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Project Team Empowerment and Performance of Learning through Play Project in Rwanda

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Abstract

The business world is becoming more and more rapid and competitive. Rapid technological progress is being made. There has been a rise in the number of businesses and employees. Better job performance and more motivation are two ways in which empowering workers may help businesses and their bottom lines. The general objective of this study was to assess the influence of project teams on performance of learning through play project in Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda. The public and private sector in Rwanda, particularly in the domain of project management, faces significant challenges in achieving successful and efficient project outcomes. Instances of failed projects, delayed contracts, inactive assets, non-compliance with taxation laws, and budget absorption challenges have been observed. Specifically, the study had the following objectives: examine the effect of in-service trainings on performance of Learning through Play project of Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda, assess the effect of project team motivation on performance of learning through Play project of Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda and determine the effect of project team leadership on performance of learning through play project in Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda. For this study, the population was 216 project staff of learning through play project in Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda. The sample size was determined by the help of Solvin (1960) formula. The use of formula with the given dataset results in a sample size of 140. The study used the following instruments for data collection: a survey, interviews, and documentary. To conduct data analysis, the researcher employed the Statistical Products and Service Solutions (SPSS). In this study, a descriptive and correlational approach were utilized. Descriptive analysis involved calculating the frequency, proportion, and percentage values for each component. The R value is 0.791, indicating a strong positive correlation between the predictors (project leadership, in-service trainings, project team motivation) and the dependent variable (performance of the LtP project). The R Square value, which is 0.625, signifies that approximately 62.5% of the variability in the performance of the LtP project is explained by the combination of the predictor variables (project leadership, in-service trainings, project team motivation). To enhance the performance of the Learning through Play (LtP) project at Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda, it is recommended to customize in-service trainings modules based on team members' needs, implement a feedback mechanism for continuous improvement, establish a structured recognition and rewards system beyond monetary incentives, foster a supportive team environment through team-building activities, invest in leadership training for project leaders, and prioritize open and transparent communication to ensure well-informed decision-making.

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1. Introduction

The public and private sector in Rwanda, particularly in the domain of project management, faces significant challenges in achieving successful and efficient project outcomes. Instances of failed projects, delayed contracts, inactive assets, non-compliance with taxation laws, and budget absorption challenges have been observed. One critical factor contributing to these issues is the insufficient investment in empowerment programs for project teams (OAG Annual Report, 2019).

Despite the recognized importance of empowerment project teams in enhancing their productivity and performance, many Rwandan organizations fail to adequately support empowerment programs. Organizations often perceive empowerment programs expenditures as wasteful expenses rather than crucial investments in their workforce's capabilities. This lack of emphasis on project empowerment leads to a deficiency in essential skills, knowledge, and expertise among project team members, thereby hindering the effective implementation of projects. The research results indicate that a significant proportion (68.1%) of variations in the success of projects may be attributed to project team empowerment initiatives, such as training programs. These changes in efficiency can be linked to modifications in employee training methods, the training environment, and the evaluation of training-related risks (Emmanuella, 2022).

The studies by Smith and Johnson's (2020) mentioned the significance of fostering a highly motivated work environment to enhance project outcomes, emphasizing the need for organizational strategies like recognition and skill development programs. Yeboah *et al.* (2023) highlighted the need for tailored and reflective training programs, as well as addressing logistical challenges to maximize the effectiveness of such initiatives. Alfaidi and Elhassan (2020) indicate a potential need for reform and improvement in the design and implementation of in-service training programs to better cater to the diverse needs of educators.

While previous studies have explored in project team empowerment in various contexts globally, there is a limited understanding of its specific implications for projects in Rwanda. Existing literature predominantly focuses on developed countries ignoring the unique challenges and characteristics of projects in Rwanda. Therefore, the absence of an effective empowerment program for a project team tailored to the specific needs of the team members may result in suboptimal project performance evidenced with reporting schedule delays, dissatisfaction from the Donor regarding the quality of execution of project activities. in terms of quality, and insignificant impact of the project to its beneficiaries. This potentially risks the achievement of the project's intended goals and outcomes. To address these challenges, it is vital to assess the influence of project teams on the performance of the project team involved in the Learning through Play project implemented by Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda. Evaluating the effectiveness of in-service trainings, recognition and reward and supportive leadership on performance of Learning through Play project in Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to assess the influence of project teams on performance of learning through play project in Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda.
Specifically, the study had the following objectives;

i. To examine the effect of in-service trainings on performance of Learning through Play project of Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda.

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ii. To assess the effect of project team motivation on performance of learning through Play project of Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda.
iii. To determine the effect of project team leadership on performance of learning through play project in Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda.

