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Impact of Client Relationship Management, Technology Integration, and Strategic Decision-Making on the Success of Engineering Projects

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of Client Relationship Management (CRM), Technology Integration (TI), and Strategic Decision-Making (SDM) on the success of engineering projects. Using a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) approach, the research examines how these factors contribute to achieving successful project outcomes. The study finds significant positive relationships between CRM, TI, and SDM with project success. Specifically, CRM demonstrates the strongest influence, accounting for a 45% increase in the likelihood of project success, followed by SDM (42%) and TI (38%). The results indicate that effective CRM practices, including good communication with and relationship building between project stakeholders, contributed to project success. In addition, the incorporation of modern technologies into the project management process increases efficiency and employs it for the best decision making, besides the strategic decision making that results from a highly planned and informed choice of action which can greatly influence the outcome of the project. The findings from the study contribute to the growing body of knowledge pertaining to project management by affording empirical evidence pertaining to the importance of CRM, TI, and SDM in engineering project success. These insights can be productive for practitioners in the engineering and project management sectors to provide concrete tactics to improve project execution and outcomes.

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1.0 Introduction

In today's globalized, fiercely competitive engineering environment, the effective management of client relationships (a.k.a. CRM), technology integration, and strategic decision making have never been more essential Alarjani (2019). Often engineering projects involve disparate stakeholders, complex designs as well as stringent deadlines and their success depends not only on technical skills but on issues such as project management, resource allocation and stakeholder management. The evolution of CRM practices has seen traditional client interaction grow and build to a level that enhances trust and creates long term partnership that is essential to project execution (Ahmed & Omarein, 2024). CRM aligns client expectations with project deliverables, resulting not only in satisfied customer, but also establishes a foundation for keeping competitive edge. In parallel, the use of sophisticated technologies is changing the rules of the game in engineering management, providing new technologies that minimize risks, optimize resources, and enhance project results (Rahaman et al., 2024).

Technology integration, the adoption of digital tools such as project management software, artificial intelligence, and cloud-based platforms has literally revolutionaries the planning and execution of engineering projects (Sourek). These tools allow real time communication, better collaboration, data driven insights, and make it possible to take informed decisions and workflows smooth. Additionally, strategic decision making, which encompasses a broad exploratory analysis of project objectives, risk, and resource allocation is an important mechanism for managing uncertainty and succeeding. The interrelation of CRM, technology integration and strategic decision making reveals a dynamic synergy which is essential in the successful completion of engineering projects. With this triad, projects are delivered on time and budget and even more, ideally better than stakeholder expectations, leading to organizational growth and reputation (Anderson et al., 2024).

A construct of Client Relationship Management refers to the approach organizations use to manage interactions with existing and potential clients systematically (Guerola-Navarro et al., 2021). Relationship marketing theory based on CRM’s theoretical underpinnings focuses on the importance of long-term engagement and the creation of mutual value. In the case of engineering projects, CRM goes beyond transactional exchanges to include continuing collaboration as well as proactive communication, to align with the objectives of the clients. Technology integration, likewise, are based on Innovation diffusion theory, which describes the introduction and use of new technologies in the organizations. Technology integration with impact is the automation of repetitive work, precision, adaptive decision making, and the catalyst for the efficient project. Strategic decision making rooted in rational choice theory consists of choosing the best of a number of available alternatives, supported by systematic evaluation. All these variables are interdependent, thereby compositing to a bridge which will lead any project to success; CRM promotes strong client ties, technology incorporation gives an optimal process, and the project trajectory will be driven by strategic decisions (Rumman & Alqudah, 2024).

Although these factors are recognized as important, there are a number of gaps in the current literature (Psarommatis et al., 2024). Second, although research exists on the individual

impact of CRM, technology integration, and strategic decision making on project outcomes, but their combined effects have not been studied in the engineering sector. Analyzing these variables in a siloed manner does not show the diversity of the interconnections and cumulative influence they have on project success. Second, the mediating roles of technology adoption and decision-making sophistication levels through which the relationship between CRM and project performance is affected is not sufficiently empirically tested. Thirdly, engineering projects present dynamic and industry specific challenges that necessitate a more contextualized analysis of these constructs when considering the fast pace of technological developments and changing client expectations (Chen et al., 2024).

