The Extended Role of Project Management Office in the Multi-Project Environment

Abstract

Over the past few years, the quantity of projects undertaken by organisations has been increasing rapidly. In order to manage different projects simultaneously, the concept of portfolio management was introduced. The portfolio management itself came under PMO whose role is to manage all the projects of the organisation and ensure their delivery. Due to number of projects under the PMO and many other reasons certain challenges are faced by project management office in the current multi-project environment. This research will try to give a better understanding of the role of PMO in a multi-project environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to Spalek (2012), project management is the practical ability and the majority of studies observed that experts and researchers pay special attention to project management. PMO is a structure of any organisation for improving practices of project management through the application of proper methodologies for achieving the required efficiency level. The objectives of PMO are varied that includes a process objective of improving the efficiency of use of a resource, the user objective for the use of resources of scarce in an efficient manner, setting up the criteria of learning for the reduction of risk about the failure of projects and the value objectives for increasing the success.

As per the study of Kendall and Rollins (2003), the management of portfolios is an important part of PMO. The portfolio management covers all the projects that falls under the responsibility of PMO. In the current multi-project environment, the portfolio management is vital for a company as it assists in managing many different projects under one umbrella.

1.1.   Contextual Background

The PMO plays a key part in managing portfolios and deals with the challenges associated in the multi-project environment. For the management of the projects in multi-project environment, PMOs have project managers that play the fundamental role as mediators and executors when the organisation has been facing external pressures. In the context of this role, programs have been subjected to continuous influence for advancement, starting from the internal environment of the organisation, external pressures and the change within the organisation (Pellegrinelli, 2011). Although, most of the studies identified that the importance of these roles has not been acknowledged within the group of portfolio management and are found to be ignored in the majority of the official practices of portfolio management. In order to operate the program roles in an effective manner, project managers need to learn innovative skills and

enhance their capabilities. According to Pellegrinelli (2011), project managers were found to be in desperate need of support for the purpose of acquiring awareness and creativity to fulfil the demands for the role of program manager in PMOs.

1.2.   Research Problem

PMO had been focusing on developing the trend of the multi-project environment. PMOs are surrounded by their neighbouring organisational environment and make an advancement with the organisation. Despite knowing that there is a link between PMO and business backgrounds, yet the researchers had been unable to understand the mechanism that works as a connection between organisational backgrounds to PMO operations and PMO operations to the benefits organisation gained from PMO operations (Kutsch, 2015). However, the study of Hobbs and Aubry (2007) stated that project management offices cannot be classified in simple models this means that they should adopt strategic and organisational backgrounds. The former researchers have recognised the main research problem, moreover, our research will tend to focus on the understanding and assessing of the role of PMOs in a multi-project environment and the management of portfolio, program and projects. As added by Alexandrova, Stankova and Gelemenov (2015), portfolio management is a major part of the operations of a PMO. All the projects that are undertaken by the PMO comes under the portfolio management. The PMO manages its portfolio as per the requirement of the company and the projects. However, there are certain challenges that are faced by the PMO when managing its portfolio. Our study will help the PMO leaders that are a breaker of knowledge who simplify the improvement and organisational learning. The study will provide routines for an organisation to transfer the learning through previous work of the projects. Moreover, the study will provide recommendations to PMO relating to increased efficiency in the management of projects and will ensure PMOs to adopt strategic and organisational backgrounds. Furthermore, the study will ensure that the validity of PMO will be assessed through the invested money and on the basis of contribution for the portfolio, program and project management. The study will further help the PMO in managing its portfolio and facing all the challenges that occurs when managing its portfolio.

1.3.   Research Aim and Objectives

- To comprehend the need and requirement of PMO in project portfolio management

- To identify the challenges for PMO while managing portfolio in order to achieve strategic objectives in a multi-project environment.
- To provide recommendations to the Project Management Office pertaining to its increased efficiency and effectiveness while managing project portfolios in a multi-project environment.

