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Exploring the Leadership and Project Risk Management in the IT Sector, Bangalore, India

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ABSTRACT

Effective project risk management is crucial for the success of any initiative, yet it is often approached through purely technical or procedural lenses. This study explores the intersection of leadership and project risk management from a human centered perspective, emphasizing the role of emotional intelligence, communication, and ethical decision-making. By examining how leadership styles influence risk perception, mitigation strategies, and team resilience, the research highlights the importance of empathetic and adaptive leadership in navigating uncertainty. Through a qualitative analysis of case studies and expert interviews, the study reveals that humanizing project risk management by prioritizing trust, transparency, and collaborative engagement can significantly enhance project outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction. The findings suggest that integrating human elements into risk management practices not only improves response effectiveness but also fosters a culture of shared responsibility and innovation.

KEYWORDS Humanized leadership, Project risk management, Emotional intelligence, Adaptive leadership, Leadership styles.

INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic and often unpredictable project environments, managing risk effectively has become more than a technical necessity—it is a strategic imperative. Traditional approaches to project risk management typically focus on quantitative analysis, structured methodologies, and procedural compliance. However, these frameworks often overlook the human factors that significantly influence how risks are perceived, communicated, and addressed within teams and organizations. Leadership plays a central role in shaping this human dimension. This study explores how leadership, when approached with empathy, emotional intelligence, and adaptability, can transform the way project risks are managed. Humanizing leadership in the context of risk management means recognizing the value of open communication, psychological safety, and ethical responsibility. It involves leaders who not only guide decision-making but also foster trust, collaboration, and resilience among project teams. By examining the interplay between leadership styles and risk management practices, this research aims to highlight the importance of integrating human-centred principles into project leadership. Such integration can lead to more responsive, inclusive, and effective risk management strategies that align with both organizational goals and the well-being of project stakeholders.

OBJECTIVES

- To analyse the influence of leadership style on risk management practices.
- To examine the role of leadership in enhancing risk awareness among project teams.
- To assess the impact of leadership on risk decision-making processes.
- To identify leadership behaviours that contribute to successful risk management outcomes.
- To evaluate the relationship between leadership engagement and risk management effectiveness.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Emotional intelligence (EI) has also emerged as a key concept linking leadership and risk management. Goleman (1998) asserts that emotionally intelligent leaders are better equipped to manage stress, resolve conflict, and foster collaborative relationships—all of which are vital in high-risk project settings. Leadership has long been acknowledged as a critical success factor in project management. According to Turner and

Müller(2005), leadership style significantly impacts project outcomes, especially in uncertain and complex environments. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration, motivation, and individualized consideration, is particularly effective in environments where flexibility and innovation are required. This style promotes trust and empowers team members to engage proactively with risks rather than avoid them. According to Hillson and Murray-Webster (2007), risk management is as much about understanding people's attitudes and behaviors as it is about analyzing data. Humanizing risk management involves recognizing team members' fears, motivations, and perspectives, and integrating these insights into the decision-making process. Studies by Clarke (2010) further support this, indicating that leaders with high EI create psychologically safe environments that encourage open discussion of risks and uncertainties. Carmeli et al. (2010) found that inclusive leaders who actively seek diverse viewpoints and foster belonging can improve team adaptability and reduce resistance to change, leading to more effective risk mitigation strategies. The relationship between leadership and project risk management has been widely studied, but much of the existing literature emphasizes structural and process-based approaches rather than human-centric factors. Traditional risk management frameworks, such as those outlined by the Project Management Institute (PMI), focus primarily on identifying, analyzing, and mitigating risks through formal tools and techniques (PMI, 2017). While these models are effective in providing structure, they often lack attention to the social and emotional dynamics present within project teams. Turner and Baker (2020), in their study "Agile Leadership and Project Adaptability", highlighted the increasing importance of agility in leadership for successful project execution. They found that leaders who encourage team autonomy, foster collaboration, and quickly adapt to environmental changes significantly enhance project responsiveness and outcome quality. Müller and Packendorff (2020), through their work titled "Leadership Behaviors and Stakeholder Engagement in Projects", explored how leaders influence stakeholder satisfaction. The study emphasized that effective communication, transparency, and timely engagement with stakeholders lead to smoother project execution and reduced resistance.

