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## **The Synergetic Role of Project Effective Communication and Trust in Project Success**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the impact of effective communication and trust on project success within the construction industry of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Using a cross-sectional survey research design, data were collected from a sample of 218 respondents involved in construction projects. Regression analysis conducted using SPSS revealed that both effective project communication and trust have significant and positive effects on project success. The results suggest that fostering open communication and building trust among project stakeholders can substantially enhance project outcomes. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence of the synergistic effects of communication and trust on project success, emphasizing their importance in project management practices within the construction sector. This study offers actionable insights for project managers, highlighting the need to integrate communication and trust-building strategies into project management frameworks for improved outcomes.

Keywords: Project Communication; Trust; Project Success; Construction Projects

### **Background and Introduction**

A project is a temporary endeavor undertaken to meet clearly-articulated objectives and is briefly explained as a temporary organization that works with clearly stated objectives (Project Management Institute, 2013). Project management is determined by factors like time, budget and result, where successful performance depends on achieving these parameters (Avots, 1969; Atkinson, 1999). Due to the dynamism, projects involve handling of many tasks at once, hence key skills as leadership, teamwork, communication and



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coordination should be considered paramount in the success of projects (Mohammed and Alipour, 2014; Khalil et al., 2023; Siddiquei, Fisher & Hrivnak, 2018; Xue, et al., 2020).

Among these factors communication and trust are critical components of project success. It is evident that effective communication runs throughout the project management process from planning to implementation. Studies prove that communication directly influences the quality of a project in aspects like decision making, management of stakeholders, and risk, (Aziz, 2022). As in many collaborative environments, trust enables people to be open and committed to goals and responsibilities shared collaboratively. Literature review on trust have also outlined the beneficial impact of trust on the affiliated team and overall success in a typical and virtual project setting respectively (Meng, 2015, Fareed et al., 2022). However, both communication and trust are extensively researched while they do not get the consistent attention in the management of projects as they should. This omission has pushed organizations into experiencing persistent difficulties in attaining the goals of the projects especially when the projects are complex – where they involve risky relations, functional, or geography expansion.

Previous literature has attempted to explain the impact of both communication and trust separately, but little is known about the way they interact and how their interaction affects project success. Though works by Cheung et al. (2013) show ways trust improves communication outcomes, it is unclear how these factors relation when working under a project environment with different conditions. However, a significant amount of the research has confined their studies to particular industries or contexts, thus restricting cross-study comparisons. For example, there is evidence that trust has a moderating effect on information effects and helps enhance inter-project organization relationships in organizational settings (Meng, 2015), but it is not clear in what ways and to what extent these factors may work in other environments such as project work settings. Further, while scholars call attention to the notion of formalized communication, the specifics of when and how it is effectively applied within organizations remain documented (Muszyńska, 2016). Overcoming these gaps calls for development of a more synergistic perspective in which the interdependent roles of communication and trust are understood in the context of various project environments.

In the context of project success, communication can be referred to as the mechanism or system through which information is created, disseminated, received and responded or reacted to by individuals. This includes oral, written, formal, and informal communication through words and gestures, and even through electronic means. On the other hand, trust means confidence in the ability, efficiency and honesty of members or other stakeholders in a given team. Altogether, these variables define relational and operational contexts of project management. Communication makes it possible to coordinate responsibilities and expectations for the project while trust encourages people to be comfortable in putting their ideas forward and also innovating. For instance, in virtual project teams, T&C practices, which are clear and revealed, help establish and maintain trust so that issues of physical and cultural distance can be overcome (Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999; Mumbi & McGill, 2007). Such interdependencies show that it is



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possible to move away from viewing communication and trust as separate factors that shape project success but rather as intertwined related aspects.

