



**Doctoral School of
Management and
Business
Administration**

THESIS SUMMARY

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**THE IMPACT OF PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES OF PROJECT MANAGERS
WORKING IN ICT SECTOR ON ACHIEVING PROJECT SUCCESS**

PhD thesis

Supervisor:

Dr. Görög Mihály, CSc
professor

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Department of Strategy and Project Management

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1 Relevance of the topic

Projects have always had a huge impact and importance in a life of an organization, since they are the main tools for carrying out different business strategies (Mészáros, 2005), and so are the constructors in the adaptation process to the always changing business conditions (Görög, 2013a). When recognizing the importance of the projects, businesses start to invest a great amount of funds into them. These investments account for one-fifth of the World's GDP (Bredillet, 2007). However when comparing the rate of the successful investments to the outcomes expected, it is clear that they are hardly match. Out all of the project investments that have been initiated, only one-third result in success (Standish Group, 2009), though in some sectors of the economy even lower number of successful projects are to be noticed (Deák, 2001; Kappelman et. al. 2006).

Studies proved that the main causes of the high rate of unsuccessful projects are not the hard, quantitative components (e.g. the availability of certain resources); more like the soft components that are attached to an organization or even to the human factor (Standish Group, 2009). The main causes are:

- the inadequate project scope definition,
- the inappropriate communication and
- the lack of the project leader's leadership competencies.

Taking into account the strategic role of the projects and the sums that are spent on them, is essential for the businesses to achieve project success. Thus, every examination procedure that goal is to put in focus the main causes and their impact on the project success, are aiding to a better understanding of the achieving success. This raises the chance of achieving the project success.

2 Previous researches

The understanding of the project success has greatly been evolving throughout the past 60 years, and with that, the preliminary project management triangle centric (time, cost, quality) approach seemed no longer be adequate. The environmental elements like the organization that initiates a project and the stakeholders are also playing an important role in the life of a project. The researchers also have found that certain projects needed to be managed as integrated parts of the business's strategic objectives (ld. pl. Görög, 2008; Judgev-Müller, 2005).

Almost every single professional literature that is exploring the components of project success is mainly concerned about the input and output sides of the success. The output side focuses on the success criteria, which are those base values based on which project success can be evaluated (Görög, 2013). At the same time, those approaches on the input side are focusing on the critical success factors. Setting and realizing these factors can lead to a higher possibility of project success (it can in extreme cases increase up to 100%) (see. e.g. Görög, 2013a; Fortune – White, 2006).

Based on the professional literature of the output side, one can understand how practical it is to evaluate the projects with the use of a hierarchical model. This model incorporates the following three evaluation criteria (Atkinson, 1999; Baccarini, 1999; Cooke-Davis, 2002; Görög, 2003):

- project triangle (time, cost, quality),
- the satisfaction of the client, and
- the satisfaction of other stakeholders.

Dealing with the approaches on the input side there are many different critical success factors that have a high count, so it is more efficient to group them creating nine distinct one (see at e.g. Bakker – Boonstra - Wortmann, 2010; Fortune - White 2006; Görög 2003; Lindner - Wald 2011; Yang – Huang - Wu 2011; Yu - Kwon, 2011). One of these groups is the project manager's competencies and (leadership) styles.

However, the professional literature of the critical success factors has four serious shortcomings. The first shortcoming is the importance of the critical success factors may vary throughout the delivery of the project and this is not taken into consideration. The second one is not evaluating the interactions amongst the critical success factors. The third inadequacy considers the project success as a homogeneous concept, thus not taking the success criteria into consideration. The last of the inadequacies aims to identify generalized critical factors of success, however this concept could also run into some serious difficulties. (see. e.g. Fortune – White, 2006; Görög, 2008). The number of studies that take either some of the critics or all of them into consideration are quite few, but they do certainly exist (see e.g. Fortune – White, 2006; Westerveld, 2003). Their greatest flaw however that they are not harmonizing the critical factors of success with the success criteria. Even though there are a couple of researches that discuss the harmonization (see e.g. Jha – Iver, 2007), they tend to miss to examine the critical factors of success in their very details.