Kerzner (2021), "Hybrid Leadership in Project Management", explored how the integration of traditional and agile leadership methods creates a more adaptive management model. His findings suggest that project leaders who tailor their style to project complexity and team dynamics tend to drive better performance, especially in hybrid work environments.

Despite these findings, there remains a gap in the literature when it comes to synthesizing leadership theory and risk management practice through a humanized lens. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring how empathetic, emotionally intelligent, and ethically grounded leadership can enhance project risk management in complex and dynamic environments.

RESEACH GAPS

S.No	Citation	Objective	Key Findings
1	Goleman (1998)	To introduce emotional intelligence as a factor in leadership effectiveness	Emotionally intelligent leaders manage stress, resolve conflict, and support team collaboration effectively.
2	Turner & Müller (2005)	To explore the impact of leadership style on project success	Leadership style significantly affects project outcomes, especially in complex environments.
3	Hillson & Murray-Webster (2007)	To highlight behavioral and ethical factors in risk management.	Risk management should consider human behavior, ethics, and emotional responses.
4	Clarke (2010)	To highlight behavioral and ethical factors in risk management	High EI in leaders promotes psychologically safe environments, encouraging open risk discussions.
5	Carmeli et al. (2010)	To investigate inclusive leadership	Inclusive leaders enhance team adaptability and reduce resistance to change, aiding risk
6	PMI (2017)	To provide a structured framework for risk management in team dynamics	Emphasizes tools and processes; lacks focus on human and emotional aspects of risk management.
7	Turner and Baker (2019)	To assess how agile leadership impacts project adaptability and success	Agile leader empowers team to self-manage, leading to quicker decision-making and better handling of uncertainty.
8	Müller and Packendorff (2020)	To explore the link between leadership behaviors and stakeholder satisfaction.	Leader who focus on communication and stakeholder alignment enhance trust and reduce conflict.
9	Zwikael and Meredith (2020)	To evaluate the strategic role of project leaders in global organization.	Leadership alignment with strategic goals improves cross-functional projects success.
10	Kerzner (2021)	To examine involving leadership	A blend of traditional and agile leadership approaches is most effective in today's.

		trends in hybrid project environment.	
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Conceptual model



FigNo.1showingconceptualmodelofExploringtheleadershipandprojectrisk management

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In today's complex and fast-evolving project environments, traditional approaches to risk management often fall short because they focus predominantly on structured methodologies, tools, and processes while overlooking the human dynamics that influence risk perception and response. At the same time, leadership although widely acknowledged as a critical success factor in project management is frequently examined through a technical or strategic lens, with limited emphasis on emotional intelligence, empathy, ethical judgment, and inclusive practices.

- Overreliance on Structured Models.
- Limited Focus on Human-Centered Leadership.
- Gap Between Leadership and Risk Culture.
- Challenges in Modern Project Environments.
- Consequences of Ignoring Human Dynamics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

● Method Quantitative:

A structured survey will be used to measure key variables (e.g., leadership style, emotional intelligence, team communication, risk response effectiveness). Qualitative Component: Semi-structured interviews will explore participants' insights on how leadership attitudes and interpersonal dynamics influence risk perception and decision making in real project environments.

● Sampling:

Sampling techniques

- The study will use purposive sampling, selecting participants who have Active or recent experience managing or participating in projects with high-risk components. Roles such as project managers, team leads, or senior team members.

Experience in industries such as IT, where risk management is integral.

This technique ensures that participants have the depth of experience necessary to reflect on both leadership and risk management aspects in a meaningful way.

Data Collection Methods

- Primary Data:

Google Forms will be used to distribute structured questionnaires.

- Secondary Data:

Information will be gathered from academic journals, industry reports, HR blogs, and company publications to support analysis.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

- Age group distribution

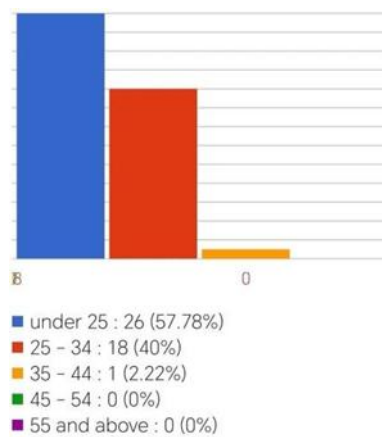


Fig no 2 showing age group distribution chart

Out of 50 responses, most participants are in the "under 25" or "25-34" age group, indicating that the data is heavily skewed towards younger professionals, possibly early-career individuals or recent graduates. Gender representation was diverse but slightly inclined toward female respondents, suggesting a moderately balanced perspective.