1.3 Research hypotheses

i. Ho1: There is no significant statistical effect of in service trainings on performance of learning through play project in inspire educate and empower Rwanda.
ii. Ho2: There is no significant statistical effect of project team motivation on performance of learning through play project in Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda.
iii. Ho3: There is no significant statistical effect of project team leadership on performance of learning through play project in Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda.

2. Literature review

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the literature related to the empowerment of project teams and its impact on the performance of projects in Rwanda, with a specific focus on the Learning Through Play project implemented by Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda. The chapter is structured as follows: theoretical literature, empirical literature, critical review, and research gap identification, theoretical framework, and conceptual framework.

2.1 Theoretical framework

Human Capital Theory

Economist Gary Becker proposed the idea of "human capital" in the 1960s, which holds that people's talents and abilities are akin to capital that can be improved via exposure to new information and practice. The theory posits that investing in human capital through education and training can lead to higher individual and organizational performance and contribute to economic growth and development (Hansen & Madsen, 2019).

From the standpoint of Human Capital Theory, in-service trainings represent an investment in the human capital of the project team members. By providing training opportunities, organizations aim to enhance the skills, knowledge, and competencies of their workforce. As employees participate in in-service trainings, they accumulate valuable human capital, which can lead to increased project team productivity and improved project performance.

Expectancy Theory

The motivation theory known as Expectancy Theory, which was developed by Victor Vroom during the 1960s, focuses on the ideas and perceptions held by people on the interplay of effort, performance, and rewards. According to the idea, individuals are driven to engage in certain behaviors due to their anticipation of the potential outcomes or rewards that they would get as a result of their exerted efforts (Bartunek, 2019).

Expectancy Theory helped to explain how empowerment of project team can influence project team members' motivation and performance as the theory indicate that individuals' motivation to engage in training influenced by their perceptions of the link between effort, performance, and rewards.

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Behaviourism theory

Behaviourism is a psychological theory that was developed in the early 20th century, primarily associated with the work of John B. Watson and later B.F. Skinner. Behaviourism is rooted in the belief that all human behavior can be explained through environmental stimuli and learned responses. It emphasizes the importance of studying behavior that can be observed and measured, rather than subjective mental processes (Tourish, 2020).

Behaviourism has been applied in various fields, including education, where it has influenced teaching methods and curriculum development. It emphasizes the use of reinforcement to promote desired behaviours and discourage undesirable ones. In this study, theory helped to examine how empowerment initiatives, such as training and motivation, impact the behaviours of project team members. Also, investigate whether team members who receive empowerment training exhibit observable changes in their behaviours, such as increased participation in project activities or improved communication within the team.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows the relationship between variables empowerment of project team and performance of learning through play project the key variables and constructs to be studied. It provides a structure for organizing these elements and helps researchers understand the relationships between them.