Referring to the previous fundamentals and literature, two of the most important critical success factors are the competencies and the leadership style of a project leader. Then again, many researches and different studies have dealt with this matter, and all of them come to an agreement, that a project manager has to possess diversified capabilities (see. e.g. Cleland, 1994; Görög, 2013a). With this in mind, it is possible to break them down into three distinct groups, just like (Cleland, 1994):

- Technical capabilities: embody all the professional expertise that are required for managing a project.
- Human capabilities: group of skills that incorporate those capabilities that are required for managing stakeholders.
- Project related capabilities: containing all the expertise belonging to different project managerial tools and techniques.

The third group of competencies can be broken down to knowledge, skill and attitude (Cleland, 1994). Referring to these entities the first is about knowing the qualitative and quantitative tools and techniques, the second group using these tools and techniques and the third is the project manager's project management approach, which usually is highlighted throughout each project.

The literature identified two attitudes (Cleland, 1994; Görög, 2013), whereby one is the project management attitude that is based on the specific project interpretation. The attitude named can also be broken down into three other attitudes. If a project manager considers project as a unique task, then the project management means managing the implementation process of this task. If a project manager considers project as a temporary organization, then the project management means managing the temporary organization. If the project manager considers project as strategic building block, then the project management means delivering the beneficial change. The three different approaches followed at the same time.

Notwithstanding it is still not clear, when mapping the project manager's capabilities, whether the quantitative or the qualitative tools are capable of aiding the realization of project success in terms of certain success criteria (Görög, 2013b). However, it would be necessary to evaluate this topic. This is the same issue when talking about the knowledge and its two factors: the tacit and explicit knowledge (Horváth, 2013). They are lacking their presence in the project management attitude.

Speaking of the project manager's characteristics as a critical factor of success, it is essential to repeat that it not only incorporates the capabilities but the personal characteristics and the leadership style as well. There are however only few studies that examine the personal characteristics, which people can expect from a project manager (see e.g. Dulawicz and Higgs, 2003); though they evaluate them without going into detail, since these studies do not differentiate between the factors of personality and competency. Based on the literature available it is possible to identify six personality characteristics (Görög, 2013), like:

- optimism,
- emotional intelligence,
- team building ability,
- trust building skills,
- motivational ability,
- improvisation.

As for the leadership style, there are a wide variety of professional literature available (e.g. Müller-Turner, 2007; 2010). Although many discuss this topic in their research but less pay enough attention to the effects of the personal characteristics on the leadership style, and to what kind of characteristic implies which leadership style (see e.g. Dulawecz – Higgs, 2003; Müller – Turner, 2010). Moreover, these researches also carry all the errors of the personal characteristics literature, meaning that they tend to mix up competency, capability and the personal characteristics. The impact of the six different personality factors - identified previously - on the leadership style cannot be found in the professional project management literature yet.