Consequently, this study aims at filling the aforementioned gaps and yielding a fresh insight into the role of communication as well as developing trust for project success. This paper seeks to contribute to the current body of knowledge by carrying out meta-analysis and empirical tests of existing theories to generate recommendations that would help practitioners and policymakers. In particular, it outlines the factors which are communication and trust and their relation with the outcomes of the project considering the major purposes of recognizing the effective practices which can be implemented in various spheres of business and kinds of projects. Furthermore, the findings stress the role of human factors in project management methodologies, which means closing the gap between the practice and research. Filling these gaps the objectives of this study are:

1. To investigate the impact of project effective communication on project success.
2. To evaluate the impact of trust on project success.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Project Success**

Project success is defined by the Project Management Institute (PMI) as managing competing demands for project quality, scope, time, and money while also resolving the concerns and expectations of project stakeholders (PMI, 2008, p. 9). Ika and Pinto (2022) suggested in his research that time, cost, and quality were called as the iron triangle and they were dominate for many years as the criteria of success of projects. End-user satisfaction, stakeholder satisfaction, project personnel satisfaction, organizational strategic objectives, and business success are just a few examples. The studies of Ika (2015) and Khang and Moe, (2008) were considered as important research in the field of project management to present the iron triangle in the literature. Relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability are among the criteria used by the authors. The degree to which the project is relevant to the priorities of the target group, beneficiary, and funder is referred to as relevance. Efficiency refers to a project's ability to fulfil its goals by utilizing the least expensive resources available. The efficacy of a project is determined by how successfully it achieves its goals, whereas impact refers to the good and bad effects that the project has caused, whether directly or indirectly, and whether planned or unforeseen. The term "sustainability" refers to the chance that the benefits of the project will continue even if donor funding is no longer available.

Lamprou & Vagiona (2018) Project completion is heavily based on the utilization of time restrictions, reasonable budgeting, and efficient project management. According to (Fernando, Walters, Ismail, Seo, & Kaimasu, 2018; Wadood, Khan and Shah, 2024), a project is considered productive only if it meets the established project requirements. Project success is described by the Project Management Institute (PMI) as meeting the established demands of project scope, quality, cost, and time while also addressing the various concerns and expectations of project stakeholders (PMI, 2008, p.9). Various academics defined project success in different ways. However, Atkinson's (2009) Iron Triangle (cost, time, quality) is the most often discussed and has been employed



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as a metric for project success and performance. According to Ika (2015), the Iron Triangle monopolized project success criteria in the early 1980s, but later other success criteria were introduced. Client satisfaction, stakeholder benefits, advantages to the company and project team members, organizational strategic objectives, and business success are all part of this. According to (Wu et al., 2017), project-based businesses use three primary factors for project success: impact on clients, organizational benefit, and satisfying design goals. However, meeting project goals on schedule, on budget, and with good quality does not always imply that the project is a success (Turner, 2014).

### **Project Communication**

Since managing every component of the project entails communicating inside the project team or with external stakeholders, communication has an impact on most project activities and areas. As a result, communication management is regarded as one of the most critical and challenging project management skills to master. It is influenced by project stakeholders' characteristics, the project environment, project communication structure, communication features, as well as physical and psychological barriers (Damasiotis, Fitsilis and O'Kane, 2012). According to research, there is a direct link between communication and project outcomes, which is influenced by the project's communication environment design (Phillips, 2014). The capacity to communicate and network in projects is often regarded as the lifeblood of project management leadership (Burke, Barron 2014), and understanding the potential of effective communication is a prerequisite for corporate success (Charles, 2009).

As a result, it appears that it is critical to continue to encourage effective communication management practices and to seek out innovative approaches to assist project managers and team members in better implementing communication and documentation processes in their projects. Kerzner (Kerzner, 2013), Schwalbe (Schwalbe, 2013), and Meredith and Mantel (Meredith and Mantel, 2013) have all detailed descriptions of how to manage a project successfully (Meredith, Mantel, 2011). Several methodologies declared communication management as one of the key knowledge areas as being critical to project success (among others (Sudhakar, 2012), in particular IT projects (Holzmann and Panizel 2013), especially when in dispersed team members it occurs (Han and Jung, 2014; Niinimä, 2014). It's worth noting, however, that communication has an impact on other aspects of project management, such as project scope, risk, and procurement. Scope management is one of the most challenging duties in a project, as it includes gathering and analyzing requirements, and it is impossible to complete this task without excellent communication. Additionally, efficient communication management is necessary for managing scope adjustments in later phases of project implementation. Identifying, assessing, responding to, and monitoring project hazards are all part of project risk management. Procurement management, which involves agreements and discussions with external contractors, necessitates the use of proper communication methods and tools, as well as intensive and well-planned communication.