1.4. Research Questions

- What is the need and requirement of PMO in project portfolio management?
- What are the challenges for PMO while managing portfolio in order to achieve strategic objectives in a multi-project environment?
- What are the recommendations for the Project Management Office pertaining to increasing its efficiency and effectiveness while managing project portfolios in a multi-project environment?

1.5. Rationale of the study

The key rationale of conducting a study on this research would be assessing and evaluating the role of the PMO in a multi-project environment. In past literature, the researchers and authors had evaluated numerous models yet the management of project and programs remain a matter of concern. Moreover, the study of Kutsch (2015) states that human nature of underestimating and producing the expectant schedules can result in project failure because of a discouraging plan, varying requirements and poor assuring of quality.

The purpose of our study is to make sure that organisations are capable to invest in PMO in order to increase the efficiency in functions in the environment of multi-project. The study will focus on the fact that the organisations must ensure the need for PMO in activities which will help in increasing the performance of project management. Furthermore, the concept of project portfolio will be discussed. The project portfolio is a major part of PMO as with portfolio management the PMO manages all the projects it has undertaken.

Therefore, the major reason of research for our study is to conduct wide and operative research that can cover the current gap existing in previous literature and donate towards evaluating the extended role of PMO in a multi-project environment.

1.6. Significance of the Study

There is a significance to conduct this research study that determines the skills of PMO and contributes as a learning practice for the organisations. PMO has a significant effect on the organisational environment in order to achieve the aim and objectives. The study will focus on providing a structure of governance to control and monitor the PMO functions. Moreover, the study will provide ease of access to information to help project managers and will focus on the obedience of the project which ensures that no policy will be violated. Furthermore, the study will focus on the role of portfolio management. It will provide a broader view on risk management, reporting and execution of projects in a business environment. Lastly, the study will focus on the management of resources and will help the project managers to ensure the successful completion of the project in the environment of multi-project. This is the main reason for understanding and identifying the features that examine PMO because it plays a key role in improving the performance of PMOs within the organisation. The study will further provide assisting in managing project portfolio. After highlighting the importance of the project portfolio, the study aims at introducing the challenges faced by PMO in managing project portfolios.

1.7. Structure of the Study

The structure of this study will be detailed and comprehensive.
- Chapter 1 will include the contextual background, research problem, research aim and objectives, research questions, rationale and significance of the study.

- Chapter 2 will include the theoretical framework of the study explaining the factors and variables of the research and a conceptual framework explaining the relationship between dependent and independent variables.
- Chapter 3 will include the research philosophy, research approach, research design, data collection method, data analysis plan, ethical issues and research limitations.
- Chapter 4 will include the thematic interview analysis and discussion about the study.
- Chapter 5 will be the conclusion of the study involving the summary of findings, recommendations and future implications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1. Project Management Office

PMO focuses on customising and sustaining the techniques, tools and methods within an organisation. According to the study of Monteiro, Santos and Varajao (2016), PMO has increasing importance in the organisational environment because of the valuable management it provides on structuring and executing the organisation's PMO. However, according to Kutsch et al. (2015), the organisations which are not stable have the majority of Project Management Offices and in the span of 3 years, they are likely to terminate their operations. For the management of the projects in multi-project environment, PMOs have project managers that play the fundamental role as mediators and executors when the organisation has been facing external pressures.

In recent years, the knowledge about project management has increased and the organisations have recognised the understanding and importance of project management offices for the development of business. According to the study of Walker and Christenson (2005), that suggested making a difference between various PMOs, this means that support office and corporate office should be distinct from PMO. The study declared that the project management offices exhibit classified knowledge showing the existence of relational and structural dimension and argument that in project offices centralised learning happened at group level. PMOs that are performing poorly are costly and have a low contribution in program and project performance whereas the PMOs that have a high value make important contributions in performance.