3 Research questions and methodology

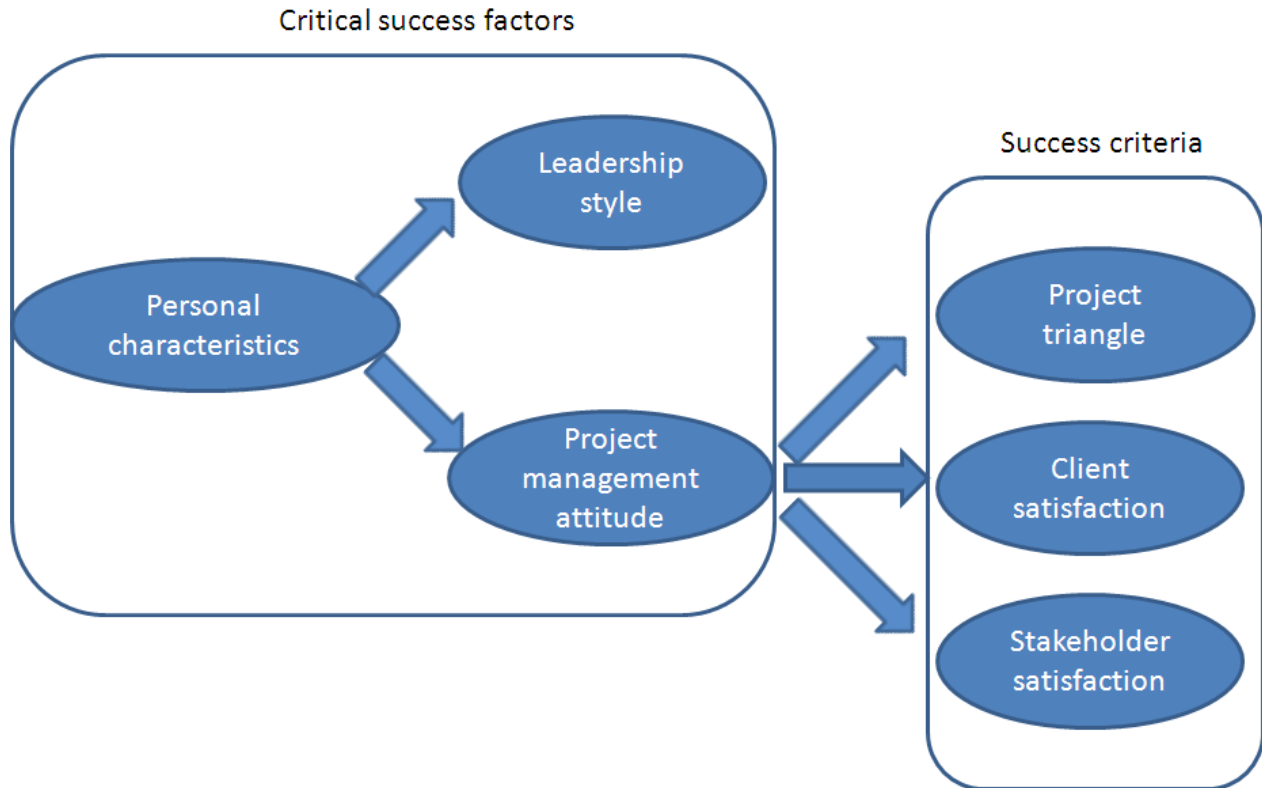
The primary objective of this research was to enable the better understanding of the realization of project success. To achieve the goals that has been set in this study – knowing the boundaries of the professional literature - was essential to demonstrate the relationship between each components of the project manager’s personal characteristics. It was also important to examine the impact that the characteristics have on the project success. This way the study aims to demonstrate the relationship between the project management attitude and the project success expressed in terms of success criteria (based on the hierarchical model). On the other hand, it aims to explain the effects of the project manager’s personal characteristics on the project management approach, and the leadership style. For a better understanding of the project management approach and the project success, it was inevitably essential to evaluate, whether the qualitative or quantitative tools are acting as the primary drive in achieving project success. In addition, it was also important to analyze if the tacit or the explicit knowledge can have a higher impact when discussing project management approach.

3.1 Research questions and the model of research

Based on the previous explanations, I have formulated the following questions of research:

- In what level do the qualitative and quantitative tools of the project management contribute to the three levels of the project success?
- What type of (tacit, explicit) knowledge plays a greater role when talking about the project manager’s project management attitude?
- Does the project management attitude have an impact on the three levels of the project success?
- Do the personal characteristics have a high impact on the project management attitude and the leadership style?

To answer all the questions introduced, the following research model has been created:



When defining this research in such a detailed manner, it is apparent that it takes all the critics on the professional literature about the critical success factors into account. On one hand, the importance of the project manager is not something that changes throughout the project lifecycle. (Görög, 2008; Fortune – White 2006). On the other hand, the project success was not defined as a homogenous entity; instead, it was defined with the use of the hierarchical model. But then again, the research has not set itself the aim to identify general success factors. Talking about the fourth shortcoming, since only one critical success factor is in the focus of the study, there is no need for inspecting the interrelationships amongst the success factors. However, they will be evaluated on a micro level because at the same time we analyze the impact of the personality factors.

