakeholder engagement and satisfaction. Communication and organizational skills form the backbone of effective project execution, while risk management and interpersonal skills provide context-dependent enhancements to project outcomes. These insights suggest that each skill is amplified by its interplay with others, reinforcing the need for a balanced and integrated skill set to achieve project success.



Succes based on various skills

Figure 6 The perceptions of respondents regarding different skills and their impact on project success

Table 3 Pearson Correlation Analysis various project management skills and their impact on project success

	Project management	Communication	Organization	Risk management	Time management	Project success	Task execution and milestones	On-time project completion	On-budget project completion	Positive impact on the future of firm
Project management	1	0.985**	0.912**	0.734**	0.927**	0.843**	0.420**	0.260**	-0.106	0.166*
Communication		1	0.934**	0.758**	0.945**	0.858**	0.444**	0.272**	-0.102	0.197*
Organization			1	0.810**	0.902**	0.817**	0.490**	0.296**	-0.124**	0.213**
Risk management				1	0.706**	0.654**	0.483**	0.359**	-0.115	0.283**
Time management					1	0.908**	0.385**	0.274**	-0.003	0.159*
Project success						1	0.363**	0.257**	-0.008	0.167*
Task execution and milestones							1	0.409**	-0.127	0.40
On-time project completion								1	0.346**	0.152*
On-budget project completion									1	0.189*
Positive impact on the future of firm										1

Adjusted R^2 is a modification of R^2 that accounts for the number of independent variables included in the regression model, making it exceptionally reliable when dealing with multiple predictors. As shown in Table 4, the Adjusted R^2 value for the model is 0.820, which indicates that approximately 82% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained by the model's independent variable(s). This high value underscores the strong explanatory power of the model. Additionally, the standard error of the estimate, as reported in Table 4, is 7.913. This statistic reflects the average deviation of observed values from the regression line and serves as a measure of prediction accuracy, with smaller values signifying a better fit. Together, these outputs suggest that the independent variables in Model 1 have a strong positive relationship with the dependent variable, contributing significantly to the explanation of variance. The high Adjusted R^2 and low standard error of the estimate, as evidenced in Table 2, confirm that the model has a robust fit and strong predictive capabilities, further validating the effectiveness of the regression model in this context.

Table 4 Regression Analysis

Model	R	R-square	Adjusted R-square	Standard Error
1	0.908	0.825	0.820	7.913

a. Predictors: (Constant), Interpersonal Skills, Risk Management Skills, Project management skills, Organization skills, Communication skills

b. Dependent Variable: Project success

As shown in Table 5, the ANOVA results confirm the significance of the regression model in predicting the dependent variable, Project Success, based on the independent variables (Interpersonal Skills, Risk Management Skills, Project Management Skills, Organization Skills, and Communication Skills). The regression sums of squares, 48368.580, represents the variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. With 5 degrees of freedom (df), the mean square value is 9673.716, reflecting the average variance explained by each predictor. The F-statistic, 154.484, indicates a strong relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable. The associated p-value (Sig.) is .000, confirming that the model is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). These results highlight that the independent variables significantly contribute to explaining the variance in Project Success, validating the model's predictive strength.

Table 5 ANOVAa

Model 1	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	48368.580	5	9673.716	154.484	.000 ^b
Residual	10269.631	164	62.620		
Total	58638.212	169			

a Dependent Variable: Project Success

b Predictors: (constant), interpersonal skills, risk management skills, project management skills, organization skills, communication skills.