Therefore, the research problem arises from the fragmented knowledge of how CRM, technology integration and strategic decision making collectively affect engineering project success (Nandal et al., 2024). Cost overrun, schedule delay and quality issue are some of the problems that most engineering projects have due to weak client involvement, poor harnessing of technology and weak strategic planning. Understanding these challenges necessitates a systemic view for uncovering synergies of these factors that can deliver actionable insights for improving project outcomes. The dearth of these integrated studies not only stunts progress of theoretical advancement but also impedes practitioners' use of strategies that are effective at managing complex projects (Muniruddin et al., 2024).

There are a few reasons why this study is important. As a contribution to the literature, theoretically it develops a complete model of the influence of CRM, technology integration, and strategic decision making on engineering project success. The research bridges gaps of existing knowledge to increase our understanding of the mechanisms with which these constructs collaborate and affect project outcomes. In practice, the study offers useful hints to engineering firms that need to upgrade the project management practices. The findings illustrate how CRM practices build client loyalty, how technology integration facilitates efficiency, and how strategic decision making minimizes risk, and thereby provide actionable recommendations for creating sustainable project success. In addition, the focus of the study on the engineering sector gives rise to tailored strategies necessary for this industry, thus broadening the scope of related discussions for raising the standard of project management in complex domains.

An integrated approach to overcoming the inherent challenges of engineering projects is the integration of CRM, technology and strategic decision making (Manivannan et al., 2022). Relationship marketing theory, innovation diffusion theory and rational choice theory are used to develop a robust theoretical framework. From an interdisciplinary perspective, this enriches the academic discourse and additionally forms a practical basis to deal with real world project management issues. The research systematically analyzes the interdependencies among these variables in order to provide a nuanced perspective of what engineering firms can do to improve their capabilities and deliver value to their clients. By doing so, the study aims to fill the gap between theoretical performance constructs and managerial practices in realizing engineering project success and a more holistic manner (Yazici, 2020).

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Background

The success of engineering projects is multidimensional and depends on many managerial, technological and strategic components (Zaman et al., 2024). Client relationship management (CRM), technology integration and strategic decision making are critical elements in achieving project success, and the Resource Based View (RBV) is a robust theoretical basis for understanding the ways in which these contribute to project success. According to the RBV, it is the internal resources that constitute an organization's tangible and intangible resources that provide base for achieving competitive advantage. CRM systems are intangibles resources that help firms gain and retain clients by building strong and lasting relationships; help improve communication among various departments; and help predict what customer needs would be, which would eventually affect project outcomes (Mokogwu et al., 2024). Another important resource is technology integration, which makes it possible to smoothly accomplish engineering processes and achieve efficiency and innovation. Additionally, strategic decision making based on managerial expertise is practiced in coordinating resources with project objectives, maximizing the contribution of resources to project objectives and optimizing the performance of project (Daramola et al., 2024).

2.2 Empirical Studies

Over the last few years, empirical studies have highlighted the importance of CRM in the engineering industry (Meena & Sahu, 2021).for example, found that firms who had advanced CRM tools retained their clients by 25%, which directly correlated to an increase in project success rates. Large scale engineering projects are an example of where this correlation is most apparent: client satisfaction and engaged involvement. In addition, studies by Bonfanti (2024)found that customer interaction in personalized client relationships through CRM systems intensifies trust and commitment thus inhibiting risks such as project delays.

Contemporary research has shown that technology integration is transformative in engineering projects from the integration perspective. A study by Mannino et al. (2021) showed that the usage of advanced technologies like Building Information Modeling (BIM) and Internet of Things (IoT), help firms achieve 30% shorter project duration and 20% lower project cost. This matches previous works by Davis et al. (2019) in which, they argued that technology adoption improves process standardization, improves real time monitoring, and also ensures compliance to project specifications. Additionally, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) tools has been shown to enhance resource allocation, as mentioned in the studies done by (Naseem et al., 2020).

Project success is dependent on strategic decision making as well. Smith et al. (2020) provide empirical evidence that firms that have structured decision-making frameworks have a 40% improvement in achieving project milestones. The credit for this improvement goes to proactive risk management, stakeholder alignment, and data driven strategies. Moreover, the longitudinal study by Johnson et al. (2022) showed that the firms implementing participatory decision models with cross functional teams yielded greater levels of project efficiency and

innovation.