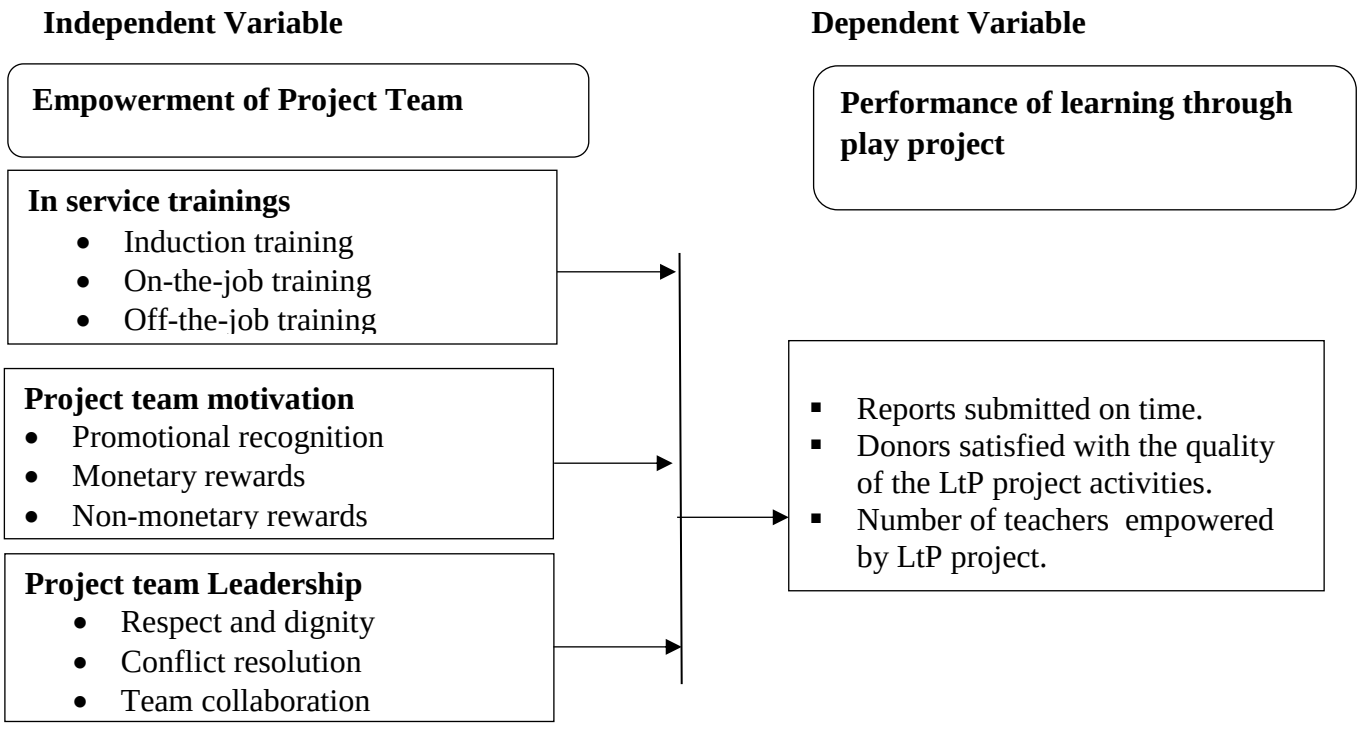

Figure 1: Conceptual framework
Source: Researcher, 2023

The conceptual framework establishes a close relationship between the Learning through Play (LtP) project's performance and the independent variables of in-service trainings, project team motivation, and leadership. Training that occurs throughout an employee's employment is essential, and this includes both formal and informal settings. Members of the project team are given the tools they need to do their tasks successfully. Enhanced competencies directly

impact project performance indicators. For instance, well-trained team members are more likely to submit reports on time and successfully empower teachers through the LtP project.

Project team motivation factors, such as promotional recognition, monetary rewards, and non-monetary rewards, act as catalysts for engaged and committed team members. Motivated teams are driven to excel, leading to improved project performance. Monetary incentives and recognition serve as powerful motivators, positively influencing donor satisfaction and the empowerment of teachers through the LtP project. Leadership qualities, encompassing respect, dignity, conflict resolution, and team collaboration, define the team's working environment. Effective leadership fosters collaboration and trust among team members, enabling them to overcome challenges and work cohesively. These leadership attributes play a pivotal role in achieving project goals, resulting in timely reporting, donor satisfaction, and teacher empowerment through the LtP project.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research design

For this study, the researcher used quantitative data collected from closed ended questionnaire while descriptive analysis was used for generating frequencies, percentages, mean and standard-deviation. The correlational study design was employed to explain the relationships between the variables.

3.2. Target population and sample design

For this study, the population was 216 project staff of learning through play project in Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda.

The sample size determined by the help of Solvin (1960) formula.

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

In this formula, 'n' symbolizes the sample size, 'N' symbolizes the population size, and 'e' denotes the margin of error, which is set at 0.05. Utilizing this formula with the given dataset results in a sample size of 140.

$$n = \frac{216}{1 + 216(0.05)^2} = \frac{216}{1 + 216(0.0025)} = \frac{216}{1 + 0.54} = \frac{216}{1.54} = 140$$

Cluster sampling was employed in this investigation. Researcher accomplished this by categorizing the population into subsets according to their specific areas of expertise. The researcher then picks participants from this group at random to create a sample. The research used a simple random sampling technique to choose respondents from the clusters. Since all potential participants are administrators, a random selection technique was used to choose an accurate cross-section of the field.

3.3. Data collection instruments

To ensure the thoroughness of the inquiry, precise questions and statements employed to examine each objective. The study utilized the following instruments for data collection: a survey, interviews, and documentary.

3.4. Data analysis procedure

To conduct data analysis, the researcher employed the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) statistical methodology. In this study, a descriptive and correlational approach were utilized. Descriptive analysis involved calculating the frequency, proportion, and percentage

values for each component. For the correlational analysis, a regression equation employed to delineate the relationship between a dependent variable and a set of determinants within the dataset.

In the linear regression model, the equation took the following form:

$Y = b0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3$

Where:

Y = Performance of LtP project

X_1 in-service trainings.

X_2 project team motivation.