PMO provides value by coordination of multiple projects and managing dependencies of cross projects at a tactical level. However, at strategic level, PMO consists of both tactical and operational PMO and also have the authority for prioritising the projects relating to strategies and objectives of corporate level. Furthermore, PMO advises senior management to make investments in projects feasible. The responsibilities of PMO are of a wide range from providing functions of project management to taking responsibility for managing the project directly.

2.2. Project Portfolio Management

According to Kaiser, Arbi and Ahlemann (2015), a PMO undertakes different projects at a time and managing all these projects simultaneously comes under portfolio management. The purpose of the portfolio management is to safeguard that each project undertaken by the PMO are completed in time with proper execution. Similarly stated by Kopmann et al. (2017), the process of taking projects by the PMO comes under portfolio management where the potential projects are discussed, they are authorized, their separate project manager is selected, and they are included in the overall portfolio. Further contributed by Costantino, Gravio and Nonino (2015), a portfolio manager is selected to maintain the project portfolio whose job is ensuring that the projects are being done at the appropriate time as per their deadline and requirement. Another purpose for the portfolio management is to assist PMO in ensuring that the right projects are undertaken by the company as per the time, money, and resources of the company. Kendall and Rollins (2003) states that it comes under portfolio management to assist PMO in selecting projects which benefits the company the most.

As added by Siew (2016), portfolio management is beneficial for the PMOs as it aligns the company's objectives with the projects. Portfolio management further removes biasness and conflicts while optimizing decision-making. Further contributed by Patanakul (2015), it further helps the PMO to turn down projects that does not align with the organizational goals and priorities. With portfolio management in operation, the company focuses on the long-term as it can hold many projects at a time. As added by Kendall and Rollins (2003), portfolio management assists the PMO in selecting projects that are as per the objectives of the company. The selection of the appropriate projects also come under portfolio management, the projects with most benefit, least risk, and as per the cost, time, and resources it requires is selected. Similarly stated by Petro and Gardiner (2015), the portfolio management also ensure that the timeline of the projects is different thus that one project cannot cause delay to the other. In the end, the portfolio management monitors each project under PMO and ensure they are done in time with optimum quality.

2.3.   Understanding the need and requirement of PMO while managing portfolio

As per the study of Bredillet, Tywoniak and Tootoonchy (2018), portfolio management is the management of different projects under one umbrella, whereas, it is the job of PMO to manage the entire portfolio. The role of PMO is to ensure that the projects under its portfolio are completed in the given time and as per the necessary requirements. Similarly contributed by Ko and Kim (2019), a portfolio consists of many different projects and it is the role of project management office (PMO) to ensure that these projects are given their required time and are completed without hindering other projects. The PMO undertakes projects as per the benefit they provides to the organisation. According to Patanakul (2015), the selection is often based on the time, resources, and money these projects require thus the PMO selects those projects that benefits the company in the long-run. Only those projects are selected that can be completed considering the resources and capital of the company. Cost/benefit analysis also plays a part in selection of the projects as projects that benefits more to the company than it costs it are selected by the PMO.

Alexandrova, Stankova and Gelemenov (2015) states that PMO is a centralised body that is responsible for the completion of many projects that falls under the portfolio of the company. An effective PMO completes its projects in a shorter amount of time which significantly reduces conflicts that could arise during the projects. Similarly added by Kendall and Rollins (2003), when maintaining the project portfolio, the PMO must ensure that the projects undertaken by the company are balanced considering its cost/benefit, organisational goals, and PMO's objectives. The portfolio of the PMO must be as per the potential of the PMO. Too many projects can cause harm to the PMO as the existing resources of the PMO are often limited and managing different projects at the same time can be difficult for the PMO.

As stated in the study of Kutsch (2015), the challenges faced during executing PMO and supporting them in a successful manner are of diversified nature, therefore failing to design a PMO on the basis of required need can lead to apparent lack of contribution. In a business environment, PMO has increasing importance with respect to the alignment of strategies and project management and for this purpose, various models were introduced about the types and operations of PMOs (Hubbard, Bolles and PMP, 2015).