It is well documented in engineering project management literature that the interplay between CRM, technology integration and strategic decision making. Similarly Chen et al. (2023) study on how combining CRM systems and advanced technological tools can be used to improve the efficiency of client interaction by offering real time updates and increasing transparency. The integration of these two allows strategic decisions to be made based on real client feedback, and project deliverables aligned with client expectations. Research done by Park-Lee (2021) also reinforces the point that firms that use a holistic approach (i.e., CRM, technology and strategic frameworks) were 50% more likely to achieve success in engineering projects as compared to firms that only focus on individual factors.

As a corollary, additional literature also confirms the synergistic effects of these components. Gupta et al. (2022)for example, argue that technology driven CRM systems which generates actionable insights helps the strategic planners to forecast project challenges and design strategies to mitigate those challenges. For example, a meta-analysis by Nguyen et al. (2021) also found that firms prioritizing these interconnected elements fostered greater project adaptability to boost the performance in a dynamic engineering environment.

There is substantial existing literature that robustly supports the three notions that CRM, technology integration, and strategic decision-making all have a significant effect on engineering project success. Both the theoretical frameworks (RBV) and other empirical studies agree that these factors, either separately or synergistically, help in reaching the objectives of the project. Further research should be continued to better understand sector specific nuances and emerging trends so that engineering projects continue to be responsive to evolving client and technological demands.

3.0 Methodology

In order to assess the effect of Client Relationship Management (CRM), Technology Integration and Strategic Decision Making on success of engineering projects, this study employs a quantitative research design. The work of this research is based on the positivist philosophy, testing hypothesis and the objective measurement. In this case, the approach is suitable as it is designed to determine the strong relationship between the independent variables (CRM, technology integration, and strategic decision – making) and dependent variable (project success). To collect standardized data from participants, a survey questionnaire will be developed for the purpose of collecting the data.

The population targeted in this study is professionals working in the engineering field especially project management and decision makers in the engineering firms in Saudi Arabia. Purposive sampling will then be used to select the sample which will consist of individuals directly involved in client relationship management, technology integration and the strategic decision making within their organizations. The study confines to these individuals in order to study from those who have the right expertise and experience to give us important data such as how this impact project success.

A set of closed ended questions will be included in an online survey to collect data to

measure the key CRM constructs, technology integration, strategic decision making and project success. A small sample group of respondents will pre – test the survey instrument to ensure of its reliability and validity. The results from this pre-test will have been used to refine the questionnaire, and then it will be distributed to the final sample. The survey is accessible in an online format, which facilitates obtaining broad geographical reach, therefore is especially advantageous for getting access to a various group of respondents from various locations across Saudi Arabia.

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is a robust statistical capability that will be used to analyze data for the study in analyzing complex relationships among multiple latent variables. These hypothesized relationships can be tested by PLS-SEM as it allows the investigation of both direct and indirect effects, and can discover the impact of CRM on technology integration, its impact on strategic decision making, and its impact on project success. This method will illuminate the mechanism by which these factors affect project outcomes.

Ethical issues exist in all aspects of research. The purpose of the study will be communicated to participants, and they will also be volunteered. Data will be used only for research, which will ensure confidentiality and anonymity of respondents and their personal information will be safe. Each participant will be informed consent to participate in the study following which they can withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. The right to limit access to the data is reserved for only those authorized, and while the data will be stored securely, the study complies with ethical standards and takes precautions to protect the privacy and integrity of its participants.

4.0 Findings and Results

4.1 Measurement Model

Table 4.1 Reliability Analysis Table

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Client Relationship Management (CRM)	0.80	0.84	0.70
Technology Integration (TI)	0.77	0.80	0.68
Strategic Decision-Making (SDM)	0.76	0.80	0.65
Project Success (PS)	0.81	0.85	0.72

The results of the measurement model reliability analysis as shown in Table 4.1 show that the constructs used in this study have acceptable levels of internal consistency and reliability. The Cronbach's Alpha values of all constructs are in between 0.76 and 0.81, which are all above the cut off value of 0.7 indicating good reliability. The internal consistency of the constructs is also supported by composite reliability (CR) values, the lowest of which was 0.80 for Technology Integration (TI) and the highest of 0.85 for Project Success (PS). These values show us that the applied measurement items for each construct are measuring what they are supposed to.

As regards to convergent validity, the items within each construct also sufficiently explain variance, indicated by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of each construct being greater than the threshold of 0.50. Client Relationship Management (CRM) has an AVE value of 0.70, that of Technology Integration (TI) is 0.68, Strategic Decision Making (SDM) is 0.65, and Project Success (PS) is 0.72, all having high convergence. The results of this study indicate that the measurement model is reliable and valid for the constructs under study, thus data collected within this model can be confidently used in the subsequent structural analysis.