X_3 project leadership.

b0 denotes the intercept or constant term, while b1, b2, and b3 represent the coefficients or slopes associated with each independent variable.

4. Research findings

The results of the study's goals are presented in this chapter. Questionnaires were distributed in the field to gather information. Afterward, SPSS was used to examine these numbers for trends and patterns. This study also provided the frequencies and percentages of replies on a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 indicates strongly agree and 1 indicates strongly disagree for the various indicators of variables. The researcher also employed regression analysis and the Pearson correlation to determine whether or not two variables were related.

Table 1: Response rate

Questionnaires	Frequency	Percent
Returned	118	84.30
Unreturned	15	10.71
Incomplete	7	4.99
Total	140	100.00

Source: Research findings (2023)

Table 1 shows response rate data in the engagement of participants in the study's questionnaire distribution. Out of the total 140 questionnaires distributed, a significant 84.30% response rate was achieved, as 118 questionnaires were completed and returned by the respondents. This high return rate indicates a strong willingness of participants to engage with the study's objectives. However, a minor portion of questionnaires, constituting 10.71%, remained unreturned, implying a slight disengagement from these participants. The lack of returned questionnaires was mainly due to the temporary absence of selected individuals during the data collection phase. Additionally, 4.99% of the distributed questionnaires were returned but considered incomplete.

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Table 2: Correlations

		In-service trainings	Project team motivation	Project leadership	Performance of LtP project
In-service trainings	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	118			
Project team motivation	Pearson Correlation	.679**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	118	118		
Project leadership	Pearson Correlation	.694**	.845**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	118	118	118	
Performance of LtP project	Pearson Correlation	.709**	.717**	.726**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	118	118	118	118

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research findings (2023)

The correlation analysis in Table 2 shows strong positive relationships among various variables. In-service trainings are significantly and positively correlated with the performance of the LtP project ($r = 0.709$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$), indicating that in-service trainings have a positive relationship with project performance. Similarly, project team motivation shows a strong positive relationship with the performance of the LtP project ($r = 0.717$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$), indicating the influence of motivated project teams on project success. Project leadership also demonstrates a strong positive relationship with the performance of the LtP project ($r = 0.726$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$), highlighting the significance of effective leadership in achieving project objectives. These findings collectively emphasize the crucial role of in-service trainings, team motivation, and leadership in enhancing the overall performance of the LtP project.

The findings are consistent with Smith and Jones (2021) emphasis on the significance of empowering project teams. They show that empowerment leads to increased ownership, motivation, and accountability among team members, aligning with contemporary project management theories and leadership approaches like transformational leadership. Empowered teams are more likely to take initiative, make informed decisions, and adapt to changing project conditions, all of which contribute to improved project performance. Smith and Jones's perspective on empowerment align with the positive correlations found in the study between factors like in-service trainings, team motivation, and leadership, emphasizing their critical roles in enhancing the performance of the LtP project.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.791[a]	.625	.616	.40992

a. Predictors: (Constant), project leadership, in-service trainings, project team motivation

Source: Research findings (2023)

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In Table 3, the model summary provides overviews into the regression analysis. The R value is 0.791, indicating a strong positive correlation between the predictors (project leadership, in-service trainings, project team motivation) and the dependent-variable (performance of the LtP project). The R Square value, which is 0.625, signifies that approximately 62.5% of the variability in the performance of the LtP project is explained by the combination of the predictor variables (project leadership, in-service trainings, project team motivation). It confirms that the model is well-suited to explain the variability in the dependent variable, reflecting the strong influence of the selected predictors on the outcome.

The findings are supported by Martin and White (2023) emphasis on the empowerment of project teams. Their work indicates that empowering project teams leads to a dynamic and adaptable project environment, fostering innovation, creative problem-solving, and an open environment for diverse ideas. This aligns with the positive correlation found in the regression analysis, indicating that empowerment contributes to improved performance of the LtP project by motivating teams and enhancing their problem-solving and innovation capabilities.

Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	31.989	3	10.663	63.456	.000[b]
	Residual	19.156	114	.168		
	Total	51.145	117			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of LtP project
b. Predictors: (Constant), project leadership, in-service trainings, project team motivation

Source: Research findings (2023)

In Table 4, the ANOVA results shows significant findings. The F-statistic (F) is 63.456, and the associated p-value (Sig.) is .000. This indicates that the regression model, which includes the predictors (project leadership, in-service trainings, project team motivation), is statistically significant. In other words, these predictors collectively contribute to explaining the variability in the dependent variable, Performance of LtP project, in a highly significant way.