From Table 6 and the previous discussions, the regression analysis suggests that Interpersonal Skills have the strongest positive effect on Project Success, followed by Project Management Skills, Communication Skills, Organization Skills, and Risk Management Skills. However, as shown in Table 3, none of the coefficients are statistically significant, with all p-values exceeding 0.05. This indicates that the relationships between these predictors and Project Success lack statistical reliability. While earlier findings, such as those in Table 5 (ANOVA) and Table 3 (Correlation), highlighted strong correlations and significant variance explained by these skills (e.g., Adjusted $R^2 = 0.820$), the lack of significance in the coefficients may point to multicollinearity among the predictors or insufficient sample size to detect these effects. It also suggests that while these variables conceptually contribute to project outcomes, their independent effects may not be distinct enough to achieve statistical significance in this model. This finding underscores the complexity of modeling Project Success and the need for additional refinement of the model, possibly through incorporating interaction terms, reducing multicollinearity, or exploring non-linear relationships as well as machine learning. Despite this limitation, the alignment between correlation patterns in Table 3 and the coefficients in Table 6 suggests that these skills collectively hold conceptual importance in driving Project Success, even if the current model struggles to isolate their contributions.

Table 6 Coefficients

Model1	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
Constant	17.477	3.150		5.548	0.000
Project management skills	0.046	0.146	0.060	0.313	0.755
Communication skills	-0.047	0.192	-0.058	-0.245	0.807
Organization skills	-0.041	0.091	-0.048	-0.458	0.648
Risk Management Skills	-0.046	0.060	-0.043	-0.764	0.446
Interpersonal Skills	0.857	0.095	0.920	8.992	0.000

The findings highlight the importance of communication, organizational, risk management, and interpersonal skills in project success. Effective communication improves coordination, goal alignment, and problem resolution, while organizational skills ensure efficient task prioritization and resource use, leading to timely and budget-compliant outcomes. Risk management minimizes delays and overruns through proactive mitigation, and

interpersonal skills foster collaboration, stakeholder trust, and positive team dynamics. Observations confirm that projects with strong management skills achieve milestones effectively, while their absence leads to delays and poor outcomes. These skills are essential for optimizing project success, especially in resource-limited contexts such as Rwanda's USAID Huguka Dukore Akazi Kanoze Project.

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Conclusion

The study highlights the critical role of project management skills, including communication, organizational, risk management, and interpersonal in achieving project success within development contexts, particularly the USAID Huguka Dukore Akazi Kanoze Project in Rwanda. Communication skills were identified as essential for aligning teams, ensuring precise task execution, and engaging stakeholders effectively. Organizational skills contributed significantly to timely and structured project completion, while risk management skills minimized potential delays and budget overruns. Interpersonal skills fostered teamwork, trust, and collaboration, which are essential for project cohesion and stakeholder satisfaction. Collectively, these skills underscore the importance of a balanced and integrated approach to project management for optimizing outcomes, especially in resource-constrained environments.

Recommendations

To enhance project outcomes, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Enhanced Training Programs:** Regular and targeted training in project management skills, particularly communication and risk management, should be institutionalized to address gaps and foster continuous improvement.
2. **Leadership Development:** Greater emphasis on empowering leaders with strategic and adaptive communication strategies to improve team alignment and stakeholder engagement.
3. **Structured Risk Mitigation Plans:** Develop comprehensive frameworks for risk assessment and monitoring tailored to the unique challenges of development projects.
4. **Interpersonal Skill Workshops:** Implementation of workshops focused on fostering collaboration and inclusivity to enhance team cohesion and performance.
5. **Integration of Best Practices:** Incorporating best practices from successful projects into future initiatives to institutionalize learning and improve project sustainability.

Areas for Further Research

Future research could explore the long-term impact of project management skills on project sustainability and organizational growth through longitudinal studies, providing a deeper understanding of their enduring influence. Comparative analyses between development projects in Rwanda and other resource-constrained settings would offer valuable insights into how contextual factors shape project success, enabling the identification of best practices across diverse environments. Additionally, investigating the role of digital tools and technologies in enhancing project management skills and outcomes could reveal innovative approaches to improving efficiency and effectiveness in development contexts. Finally, exploring the impact of gender-sensitive approaches in project management could highlight their influence on success metrics, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity and equity in achieving sustainable outcomes. These recommendations and areas for further research aim to refine the understanding and application of project management skills in fostering effective development initiatives.

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