

## ABSTRACT

Contemporary organizations use projects and project based structures extensively because it increases flexibility and allows better and more efficient allocation of resources within an organization. It also brings focus to a set of activities and enables a more effective governance based on cost, time and schedules. Despite this focus, project failures are well documented and are known to impact organizational performance. Projects vary across several dimensions and these contingencies require different management styles and practices to deliver effective performance. Yet the dominant assumption in project management practices continues to be “One size fits all”. We draw on project contingency literature to understand how contingencies impact project performance. Another dimension that impacts project performance is the extent to which the project manager has autonomy in handling the managerial practices in the project.

In this study, our focus is to understand the interplay among project contingencies, impact of autonomy in implementing Human Resources (HR) practices (known as devolution) and project performance. Software services industry has been chosen as the context due to nature of industry being predominantly project oriented.

This thesis consists of three related essays. In the first essay, the rela-

tionship among the constructs namely project contingencies, devolution of HR practices and, project performance is explored. Using qualitative research methodology, with project managers as respondents, we arrived at a theoretical framework for project contingencies.

The theoretical framework has been tested for validity and generalisability in the second part. Literature review suggests HR support environment as an important factor that influences the relationship between devolution and organisational performance. Hence, this factor was added to the model. A survey about project experiences was designed and was administered to project managers. The analysis revealed that in case of projects with high uncertainty, devolution of HR practices impacts project performance positively. Also, the impact of HR environment is significant in the relationship between devolution and project performance.

We argue for higher devolution to project manager in cases of projects with high uncertainty. However, the extent of uncertainty is best assessed by the project manager. This information is not available to the same nuance and extent to the project owner or the central administration. This scenario is formulated analytically using principal agent model. Optimal contract that the organisation can offer to the manager in order to ensure profitability has been derived. The study has theoretical and managerial implications for the field of project management and human resources management.