Effective communication has an impact on a range of aspects of a business and can help it achieve greater success (Steingrimsdottir, 2011). Internal



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communication that is effective can help to foster a positive environment of motivation, trust, involvement, and open sharing of views and ideas (Moyer, 2011). Miscommunication can result from a lack of good communication, which can wreak havoc on an organization's ability to work smoothly. The impact of communication management on project success is gaining popularity all around the world. A Malaysian study recommends a greater understanding and practice of excellent communication in the construction industry (Perumal, 2011). The Dutch construction industry places a strong emphasis on the factors that influence communication in building projects, with a particular emphasis on communication challenges (Hoezen, 2012).

### **Association between Project Effective Communication and Project Success**

It has been known over the past years that the performance of a project is dependent on a variety of factors. Throughout the project, these different variables will contribute and impact performance, but the frequency of project success is still unknown (Joslin & Mu'ller, 2016). There are various ways of measuring a project's progress with respect to different individuals. In order to succeed in a project, project management literature focuses on the threefold constraints that are expense, time and schedule. As mentioned, the success of a project depends on an enormous number of factors which can influence the performance of the project differently and also have different impacts on the success of the project. All variables are not equally significant because of the diversity of effect and impact (Todorovi'c, et al., 2015).

The success of the project is framed by the need and expectation requirements, while satisfaction also plays a vital role. Not only is project performance calculated on the scale of time, expense and timeline, but it is now surrounded by an overwhelming number of different variables that will be the justification or cause of a project's success. Another significant factor for a good project is the consistency of the work. Success is measured by the degree of productivity or, in other words, the degree of achieving the goals along with the fact of how those goals are to be achieved (Baccarini, 1999). The progress of a project is evaluated by project goals. When it achieves its goals, a project is successful. Whereas, success factors are those factors that have had an effect on the success of a project directly or indirectly (Davies, 2002).

Project communication enables the project team to convey information verbally and nonverbally, as well as submit and receive information from the project team in a clear and concise manner. As a result, when project team members communicate knowledge through effective communication, the project team's operations and functions improve, as does team efficiency (Sullivan & Gee, 2007). Communication regularity has previously been discovered to increase knowledge sharing among team members, improve their efficiency, and provide an open forum for interacting more, exchanging additional problem-related information, and seeking solutions to such issues as the relationship between communication and progress (Patrashkova et al., 2003).

Communication ensures understanding between project team members that leads to timely and successful achievement of project goals by also increasing project efficiency that ultimately leads to project success (Henderson, Stackman



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& Lindekilde, 2016). Regular communication can improve knowledge sharing between team members of the team from which team members can use further in-training to maximize team efficiency (Allen, 1970). The probability of success will increase through communication and trust between parties (Ragatz, Handfield, & Scannell, 1997). This study would contribute to the existing literature by analyzing the effects of project communication on project success in construction projects in Pakistan. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: project effective Communication is positively linked with project success.

### **Relationship between Trust and Project Success**

A project is said to be effective by applying appropriate strategies specific to an organization's product or service while achieving its set objectives or targets. Whereas, by achieving set targets or objectives within the expense, the management team is efficient and the end result is up to the desired level (Muller & Turner, 2010). The effective management of the project would be effective while human resource practices play a critical role in project performance.

Trust has been identified as a key factor in project performance (Doloi, H., 2009). The Trust and coordination between stakeholders will improve cooperation, which increases the likelihood of project success (Diallo and Tuillier, 2005). According to Cheung et al. trust has relationships that influence communication and, as a result, project success and stakeholder interests. Trust is still critical for megaproject success, and it can help promote megaproject alliance collaboration and boost megaproject performance (Veenswijk, Marrewijk, and Boersma, 2010). One of the key factors leading to megaproject inefficiency is a lack of confidence; mutual trust and cooperation could aid megaproject success in terms of results and parties' satisfaction (Veenswijk, Marrewijk, and Boersma, 2010). Contractor and subcontractor confidence contribute to significant time and cost savings, resulting in improved project efficiency (Cheung, Yiu, and Lam, 2013). Megaproject success can be aided by interrelationships founded on mutual confidence.

