THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

Community development projects worldwide play an important role in the development of society, in some of the poorest rural areas of the globe. Consequently, projects are designed to enhance the quality of life for the more vulnerable people in society in any country or region. When community development is effective, there is less crime, less disparity between citizens, better jobs available, a more talented workforce, and fewer overall issues that impact residents. Community development reduces problems and increases opportunities for growth. Without community development, both economic and business development suffer greatly. Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural country where a number of development projects are ongoing at present. The research problem is to find the positive and negative impact of different cultures on community development projects related to non-governmental organizations. This study aims to explore the relationship between community development projects and cultural diversity as a stepping stone to increasing the existing knowledge and filling the research gap. The overall objective of this study is to explore and find the positive and negative impact of different cultures, on community development projects related to non-governmental organizations sectors. The primary data was collected by using in-depth interview questions with Program Managers, MEAL Coordinators, Admin and Program Officers, Senior Program Managers, and Finance and Admin Officers. Secondary data was collected from various documentary sources and reports of NGOs. The data were analyzed qualitatively using thematic content analysis. According to research questions positive attitude, high participation, owner-driven, exploring opportunities, solving problems, emotional intelligence, good working culture, partnerships, group work, open and active culture, a clear idea about career, developing community platforms and resilience width are the thirteen newly identified positive factors related to community development projects. Fear to the majority, lack of trust, thinking style, and marital status are the four newly identified negative factors based on the Sri Lankan context. This research will help project-related parties, project managers, project teams, and project-related students in their project purpose in the future.

Keywords: *community development, cultural diversity, project management*

Introduction

According to the Project Management Institute's (PMI, 2008) Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) projects, which are temporary endeavors undertaken to meet unique goals and objectives within a defined scope, budget, and time frame, typically go through a life cycle. The project life cycle is a logical sequence of activities to accomplish the project goals, there are five phases in the project life cycle project initiation phase, project planning stage, project implementation stage, project monitoring and controlling phase,

and finally, project closing or terminating phase. According to Rooke the Tylor's (2001) definition of culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".

Cultural diversity within the parts of the country has been regarded for a long as a major instance of the ruthless rivalry among nation-states. In this Present scenario of the globalization era, ethnic diversity (Mauro, 1995) and ethnolinguistic fractionalization has been identified as the main factor for low economic performance (Easterly and Levine, 1997) and societal instability (Nettle et al. 2007). Communities living in Sri Lanka have faced different communication issues, and specific cultural, ethnic, and religious issues while implementing community development projects in rural areas. Together the cultures of the world create a rich and varied tapestry. The resulting cultural diversity expands choices, nurtures a variety of skills, human values, and worldviews, and provides wisdom from the past to inform the future. Cultural diversity is a mainspring for sustainable development for individuals, communities, and countries. Successful project management is complex. Project managers give their full effort to complete all sizes of projects within their budget and schedule. Due to the project managers' knowledge and experience, they will complete the project by managing different constraints on time. A number of studies have been conducted to find out the Impact of Cultural Diversity on Construction Projects. Most of them are related to western countries. This study is carried out by especially considering non-governmental organizations. This study will address the lack of studies related to cultural diversity in Sri Lanka and will provide better guidance to the other community development projects to identify the cultural barriers and effectively use cultural practices and strategies to build cohesion among different cultures and to get successful project outputs.

Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural and multi-religious country associated with different attitudes and knowledge perspectives. Since, a developing country, several non-governmental organizations will implement different kinds of projects to uplift the economic level and community development projects. But when we consider culture, religion, race, beliefs, morals, capabilities, and habits; those things will differ according to the people's diversity. With the impact of these factors, some projects will be successful while other part of projects become a failure. A considerable number of researches have been done on the impact of cultural diversity on construction projects. But this study mainly focuses on community development projects related to non-governmental organizations. According to (Ankrah, 2007), "some research context was limited to construction projects in the UK. It is entirely plausible that there may be significant differences in the findings if this study is replicated in other countries." The main objective of this study is to explore the positive and negative impact of cultural diversity, on community development projects in non-governmental organizations. Specific objectives are: to identify positive factors in cultural diversity related to community development projects in NGOs, to identify negative factors in cultural diversity related to community development projects in NGOs and

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to determine the impact of cultural diversity on project performance relevant to community development projects in NGOs.