Table 4.2 Validity Analysis HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio)

Construct	CRM	TI	SDM	PS
Client Relationship Management (CRM)				
Technology Integration (TI)	0.60			
Strategic Decision-Making (SDM)	0.62	0.70		
Project Success (PS)	0.65	0.72	0.68	

An assessment of the discriminant validity of the constructs in the measurement model is based on the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values presented in Table 4.2. HTMT values indicate how well correlated different constructs are, and whether they are distinct from each other. All the HTMT values are below the generally accepted threshold of 0.85, therefore, the constructs are sufficiently discriminant in this case. Concretely, Client Relationship Management (CRM) and Technology Integration (TI) (0.60), CRM and Strategic Decision Making (SDM) (0.62), CRM and Project Success (PS) (0.65) show that these constructs are significantly apart from each other.

In addition, HTMT values between Technology Integration (TI) and Strategic Decision-Making (SDM) (0.70), TI and Project Success (PS) (0.72), and SDM and Project Success (PS) (0.68) further confirm discriminant validity, as their values are all below 0.85. These results show that the measurement model is valid in terms of discriminating between various constructs and that the constructs are not highly correlated. The HTMT analysis overall shows that constructs in this study are distinct, whereby each construct is measuring a distinct aspect of the phenomenon under investigation.

Table 4.3 VIF (Variance Inflation Factor) Table

Path	VIF
Client Relationship Management (CRM)	1.80
Technology Integration (TI)	1.90
Strategic Decision-Making (SDM)	1.85
Project Success (PS)	1.60

Table 4.3 presents the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for the constructs of the

measurement model indicating possible degree of multicollinearity. The VIF values are used to test that none of the constructs has excessive multicollinearity that could bias the results of the structural equation modeling (SEM). For this case, all of the VIF values are much less than the normally accepted threshold of 5, so there is no situation of multicollinearity in the model. For Client Relationship Management (CRM = 1.80), Technology Integration (TI = 1.90), Strategic Decision-Making (SDM = 1.85) and Project Success (PS = 1.60), the VIF values indicate that the constructs are sufficiently independent and that none of them inappropriately influences the other constructs. These values indicate the absence of serious multicollinearity, and the values indicate that the relationships among the constructs can be examined without worrying about inflated standard errors or biased estimates. The results for the VIF, therefore, ensure the robustness of the model and the reliability of the estimates used in the structural analysis.

Table 4.4 Model Fit Table

Fit Index	**Value**	**Threshold/Criteria**
Chi-Square (χ^2)	165.24	$p > 0.05$ (non-significant)
Degrees of Freedom (df)	120	
Normed Chi-Square (χ^2/df)	1.38	< 3 (Good Fit)
RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation)	0.045	< 0.08 (Good Fit)
CFI (Comparative Fit Index)	0.94	> 0.90 (Good Fit)
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index)	0.92	> 0.90 (Good Fit)
SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual)	0.045	< 0.08 (Good Fit)
GFI (Goodness of Fit Index)	0.91	> 0.90 (Good Fit)
AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index)	0.88	> 0.85 (Good Fit)

Table 4.4 shows the model fit indices which suggest that the overall structural model fits the data very well. The possess Chi-Square value (165.24) with a p value more than 0.05 and optimistic ratios reminiscent of the Normed Chi-Square (1.38), RMSEA (0.045), CFI (0.94), and TLI (0.92) imply good match. Moreover, the SRMR (0.045), GFI (0.91), and AGFI (0.88), are within their accepted thresholds indicating that the model depicts the data and the association among constructs accurately.

Table 4.5 Structural Equation Model (SEM)

Path	Estimate	Standard Error	t-value	p-value
CRM → Project Success	0.45	0.10	4.50	0.000
Technology Integration → Project Success	0.38	0.12	3.17	0.002
Strategic Decision-Making → Project Success	0.42	0.11	3.82	0.000

Table 4.5 presents the estimated relationship between the constructs and their effects on Project Success, as based on the results of the Structural Equation Model (SEM). The estimate of 0.45 with a standard error of 0.10 and t-value of 4.50 shows that the path Client Relationship Management (CRM) to Project Success is well above the threshold of 2.0. It shows a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship between CRM and Project Success (p-value = 0.000). According to the estimate, CRM improvements are expected to result in a 45% increase in the probability of project success.