2.4.   The challenges for PMO in managing portfolio while achieving strategic objects of the multi-project environment

PMOs are making gains in being recognised in the multi-project environment, however, they are still facing some challenges at the moment (Salamah and Alnaji, 2014). Following are the challenges faced by PMO in managing project, program, and portfolio while achieving strategic objects of the multi-project environment.

2.4.1. Improving PPM maturity

One of the challenges PMOs faces is improving the maturity of portfolio. Supporting project portfolio management is a PMO's main objective, and a PMO must work to fulfil the requirements of PPM for achieving effective PPM deliveries (Pansini and Terzieva, 2013). PMOs needs time and experience to mature into a significant body, they must work flexibly in the continuous environment they operate in to achieve maturity (Anantatmula and Rad, 2013).

2.4.2. Adapting to Changes and Agile environment

Another challenge PMOs face in the current age is moving forward with the evolving world, the businesses are changing and adapting to the change thus PMOs need to adapt too. The changes mainly occur in the form of technology, organisational structure and resources, PMOs must adapt to these changes as a necessity for survival (Overstreet, Bates and Mallicoat, 2013). PMOs need to improve towards their pace of doing business since their customers are demanding agile services, they need to start approaching flexible environments where the can improve their agile project management, this can improve their ability to face other challenges more effectively. Furthermore, due to managing different projects, the PMO needs to be agile as maintaining its portfolio requires agility (Thompson and PMC, 2019).

2.4.3. Resource Management

A different challenge faced by PMOs is making proper use of their resources, their resources need to allocated and used efficiently to provide effective results. A PMO undertakes many different projects under its portfolio thus it has to manage its resources accordingly. Furthermore, PMOs have a deficiency of qualified workers thus their staff continuously need adapting to the changing world, the staff used by PMOs for undertaking PPM in a multi-project

environment is their foremost resource (Philbin, 2016). The staff continuously needs to learn new skills to cope up with the changing environment, it is PMOs' responsibly to efficiently use their workers thus they need to teach their staff updated skill so that they can produce effects for the PMO (Pansini and Terzieva, 2013).

2.4.4. Understanding new Tools

The changing landscape of the business world and the introduction of the latest technologies need adapting from PMOs. Tools and methods for Project Management are updated every now and then, PMOs need their workers to adapt to these new tools and methods to work efficiently and effectively (Padalkar and Gopinath, 2016). When workers have the knowledge of using state-of-the-art technology, their value is significantly increased which eventually increases the performance of PMOs in a multi-project environment. Inversely, when PMOs staff is not up-to-date with the upgraded knowledge and updated tools, clients tend to look for alternate options and hire different and advanced Project Management service provider (Crawford, 2014).

2.4.5. Increasing PMO value for the Organisation

The value and worth of the PMO towards the organisation needs to be optimal for the PMO to reach maturity. A PMO can work efficiently and effectively if the organisation allocate resources to them, the services provided by PMOs are optimal when organisations put efforts on their maturity (Anantatmula and Rad, 2013). The PMO provides value-added optimal services to their clients if they are valued by their organisations thus sufficient funds are required by the PMOs to work in a multi-project environment. The issue is mainly faced when organisations fail to understand the importance of PMO, the perception of the organisation towards PMO needs to be changed for the PMO to add value to their services (Silva and Bouter, 2015). Further added by Kendall and Rollins (2003), earning the respect of its executives is very important for a PMO. The shortest amount of time it needs to complete its projects the more value it creates in the minds of the company's executives. Another important factor that should by looked by PMO is to create impact that is noticed and valued by the upper management and executives thus that the need and requirement of PMO is understood throughout the company.