Literature Review
Culture
Tylor's description of culture is captured (Rooke, 2001) as "That complex total which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".

Cultural Diversity
Cultural Diversity within a country's borders has long been regarded as a major handicap in the ruthless contest among nation countries. Indeed, in the moment's globalization period, ethnical diversity (Mauro, 1995) and especially the so-called ethnic-verbal bifurcation has been interwind as a factor of poor profitable performance (Easterly and Levine, 1997) and societal insecurity (Nettle et al 2007).

Project
Project Management Institute's (PMI, 2008) Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) projects, which are temporary endeavors undertaken to meet unique goals and objectives within a defined scope, budget, and time frame, typically go through a life cycle.

Project management
Project Management is the application of project-related knowledge, skills, tools, and techniques to meet project requirements or project deliverables (PMI, 2008).

Project Performance
Project performance can be measured from the project initiation phase to the project closure phase. Through continuous monitoring and evaluation.as well as project performance can be measured through different indicators.

Cultural diversity within a country's borders has long been regarded as a major handicap in the ruthless rivalry among nation-states. In the present era, ethnic diversity (Mauro, 1995) and implicated as a factor in poor economic performance (Easterly and Levine, 1997). Cultural diversity plays a major role in the development sector of a country. Culture will be affected by the project performance due to communication issues among different cultures and some other factors. The way of taking decisions, thinking style, feeling, and acting in response to opportunities and threats may impact the culture too (Thompson, 1993). With the same, the trust between other persons, and the acceptance of cultural diversity within one's own living environment to other persons living environment is expected to be

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different in several areas. According to the sociological approach, culture can be described as a common pattern of beliefs, norms, values, and actions within a specified group of people in a certain area. But it will impact several situations while executing the project. According to Hofstede (1984), culture is "a collaborative programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one order of people from Cultural Diversity clarified that "mind" stands not only for allowing and feeling but also for acting. As well as, Culture provides group members with beliefs and values channeling individuals into an assortment of possible behaviors (Triandis, 1995). Adapting these values and hypotheticals by the young generation through literacy and socialization means that culture has a specific and stable element (Arikan, 2011). Artistic change is regularly slow and disseminates easier to young people, performing intergenerational changes (Inglehart, 1990). In scientific literature, culture is frequently inferred as an explanation and independent frame. According to Hofstede (1980), cultural differences can be captured by four dimensions: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, collectivism, and masculinity-femininity (Kaasa, 2012). This kind of cross-national comparison refers to cultural dimensions and characteristics that have been empirically measured at the country or national level (sometimes also at the sub-national regional level), considering nations as cultural units and usually putting aside cultural variations within countries compared.

Ethnically concentrated societies are frequently characterized by competitive rent-seeking conditioning by different groups and can hardly agree upon choices for public structure (Alesina etal 2003, 2005), diversity is expensive in terms of social cohesion (Putnam 2007). Mauro (1995) introduced and explained the concept of ethnic diversity and empirically figure out its impact on economic growth, the diversity index, the Ethno Linguistic Fractionalization (ELF) Index, and its impact on the highest probability of instability in politics and how it follows and influence to economic development. Ethnical identity includes multiple crosscutting features that combine verbal, ethnical, religious, and artistic rudiments, blurring distinctions (Okedii 2011).