3.2 Research hypotheses:

Using the research questions as the fundamentals of this study, the following hypotheses have been defined:

H1: The quantitative project management tools have a higher level of contribution to all the three levels of the project success than the qualitative project management tools.

H2: In the project management attitude the explicit knowledge exists in a higher degree than the tacit knowledge.

H3: The project management attitude has an impact all the three level of project success.

H4: The personal characteristics have an influence on the project management attitude and leadership style.

Throughout the actual research, the exact degree of effect was not taken into consideration but its presence. Furthermore in the event of hypothesis four (H4) the aim was to exhibit the influence of the personality characteristics (or the lack of the influence) but not identifying every single element that has any effect.

3.3 Research methodology

The research method for the current research was created in line with the nature of the research questions and the hypotheses leading to the most efficient sampling procedure that was a qualitative semi-instructed interview in every case. The main pattern consisted of the subsidiaries of the multinational companies in the ICT sector. Considering the multinational aspect, its selection was a result of the downturn of the domestic project management culture. Out of these multinational companies five got selected, which has a leadership position in the sector. Consequently, the research results can only be applied to similar businesses and sectors that bear the same attributes.

The population was the project managers working in the company. 31 were selected among them by random sampling.

Considering the nature of the certain hypotheses and the research questions, four individual groups of questions (each with different topics) have been created for the interviews.

The first set of questions aimed to identify the qualitative and quantitative project management tools and techniques and whether they apply them or not. The question that was intended to filter the interviewees by asking about the qualitative and quantitative tools the project manager uses and applies. Further questions were inquiring about the stakeholders present in a project, and the types of project management tools and techniques (qualitative, quantitative) with he/she can realize the project success expressed in terms of the different levels of the project success (project

triangle, satisfaction of the client, satisfaction of other stakeholders). According to these, the dependent variable was the different levels of the project success, whereas the independent variable was assigned to the qualitative and quantitative managerial tools.

The second group of questions was intended to identify the project manager's project management attitude and the evaluation of the incorporating tacit and explicit knowledge. The project managers were interviewed on their project management attitude, whether or not they use the qualitative and quantitative tools in this manner. Moreover, we asked them if the tools have been refining, improving over the time of use and whether it can be studied or acquired.

The third set of questions classified the impact of the project manager's project management attitude in line with the three distinct success criteria. We asked the project managers whether they believe that the managerial approach can have an effect on the level of the project success, if so, then how would it alter the success. The reason using this last question was to filter the inappropriate answers. Thus, in this case the project management attitude was as the independent variable and the three levels of the project success as the dependent variable.

The fourth array of question consisted the identification of the impact of project manager's characteristics on the project management attitude and the leadership style. Each project manager had to answer which factors influenced the development of his/her project management attitude and leadership style. The project leaders were expected to describe these factors with their own word.

The interview also consisted questions on previously acquired personal characteristics, in accordance with the earlier career. If they had such then the question was how they did acquire it. Depending the interviewee's answer the project manager had to interpret what kind of change took place in his/her leadership style. Finally, the last of the questions was a verification on the personal characteristics. Meaning, whether their project management attitude and leadership style would change if their personal characteristics altered. Based on the information above we can set the independent variable as the project manager characteristics, whereas the dependent variable acts for the project management attitude and the leadership style.

The purpose of this current research was to answer four distinct questions, which have been formed on the fundamentals of the set hypotheses.

H1: The quantitative project management tools have a higher level of contribution to all the three levels of the project success than the qualitative project management tools.

On the bases of the filter questions two project leader were closed off the cast namely 29 project leader’s answers were accepted or rejected, this is hypothesis.