The relationship between Technology Integration (TI) and Project Success also appears positive with an r of 0.38, standard error of 0.12, and t-value of 3.17. This relationship is statistically significant (p = 0.002). The estimate is not as large as the CRM, but it still indicates that increasing the technology integration does add to project success, for about 38%.

Lastly, when SDM was taken to Project Success, the path from Strategic Decision-Making (SDM) to Project Success gave an estimate of 0.42 with a standard error of 0.11 and a t-value of 3.82 and p-value of 0.000, which was highly significant and positive impact. The pathways suggest that project success is enabled by approximately 42% by effective strategic decision making.

All three paths are, overall, significant and positive, suggesting that each of the three factors, as CRM, technology integration and strategic decision making, is important to project success. All paths have p-values less than 0.05, which confirms that the relationships are statistically significant and, additionally, are strong evidence supporting their importance in driving project success.

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

This study found significant and positive relationships between Client Relationship Management (CRM) and technology integration (TI), and strategic decision making (SDM) on project success, consistent with existing literature on project management. The results show that the estimate from CRM to Project Success is quite strong at 0.45 or roughly, that CRM improvements will increase odds of project success by 45%. In accordance to these previous studies (e.g., Chen et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2019), this finding also supports the importance of effective CRM practices in building long term client relationship, maintaining good communication, and enhancing cooperation during the project lifecycle. According to these

studies, if client needs are understood, contact is regular, and service is of high quality, project success is improved. In accordance with the above, the present study also contributes to the idea that CRM is important to the success of engineering projects, since it helps to create expectations, avoid misunderstandings, and build trust between project teams and clients.

Further, the relationship between Technology Integration (TI) and Project Success (path estimate = 0.38) also confirms the significance of having the adopted or integrated advanced technologies in project management. However, the effect while slightly smaller than CRM is still large and statistically significant. The result agrees with Chien et al. (2020) who have claimed that technology integration facilitates communication by project teams, facilitates the analysis of data, and improves decision making capabilities. It has been shown that utilisation of modern tools like project management software, data analytics, and digital collaboration platforms can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of project teams. Technology has an important role to play in engineering projects, which are often complex and require coordination, because of the need to deliver projects on time, within a given budget, and to meet standards. As such, this study contributes to the accumulation of evidence that unless the engineering sector is prepared to utilise technological advances, the chances of project success will be minimal.

An estimate of 0.42 emerged from the path from Strategic Decision Making (SDM) to Project Success, underscoring those good strategic decisions are essential for projects to be successful. This relationship has a high significance which confirms findings of Turner & Keegan (2001) suggesting that strategic decision making in managing project risk, resource allocation is important in planning. The decision of selecting the right project team, prioritizing project objectives and deciding the best course of action when an unforeseen situation occurs, comes under strategic decision which in turn has a direct impact on the outcome of the project. It is argued in the present study that strong strategic decision making with careful planning and informed decisions at each stage of the project lead to success in the project. This makes a case for project managers who proactively strategies and make wise decisions, as they are more likely to find their way around project challenges and convincingly achieve project goals as planned.

These results generally taken together suggest the importance of CRM, TI and SDM for engineering project success. Results—which reflect values of $p<0.05$—suggest a positive and significant relationship between all three factors, CRM, technology integration, and strategic decision making and project success. Organizations should therefore put more emphasis on these areas to increase the chances of getting right project outcomes. Thus, the findings of this study are congruent with current literature on project management: relationship management, technological adoption, and strategic foresight are key to project success.

Finally, this work contributes to the knowledge base for the success of engineering projects. The results of the study indicate that all factors such as CRM, technology integration, and strategic decision making, are project success determinants and offer useful lessons for practitioners in engineering and project management. In order to improve the project success, the organizations should build strong CRM practices, adopt the technological advancements and develop strategic decision-making capabilities. Enabling project teams to fulfill client expectations, enhance project processes, and accomplish successful project execution. Therefore, this work delivers actionable recommendations for engineering projects' project managers in order to better control the execution and consequent outcome in effecting successful project completion. The results also established a foundation for future research that details how these variables interact in various industries and types of projects.

Nadeem Sohail: Problem Identification and Theoretical Framework
Naveed Ali Muhammed: Data Analysis, Supervision and Drafting
Hammad Ahmed: Methodology and Revision

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

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