Gap Analysis

A considerable number of researches have been done on the impact of cultural diversity on construction projects. But this study mainly focuses on community development projects related to non-governmental organizations. According to (Ankrah, 2007) explained, "This research context was limited to construction projects in the UK. It is entirely plausible that there may be significant differences in the findings if this study is replicated in other countries. It will be interesting and useful for benchmarking purposes to determine if differences exist and the effects (if any) on project outcomes. It is therefore recommended that this study is Conclusions and recommendations in other countries to allow for comparative analysis to be undertaken". Researchers believe the findings of this research will help to find the barriers among cultures and to reduce the impact of these issues to get successful

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projects. This study aims to explore and fill the gap of the rare availability of research on the impact of different cultures on community development projects in Sri Lanka.

Methodology

As the research topic to identify the impact of cultural diversity, the researcher uses qualitative research type. To collect these types of data, researchers can use structured questionnaires, observations, structured or semi-structured interviews, etc. The researcher used interviews, personal observations, and audio recordings to collect data in this research. The researcher uses the reports of NGOs. Researchers use Qualitative data collection methods to collect the necessary data to investigate this research and to get the final findings descriptively. Therefore, this research uses interviews as the primary data collection method, researcher prepared questions to get replies from representatives of the selected sample. For this research, the researcher uses judgment (purposive) sampling to select a sample size from the population and it has under the non-probability sampling method. In these techniques, the researcher uses his own judgment to select representatives from the population for the sample size. The researcher believes that can get valid, trusty, and quality data from the sample when selecting the sample by his own judgment. However, for this research six representatives including Program Managers, MEAL Coordinators, Admin and Program Officers, Senior Program Managers, and Finance and Admin Officers were selected as the sample to collect the needed data to investigate the research.

Results

Interview Participant list

Table 1: Interviewed Participants

Code icon	Profession	Organization	Working Experience
R1	Program Manager	Offer Ceylon	17 Y
R2	MEAL Coordinator	World Vision Lanka	09 Y
R3	Admin and Program Officer	Caritaz-Valvuthayam	07 Y
R4	Senior Program Manager	AMCOR (Association of Mobilizing Community Resources)	06 Y
R5	Finance and Admin Officer	PALM (Community Development Services Company (Guarantee) Ltd	04 Y

R6	MEAL Officer	SHF (Serving Humanity Foundation)	02 Y

Theme 01:

What kind of community development projects are ongoing in your organization?

- Offer Ceylon – Reintegration program, Capacity Development for Community Project, Women Empowerment Project
- WVL- Livelihood Development Project, Child Protection and Participation Project, Community Engagement Project
- Caritas-Valvuthayam - Livelihood Development Project, Food Security Project, Environment Protection Project, Interreligious Program, Peace Building Program
- AMCOR- Women Empowerment Project, Preventing Violence and Extremism Project, Human Trafficking Project
- PALM – Climate Resilience Integrated Water Management Project, Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Project
- SHF- Multicultural Development Project, Social Cohesion Project, Care for Orphans Project, Language Programs, Youths' Development Project

Theme 02:

Does this project areas consist of different cultures?

Theme Findings:

Here researcher identified all non-governmental organizations working with Sinhala, Tamil, and Muslim cultures. Sometimes though World Vision is a Christian faith organization it engages with multicultural people. Though PALM, SHF, and Offer Ceylon are situated in northern and eastern provinces they are engaging with multicultural people and university students too. Caritaz Valvuthayam and AMCOR Organizations are doing many projects related to interreligious and social cohesion and peace-building projects with different cultures and ethnic groups.

Theme 03:

Can you see if any positive factors impact the success of community projects from the perspective of different cultures? If yes, list the factors and briefly explain the positive relationship between cultural diversity and the success of community development projects.
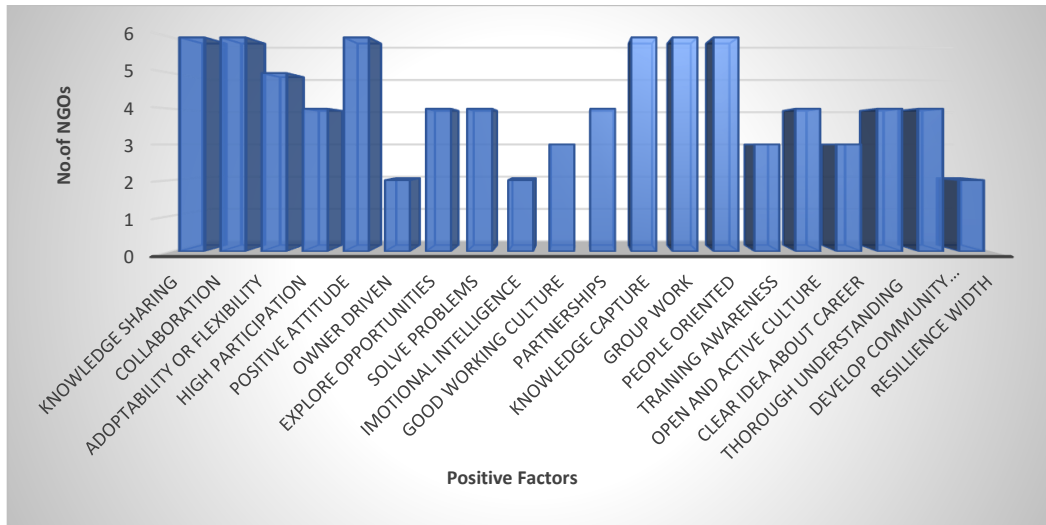
Figure 1: Positive factors which impact to community development projects

Theme findings:

According to this bar graph, it shows all the respondents have identified very important factors such as Knowledge sharing, Collaboration, Positive attitude, knowledge capture, Group work, and People-oriented are some factors accepted by all respondents. So, due to these factors, it will enhance the experience of the beneficiaries, and positive feedback. Other than that, they will aware of the malpractices, get correct guidance, and reduce the loss of income. Due to the parallel monitoring systems, exposure visits of beneficiaries, brainstorming sessions, sharing correct strategies, mobilizing, and post evaluation, they will highly engage with different cultures and positively impact society.

Theme 04:

Can you see if any negative factors impact the success of community projects from the perspective of different cultures? If yes, list the factors. And briefly explain how these factors impact the smooth running of the project.
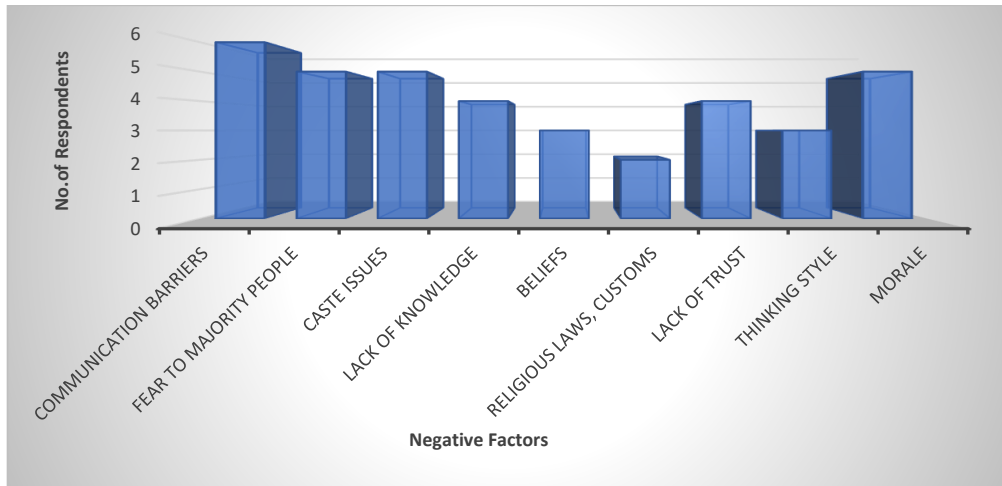
Figure 2: Negative factors which impact to community development projects

Theme Findings:

All the NGOs identified that Communication barriers are a major problem. And also fear in the majority of people, caste issues in some cultures, and their morale may be impacted as negative factors to the community development projects. Lack of knowledge, beliefs, religious laws and customs, lack of trust, and thinking style may impact the projects in different ways. These factors impact the success of community development projects. Most of the NGOs and donors ask to take the awareness sessions or training sessions in the language where according to the majority of people. But sometimes if they held those sessions in one language to different communities, they will not get 100% idea. Sometimes staff also not much fluent. So, it will increase the project budget and scope. But it helps the success of the project and performance of the project. Due to the war-affected areas, there are unmarried, disabled, widows or women-headed families are there. They have some fear to move with other societies because at the time they may feel other people will ask about their personal things and they like to hide from the common society and they like to live lonely with their past memories. So, lack of trust and thinking style are some negative factors the researcher identified in the data collection. Especially in Tamil culture caste issues impact and in Muslim cultures their religious laws, and customs impact woman's participation. As organizations, they will adopt according to their perspectives and through awareness sessions, they can eradicate these negative factors.

Theme 05:

How does this cultural diversity impact project performance relevant to NGO community development projects?

Social impact- Social cohesion and interreligious projects will enhance the building of peace and harmony among different cultures, and it will increase the social security among the villages and people.

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Cultural impact – People celebrate different cultural festivals like Vesak, Poson, Christmas, Mahasivarathri, Thaipongal, New Year, Nonbu functions and etc. It will give good knowledge to all people and children in the societies. So, it will increase the trust among people, and collaboration with others. They will understand others' cultures and respect them.

Environmental impact – Livelihood development projects, and SMART agriculture projects, will help increase the people's income level and reduce the loss of investments. As well as they share the resources among themselves as neighbors. They build different Community-Based Organizations and do volunteer activities like shramadana, tree planting projects, etc.

Economic impact - Livelihood development projects, Capacity Development for Community Projects, and Women Empowerment Projects work as groups by sharing their ideas, for the Youths' Development Project all people get together to do their tasks due to that it will enhance the economic level, so basic human needs will be fulfilled and can reduce the economic imbalance in the society.

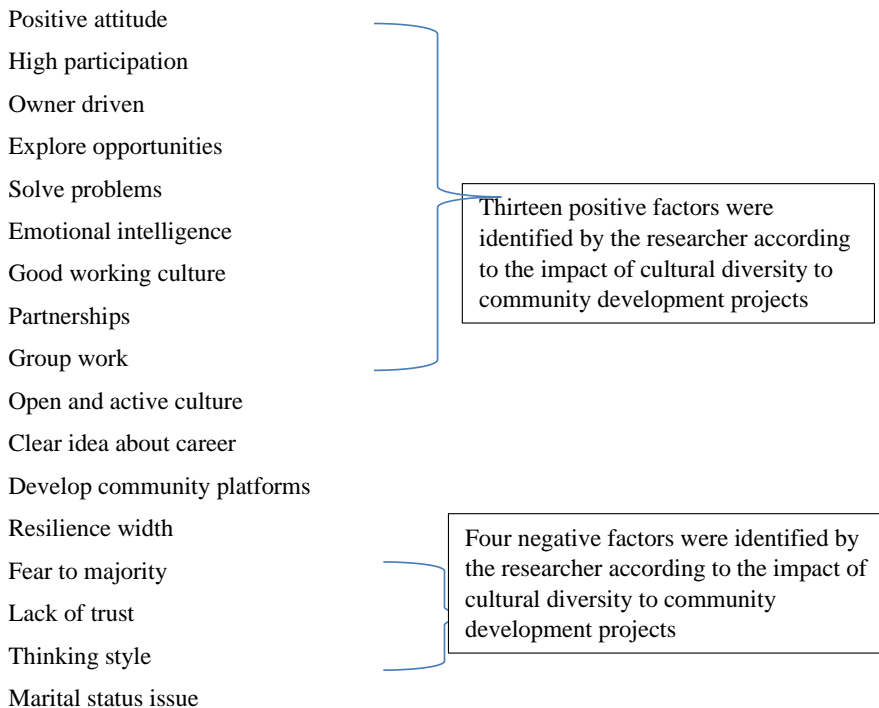**Final Findings: According to the Thematic Analysis**