The first hypothesis is quite complex, since the project success can be expressed in terms of three success criteria. Thus the impact on project triangle, client satisfaction and stakeholder satisfaction was analyzed separately.

In the first case the observation is that the activities containing quantitative project management tools and techniques were applied more than those which contain qualitative, or qualitative and quantitative. Activities which contain quantitative tools and techniques are planning, project control, qualitative and quantitative are the project scope definition, the assurance of project result, optimisation and assuring the quality of the project result, qualitative are the communication and the stakeholder management. According the project managers there were 51 quantitative, 30 qualitative and quantitative, 27 qualitative tools. The result is summoned by the table:

Success based on the project triangle	Quantitative managerial tools	Qualitative and quantitative managerial tools	Qualitative managerial tools
Total	planning (28), control (23)	project scope definition (9), optimization (21)	managing stakeholders (7), communication (20)

However based on the project manager answers we can determine that qualitative tools are as vital as the quantitative ones.

Thus – though in numbers they under use more times – we cannot state that the quantitative project management tools would contribute in a higher manner to the aspect of the project triangle than the qualitative tools.

Looking at the numbers of the quantitative elements when benchmarking the success based on the client satisfaction we have to acknowledge that they are not even more than the qualitative ones. The answers look as follows:

Success based on project owner satisfaction	Quantitative managerial tools	Qualitative and quantitative managerial tools	Qualitative managerial tools
Total		ensuring project- results (14), project scope definition (11)	communication (24), managing stakeholders (10)

As the results show, we cannot state that the quantitative project managerial tools have a higher level of contribution to the success expressed in terms of client satisfaction

The third part of this benchmark is about the impact on the project success that derivate from the stakeholders' satisfaction. As expected, just like in the previous section the results show the same output. Here is the summary of the answers given:

Project success based on the satisfaction of the stakeholders	Quantitative managerial tools	Qualitative and quantitative managerial tools	Qualitative managerial tools
Total	control (2)	limitation (7), optimization (2), product excellence (3)	managing stakeholders (20), communication (21)

Based on the previous results we cannot say that the contribution to the project success (expressed in terms of satisfaction of the stakeholders) of the quantitative management tools is

higher than the contribution of the qualitative ones. Summarizing all the three benchmarks, we have to **reject the first hypothesis (H1)**.

H2: In the project management attitude the explicit knowledge exists in a higher degree than the tacit knowledge.

The first part contains the identification of the project management attitude of the project manager. For the categorization the project leader had to write down with his/her own words in what way does he or she manages the project. In the case if the project manager interprets the project as unique task and regards main task the management of the project process, the project manager follows a project-process centric project management attitude. If interprets the project as temporary organisation and regards main task managing this organization, follows a stakeholder-centric project management attitude. If interprets the project as strategic component and thus the main task is the delivery of the beneficial changes, follows the strategy centric project management attitude. The project leader’s outlook is summoned in the following table:

	Project-process centric	Stakeholder centric	Project-process and stakeholder centric	Strategy centric
Total	8	13	2	5

For those questions, that the project management tools are used in the spirit of this project management attitude and the applied tools could be studied or acquired, all of the answer giving project managers said (excluding those managers who did not give one appropriate answer), in the spirit of these it is rather acquired.

On the bases of these **the second hypothesis is rejected**.

H3: The project manager’s project management attitude has an impact on the three levels of the project hit.

Deriving of the feature of the hypothesis it is complex too, thus the effect on the three success criteria is examined separately too. Throughout the interview not just the effect was asked but the way too. In the light of these the not appropriate answers were filtered. For example if a project

manager was determined project process-centric and uses just communication. 21 of the project managers thought that their project management attitude have impact on the project triangle's hit, two thought not. One though, in some cases. 5 thought that the answer is not in concordance with the earlier project management attitude thus they were not considered.

25 of the project managers though that their project management attitude have an impact on the satisfaction of client and one that there is no impact. 2 answers were not in concordance with the earlier project management attitude thus the give answers were not considered.