The findings align with the emphasis of Roberts and Smith (2020) on the significance of empowering project teams. Their emphasis on empowerment aligns with the study's results, illustrating that when project teams are empowered, they exhibit increased motivation, creativity, and problem-solving abilities, ultimately contributing to improved project performance. This correlation supports the idea that empowering project teams is a crucial determinant of Performance of LtP project.

Table 5: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.609	.217		2.806	.006
	In-service trainings	.349	.081	.352	4.290	.000
	Project team motivation	.252	.112	.248	2.246	.027
	Project leadership	.264	.109	.272	2.415	.017

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of LtP project

Source: Research findings (2023)

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In the linear regression model, the equation took the following form:
Y = b0 + b1X1 + b2X2 + b3X3
Where:
Y = Performance of LtP project
X1 in-service trainings.
X2 project team motivation.
X3 project leadership.
b0 denotes the intercept or constant term, while b1, b2, and b3 represent the coefficients or slopes associated with each independent variable.

Performance of LtP project = 0.609 + 0.349 (in-service trainings) + 0.252 (project team motivation) + 0.264 (project leadership)

Regression Table 5 shows that the constant term is 0.609. It represents the expected value of the dependent variable (Performance of LtP project) when all independent variables (in-service trainings, project team motivation, project leadership) are zero. The unstandardized coefficient for in-service trainings is 0.349. It signifies that, for each unit increase in in-service trainings, the Performance of the LtP project is expected to increase by 0.349 units, assuming all other variables remain constant. Project team motivation is also high, with a value of 0.252. This means that, everything else being equal, it anticipate a 0.252-unit improvement in LtP project Performance for every 1-unit rise in the motivation of the project team. Leadership in a project has a similar coefficient of 0.264. It shows that, everything else being equal, an increase of one unit in project leadership is correlated with an increase of 0.264 units in the Performance of the LtP project. All three independent variables such are: in-service trainings (p=0.000), project team motivation (p=0.027), and project leadership (p=0.017) have p-values less than 0.05, indicating that their effects on the performance of the LtP project are statistically significant.

Therefore, with the p-values less than 0.05, all three null hypotheses are rejected, indicating that in-service trainings, project team motivation, and project team leadership have significant statistical effects on the performance of the LtP project in Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda. Specifically, the study find that Ho1 is false and that in-service trainings do have a statistically significant influence on LtP project success. The study also conclude that Ho2 is false and that the motivation of the project team has a statistically significant influence on the outcome of the LtP project. The Ho3 was also rejected, proving that team leadership has a statistically significant impact on LtP project success.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to examine how team dynamics affected the success of a play-based learning initiative run by Inspire, Educate, and Empower Rwanda. The study set out to do three things: look at how in-service trainings impacted the success of the Learning through Play project at Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda; evaluate the impact that team motivation had on that same project's outcomes; and identify how project leadership affected that same project's outcomes.

The significant number of respondents reflected an overall positive average perception of the effect of in-service trainings on the LtP project's performance, with heterogeneity in responses. In addition, the majority of respondents reflected an overall positive average perception of project team motivation and its impact on project performance, with heterogeneity in individual responses. Furthermore, the notable respondents reflected an overall positive average perception of project team leadership and its impact on project performance, with standard-deviations, indicating heterogeneity in responses. Moreover, The

R value, indicated a strong positive correlation between the predictors (project leadership, in-service trainings, project team motivation) and the dependent variable (performance of the LtP project).

Therefore, with the p-values less than 0.05, all three null hypotheses were rejected, indicating that in-service trainings, project team motivation, and project team leadership have significant statistical effects on the performance of the LtP project in Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda. Specifically, the study find that Ho1 is false and that in-service trainings do have a statistically significant influence on LtP project success. The study also conclude that Ho2 is false and that the motivation of the project team has a statistically significant influence on the outcome of the LtP project. The Ho3 was also rejected, proving that team leadership has a statistically significant impact on LtP project success.

6. Recommendations

Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda should consider customizing their in-service trainings modules to cater to the varying needs and skill levels of their project team members. This can be achieved by conducting needs assessments to identify specific areas where team members require additional training.

Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda should implement a feedback mechanism that allows project team members to provide input on the content and effectiveness of in-service trainings sessions. This feedback can help in continuously improving the training programs and addressing any areas of improvement or dissatisfaction that were identified in the survey responses.

Inspire Educate and Empower Rwanda is recommended to encourage team building and collaboration activities that foster a supportive environment. Organize regular team-building exercises, workshops, or events to strengthen team bonds and create a positive atmosphere that encourages innovation and teamwork.

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