Positive attitude

High participation

Owner driven

Explore opportunities

Solve problems

Emotional intelligence

Good working culture

Partnerships

Group work

Open and active culture

Clear idea about career

Develop community platforms

Resilience width

Fear to majority

Lack of trust

Thinking style

Marital status issue

Thirteen positive factors were identified by the researcher according to the impact of cultural diversity to community development projects

Four negative factors were identified by the researcher according to the impact of cultural diversity to community development projects

Source: Compiled by authors, 2021

Figure 3: Final Findings according to Thematic Analysis

Discussions

According to the Sri Lankan context, project management teams use different project management strategies to handle the project and gain successful project completion. The above factors are new

factors that can be applied to other community development projects which past researchers have not identified. They are Positive attitude, Owner drove, High participation, exploring opportunities, solving problems, Emotional intelligence, good working culture, Partnerships, Group work, Open and active culture, Clear ideas about career, developing community platforms and Resilience width are positive factors newly identified by the researcher. So, all these factors affected the increase in community development project performance. Fear of the majority, Lack of trust, thinking style, and marital status issues are the negative factors that the researcher identified in data collection according to the Sri Lankan context. Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country affected by war. Due to those situations, there are widows, disabled people, women headed families in some areas. Above are some negative factors identified by the researcher in data collection. The researcher has done research specifically related to the Sri Lankan context because there is a limited number of researchers in this field. This research would help to increase the existing knowledge and fill the knowledge gap about the impact of cultural diversity on community development projects. Due to this, the researcher can specify this research is unique to the Sri Lankan context.

According to the Sri Lankan context post evaluations, parallel monitoring, owner driven and high participation are some other positive factors where projects can develop the performance of the beneficiaries. So, the country would get high benefits.to handle the project and to gain successful project completion. Positive attitude, Owner drive, exploring opportunities, solving problems, and Emotional intelligence are some positive factors that impact increased project performance. Having a good attitude, will increase the good network with people, reduce conflicts, good rapport with others, as a collective base they will explore new opportunities, so these things will increase the project performance. Partnerships, Group work, Open and active culture, Clear ideas about careers, developing community platforms, and Resilience width are new negative factors identified by researchers in data collection and analysis. Because these factors are crucial and the basis for other development projects. By eradicating these factors, they can build integration, build harmony, and peace among different cultures and enhance social security among the villages, build a good culture in the society, people can engage in interreligious activities, and so on. Due to this researcher can specify this research is unique. Selecting the appropriate project location is a new finding of this research. Lack of trust, thinking style they used in Sri Lankan context. Documentation and updated documents are one of the new CSF and they can be used in other projects as a lesson learned. Other project team members can use different project management practices and strategies to overcome these barriers.

Conclusion

Project management is a valid and legitimate approach to management and has increasing use at present. According to the literature review, a project completed on time within budget could sometimes be considered a failure if it could not meet the customer requirements. Thus, project success and project

management success are not the same. Positive attitude, high participation, owner-driven, exploring opportunities, solving problems, emotional intelligence, good working culture, partnerships, group work, open and active culture, a clear idea about career, develop community platforms and resilience width are the thirteen newly identified positive factors related to community development projects. Fear of the majority, lack of trust, thinking style, and marital status are the four newly identified negative factors based on the Sri Lankan context. The researcher identified thirteen positive factors and four negative factors according to the thematic analysis. Those factors are some of the critical factors that the respondents repeatedly confirmed as positive and negative factors impacting community development projects related to the Sri Lankan context.

Recommendations

Future studies can use larger samples that cover different sizes and various types of projects. In addition, positive and negative factors related to community development projects incorporating the viewpoints of different stakeholders might add a high value to the findings presented here as another fertile ground for future studies.

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