Finally, 24 thought that their project management attitude have an impact on the satisfaction of the concerned stakeholders, three though, that there is no effect. Two answers were not in concordance with the previously give project management attitude thus their answers were not considered.

On the base of the summarized results, 17 project managers thought that their project management attitude help to reach the success of the three levels of the hierarchic model, 5 though it does not. Seven answers were not considered because of inconsistency. On the bases of these **the third hypothesis was accepted.**

H4: The project manager's personal characteristics have influence on the project manager's project management attitude and leadership style. Due to the feature of the hypothesis it is complex, thus there is separated examination for the impact of the personal characteristics on the leadership style and project management attitude. The factors, that had influence on the project management attitude are the followings:

	Factors that had an effect on the project management attitude
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Total	experience	(12),
	tuition	(15),
	education	(12),
	previous leaders	(10),
	business culture	(24),
	personality	(29),
	colleagues	(1),
	customers	(2)

For the filtering question if the personality traits change, the outlook would change too, 22 said yes, 4 no and 3 did not give an answer, thus we can state that there is influence on the project leading outlook. The second part of the hypothesis means the impact of the personal characteristics on the leadership style. Similarly to the project management attitude the first step is the identification of the factors that have influence on the project manager's leadership style. The answers are the followings:

	Factors that had an impact on the leadership style
Total	experience (15),
	tuition (14),
	education (10),
	previous leaders (13),
	business culture (22),
	personality (25),
	colleagues (1),
	customers (2)

For the question if there were changes in traits throughout their career, 27 said yes, 2 said no. From those who said yes, 26 leader's style had changed, one had not. The others follow the same style.

Generally we can determine that those who had changed leadership style, mainly changed in personal characteristics connected to people. Till the style connected to the concerned people had

changed. Those project managers who were more plan-orientated and autocratic became more democratic and less autocratic and those who were too emphatic and democratic became less democratic and more autocratic.

Finally for the question if they would change their personal characteristics, their style would change too, gave the same answers than in the case of project leading outlook, namely 22 said yes, 2 said no, 3 did not give question.

This we can state that personality traits have effect on the leading style and in the light of these **the fourth hypothesis was accepted.**

To sum it all up, the hypotheses that we have laid down at the beginning were accepted or rejected as follows:

H1: The quantitative project management tools have a higher level of contribution to all the three levels of the project success than the qualitative leadership tools. **REJECTED**

H2: In the project management attitude the explicit knowledge exists in a higher degree than the tacit knowledge. **REJECTED**

H3: The project management attitude has an impact all the three level of project success. **ACCEPTED**

H4: The personal characteristics have an influence on the project management attitude and leadership style. **ACCEPTED**

In accordance with the previous hypotheses, the following theses have been set:

T1: The quantitative project management tools do not have a higher level of contribution to all the three levels of the project success than the qualitative tools.

T2: In the project management attitude the explicit knowledge does not exist in a higher degree than the tacit knowledge.

T3: The project management attitude has an impact all the three level of project success..

T4: The personal characteristics have an influence on the project management attitude and leadership style.

Discarding the first two hypothesis and accepting the last two hypothesis, we can form three distinct implications (I1-I2-I3):

I1: When improving the project managerial capabilities it is essential to emphasize the need of the qualitative elements.

I2: When increasing managerial knowledge it is important to highlight the need of the improvement of the project management attitude in a way that the tacit knowledge could also transfer.

I3: When improving the managerial capabilities it is necessary to underline the importance of developing the personal characteristics, though it could be difficult to achieve.

3.4 Summary

The final implication of the dissertation enabled us to better understand the realization of project success. As a result of the previous statement, businesses can increase the chance of a possible project success. Furthermore it can also aid to the establishment of various university courses, since the dissertation proved that there is a demand to put additional emphasis on the enhancement of project management attitude and leadership styles. Finally yet importantly, there is a call for the transfer of the qualitative tools and the tacit knowledge, which we can achieve by initiating situational games as well as looking into case studies and running mentoring programs. (Horváth, 2013).

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