Trust in the acts and words of others is represented as assurance. Trust means optimistic assumptions regarding other parties' intentions and intensions. Trust means acquisitions of likelihood as well as people who consent to face risk and uncertainty (Jiang & Probst, 2016). Trust can be characterized as the state that acknowledges responsibility, and through trust also emerges positive expectations. In addition, level of trust will increase the degree of project success by providing necessary resources, accurate information, and expertise at the right time, furthermore, in return the team members of the project are benefited with this trust level and their reliability is also helpful in minimizing the risk factors (Ning, 2017). We hypothesized, therefore:

H2: Trust is positively related to project success.

### **Theoretical Framework**

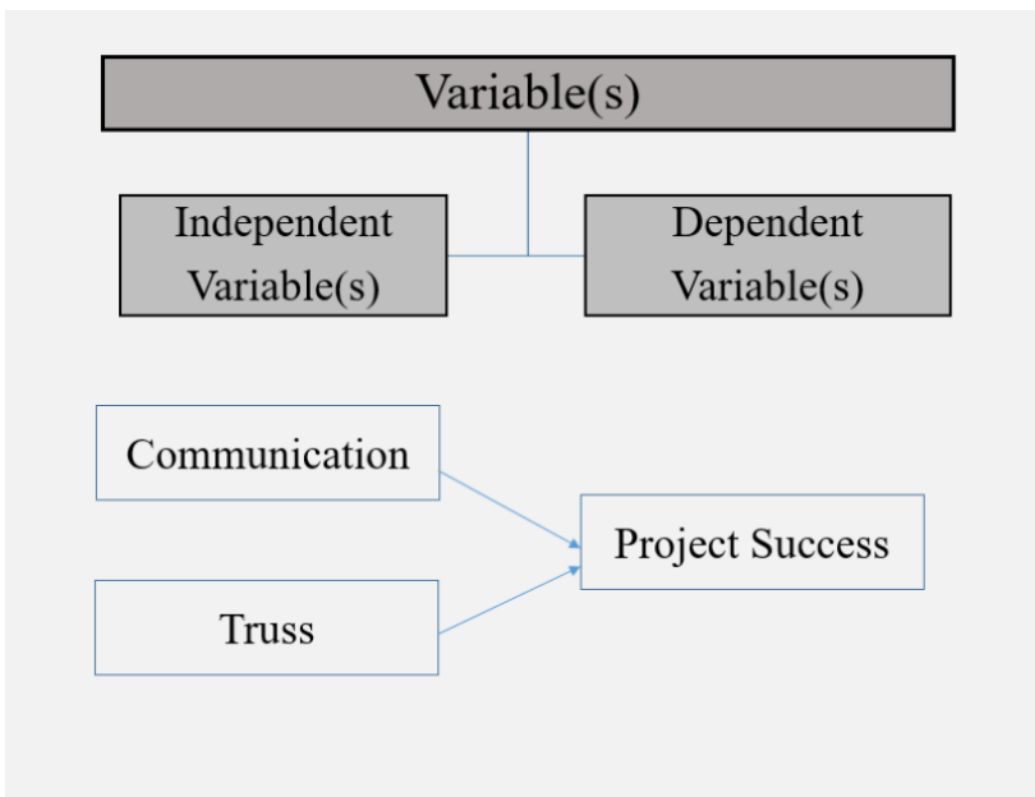


Figure 2.1 Theoretical Framework

## Research methodology

### Population and Sample

The population consists of managers, project managers and site supervisors working in various building sectors for this study. The research population comprises the private and public sectors of construction firms working in Pakistan. Therefore, data will be collected from various construction industries for this study.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

Due to some confines for the time being and asset scarcity, it is usually difficult to obtain information from the entire population. Sampling is the device usually used for data collection. For this, a specific assembly of individuals who are the true representatives of the entire population is chosen. Construction industries in Pakistan have been based on for the present report. For data collection, 300 managers from various construction industries will be approached. Convenience sampling technique is the technique used to gather data.