- Inspiration and motivate the project team

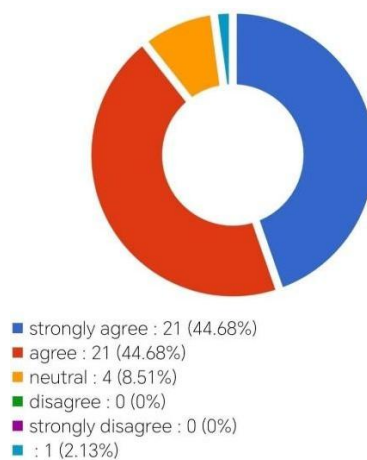
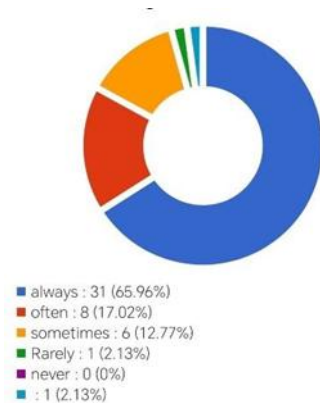


Fig no 3 showing inspiration and motivate chart

Out of 50 responses, most respondents agreed that their leaders were effective in motivating and inspiring their teams. This positive trend indicates strong leadership influence on employee engagement and job satisfaction. However, a few participants remained neutral, implying that some leaders might not consistently provide the emotional support or encouragement necessary to maximize team performance.

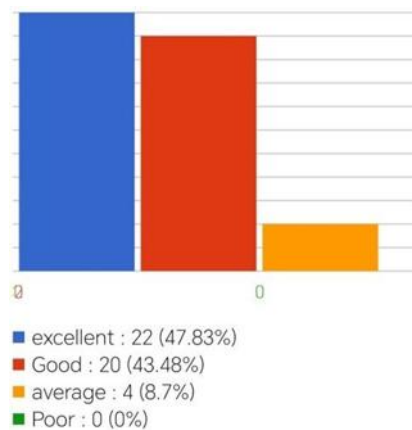
- Team involvement in decision-making



Figno4 showing team involvement in decision making chart

Out of 50 responses, that revealed a trend towards inclusive decision-making, with many team members being involved in discussions and planning. Nevertheless, there were not a few mentions of limited or occasional involvement, suggesting that some organizations still follow a more top-down approach, which may hinder innovation and reduce employees' sense of ownership.

- Communication and flexibility



Figno5 showing communication and flexibility chart

Out of 50 responses, Communication within teams, particularly regarding project objectives and unexpected changes, received generally positive feedback. Leaders were seen as effective communicators and capable of adapting to shifting circumstances—key strengths in fast-paced industries. Yet, a small segment of respondents highlighted areas where communication lacked clarity, signaling the need for better goal alignment and transparency in certain teams.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS, FUTURE RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the vital role that human-centered leadership plays in enhancing the effectiveness of project risk management. While traditional risk management approaches often focus on technical tools and structured processes, this research emphasizes the importance of integrating emotional intelligence, empathy, ethical leadership, and inclusive communication into project environments.

Limitations

Sample Size and Diversity:

The study was limited to a specific number of participants and industries, which may affect the generalizability of the findings across all sectors or cultures. As the research was conducted at a single point in time, it may not fully capture how leadership and risk dynamics evolve over the life of a project.

Implications

For Theory:

The study contributes to the growing body of literature on emotionally intelligent and ethical leadership, particularly in high-stakes, uncertain environments. It offers a framework for merging leadership theory with practical risk management strategies, shifting the focus from purely technical methods to socially aware practices.

For Practice:

Project leaders should develop not only managerial skills but also emotional and interpersonal competencies. Organizations should promote leadership development programs that include empathy training, inclusive communication, and ethical decision-making. Risk management frameworks need to evolve beyond checklists and compliance, embracing human factors as central to project success.

Future recommendation

Conduct Longitudinal Studies:

Track leadership behavior and risk responses over the course of a project to understand how relationships and trust evolve over time.

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