### Instrumentation

The items included in the questionnaire were: Project Communication and Trust (Independent Variable), Project Success (The Dependent Variable). All items will be used for the measurement scale of five points which included 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree).

To measure communication, the author will use five items questionnaire adopted



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from (Roberts, Cheney, Sweeney and Hightower, 2004). For measuring trust as the second independent variable, the six items questionnaire will be adopted from Podsakoff et al., (1990). Then for project success measurement there will be 14 items questionnaire adopted from (Aga and Vallejo 2016).

### Statistical Tools

In this study, various tools of statistics were applied in order to find out the results. SPSS 23 version was utilized for this purpose. Linear regression analysis was used in this research in which the dependence of project success was investigated on both trust and effective communication. Furthermore, correlational analysis was also conducted in this study.

### Results

#### Response Rate

For data collection, survey method was used. In survey method, questionnaire which was pre-structured and all questions of the questionnaire were adopted from the previous literature was utilized to collect data from the targeted respondents. The respondents were given questionnaire. Total number of questionnaires were 300 and they were requested to fill them and return them as soon as possible. 219 refined questionnaires were complete in all respect and it makes 73% of the total questionnaires as a response rate. The detail of demographic characteristics are given below:

Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	219	100.0
<b>Age</b>	20–30	81	37.0
	31–40	119	54.3
	41–50	8	3.7
	51 and above	11	5.0
<b>Education</b>	Undergraduate	30	13.7
	Graduate	115	52.5
	Master	74	33.8
<b>Experience</b>	Less than 1 year	60	27.4
	1 to 5 years	117	53.4
	6 to 10 years	42	19.2

### Reliability Statistics

The purpose of the reliability analysis is to ensure that the questionnaire used for data collection in a research was reliable. The table below 4.5 indicates the Cronbach's alpha test which is conducted for the calculating reliability of the questionnaire. The value of Cronbach's alpha test is 0.782; 0.738; 0.898 respectively for communication, trust and for project success which is considered as excellent for collecting data because the value is in the threshold of acceptance.





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Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Variables	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Project Communication	05	0.782
Project Trust	06	0.738
Project Success	14	0.898

**Regression Analysis**

Regression analysis shows the dependence of dependent variable which is project success (PS) in this research on independent variable that are trust and project communication (PC). In the below table 4.3 the r square value is 0.563 meaning that 56% change is explained in project success due to the project communication and trust. It also shows that project success goes in parallel to the change occurs in project communication and trust.

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.750 <sup>a</sup>	.563	.558	.02429

a. Predictors: (Constant), Trust, PC

Table 4 is about the fitness of the model. It means that the f value is greater which is 138.865 which is also significant because the p value is less than 0.05 meaning that the model is good fitted.

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.164	2	.082	138.865	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	.127	216	.001		
	Total	.291	218			

a. Dependent Variable: PS

b. Predictors: (Constant), Trust, PC

Table 4.7 ANOVA Model

The coefficients of regression is represented in table 4.5 given below. It shows that the beta value for project communication is 0.436 which is also significant at 0.000 level meaning that a single unit change in project communication will bring 43% change in project success. On the other hand, the beta value for trust is 0.482 and it is significant as well at 0.000 level of significance meaning that one unit change occurs in trust will bring 48% change in project success. So it can be concluded that both trust and project communication are important factors for the managers to be considered from start till end of the project activities in order to make the project successful.



## Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		
		Coefficients	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.040	.014		2.803	.006
	PC	.147	.016	.436	9.119	.000
	Trust	.167	.017	.482	10.088	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PS

Table 4.5 Coefficients of Regression

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Conclusions

The primary purpose of this research was to find out whether project communication, trust and project success all are associated with one another or not in Pakistan. The study was conducted in construction sector projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The findings of this study revealed that project communication has a favorable and significant impact on success of project. This signifies that the project's success is increased as a result of communication. Both factors have a positive and strong relationship. Furthermore, H1 is accepted as a result of this. This demonstrates that project communication is closely linked to project success. The findings also revealed that the project's success is closely linked to trust. Both project communication and trust are required for project success in Pakistan's construction business, demonstrating that H2 is also accepted and proven to have a favorable and strong relationship with project success.

Hypothesis 1: Communication is positively linked with Project Success

Project communication is positively related to project success, according to Hypothesis 1. This assertion was backed up by data collecting and analysis. Both the hypothesis and the data collecting outcomes were consistent with the current investigation. The findings reveal that project communication is closely linked to project success. Project success is enhanced by effective communication abilities. The hypothesis's results suggest that has a value of 0.597. This illustrates that a 59 percent change in project communication results in a 59 percent change in project success, indicating that project communication has a significant impact on project success.

In his research, Davis (2017) found that project communication is a significant aspect in assessing and comprehending project success. Communication is critical to the success of any project. Team members cannot operate effectively or generate desired results unless they communicate and understand each other. In order to accomplish the objectives of the projects, it is important for the team members to do hard work and show teamwork in their performance, which is possible through effective communication that link them with each other in order to share ideas. A project team (Ryan & O'Connor, 2013) is meant as the combination of different people to communication with one another and they



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have a common purpose to be achieved. Both success and communication are intertwined. When project communication improves, the project's success improves as well. This assertion is backed up by previous study and statistics. Communication is also considered to be the most critical ingredient for a project's success, according to previous study.

Communication ensures that project team members are on the same page, resulting in the timely and effective completion of project objectives. The performance is enhanced and then project success in the end is accomplished (Henderson, Stackman & Lindekilde, 2016). The purpose of communication is to ensure that all team members share thoughts with one another, they should know each other, perform their duties which are assigned to them and show higher efficiency. Information can move through all levels of the organization with open communication, and accurate and timely information can aid in achieving objectives and ensuring tasks that must be completed in time, resulting in increased performance of team members and success of project.

Hypothesis 2: Trust is positively related to project success

As it has been established that trust is positively related to project communication and project success, trust will also increase the level of synergy in a project group and work done in a harmonized manner to achieve the end goal, while trust also aids in the development of positive relationships among group members and with the project leader, all of which will help to ensure the project's success.

After doing extensive research, it was shown that project communication and project success are intertwined, with trust serving as a mediating factor between the two. Acceptance of hypothesis 2 assumed that trust is an important component that serves as a link between project communication and project success, strengthening their relationship.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The impact of project communication and trust on project success has never been investigated before in construction organizations, thus this research has theoretical implications. Our findings suggest that project communication and trust both contribute to project success. It is possible to attain greater results by communicating. Communication is critical to project success and is seen as such. Through communication, team members can gain a better understanding of one another, which can aid in attaining the firm's goals and objectives, ultimately contributing to project success.

The findings revealed that trust boosts project success. As a result, a favorable and significant association between trust and project success was discovered.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings show that communication is critical in any endeavor. Through communication, trust is built, which contributes to the project's success. This study is useful for project managers, supervisors, and leaders since it is critical for project managers to foster communication and trust among their staff since communication leads to project completion and goal fulfilment.



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Because communication is beneficial, it should be expanded. Meetings should be held to address the difficulties of the workers and to guide them in achieving greater performance. Their difficulties and grudges should be settled as soon as possible so that they can perform better and the project may succeed. Managers must connect staff with one another to ensure that the work flow is not disrupted. Lack of communication can have a negative impact on the project's success and perhaps cause it to fail. It is critical for the manager or work supervisor to keep all of the employees connected in order for them to perform well.

### Future Recommendations

- The future researcher can take longer sample size in order to increase the generalizability of the study.
- It is recommended for future research that the same variables should be tested in other sectors in other countries as well as in Pakistan.
- Another recommendation would be that this study conducted survey or questionnaire method for data collection however interview methods should also be used in order to conduct qualitative research.

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