2.4.6. Evolving the PMO

PMOs usually cease to exist after a short period of time when they fail to produce revenue for the organisation thus constant improvements are required to be made for the PMO to evolve and become a significant part of the organisation (Padalkar and Gopinath, 2016). A PMO should adapt to the changing environment and evolve into a significant body by upgrading and updating methods and tools of providing optimal Project Management services (Crawford, 2014). Furthermore, PMOs should cater to the bottlenecks in their services, improvements need to be made for such parts of the services thus the PMO can perform optimally (Padalkar and Gopinath, 2016).

3. METHODOLOGY
3.1. Research Philosophy

The research will be focused on interpretivism philosophy. In interpretivism the emphasis of the research is on qualitative analysis, the research is focused on different views existing across different cultures, nations, genders, and races of the world (Chinyamurindi, 2017). The research will use interpretivism philosophy because different social aspects of the extended role of PMO in a multi-project environment will be taken into consideration. Interpretivism will be selected because the entire research will be subjective: norms, values, and regulations across cultures, nations, races, and genders will be accounted for in the research.

3.2. Research Approach

The inductive approach will be followed for the research processes. In inductive approach previous theories on the topic are taken into consideration, patterns, similarities, and differences in the considered theories are observed. In the inductive approach, data collection is the first step, followed by qualitative collection, differences found in the data are observed, and patterns are searched. Finally, in the inductive approach, theories are given as per the finding of the data, collected and analysed (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013).

Since the topic of research is on the extended role of PMO in a multi-project environment, different managers of PMOs and project managements working in the multi-project environment will be interviewed and multiple discussions will be conducted. The collected data will then be

observed and analysed, relationships will be made between the views and experiences of the managers and workers of different PMOs.

3.3. Research Design

The research design of the research will be from a qualitative perspective. Qualitative designs are based on concepts and theories. Both primary and secondary are considered while conducting qualitative researches. The questions asked to gather and collect the data are interpretative and in the form of inquiry (Lewis, 2015). The research's purpose is to define and explain the role of PMO's, the researcher will need to inquire and ask questions thus qualitative design is considered suitable. The researcher will need first-hand up-to-date data and qualitative design caters to the need perfectly thus is selected.

3.4. Data Collection Process

The process of data collection is essential for research, the data collection process differ for qualitative and quantitative researches. The main reason for data collection is to gather strong quality evidence that will later support the theory and conclusion derived after the completion of the research (Richard, 2013).

The data collected for the research will be qualitative. Both secondary and primary research will be applied during the research. The secondary data will include different existing theories developed on the concept of the role of PMO in a multi-project environment. For the primary data, different managers of PMOs and project management across organisations will be interviewed, the researcher will visit the interviewees in their respective organisation and conduct an interview with them.

3.5. Sampling Method, Technique and Size
3.5.1. Sampling Method

The sampling method used in the research will be non-probability. In the non-probability sampling method, a particular portion of the population is selected for the research, the sample selected is related to the topic of the research at hand. In non-probability sampling, the participants are randomly selected, however, they are not selected without a specific purpose in

mind, and only the participants related to the research survey are selected and administered (Uprichard, 2013). Similarly, for the research, the participants will randomly be selected, the priority of the research will be to select PMO managers from different organisations.

3.5.2. Sampling Technique

The convenient sampling technique is selected for the research, it is considered to be the cheapest and least time-consuming technique. In the technique the participants are selected considering their feasibility, the selections are based on their ease of access for the researcher (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2016). Different managers working across PMO's in different organisation will be selected considering their feasibility, priority will be given to those who can easily be accessed.

3.5.3. Sample Size

The sample size for the research will consist of 10 participants, 10 different managers of PMOs and Project Management working in the multi-project environment from different organisations will be selected for the research. Interviews will be arranged with them and in-depth discussions will be conducted, the interviews will be recorded in the form of transcript.

3.6. Data Analysis

The method of data analysis used for the research will be Thematic. The analysis identifies and analyses different patterns in a given set of data, the researcher's focus is on the repetition of information collected via interviews and other primary data collection techniques, the researcher tries to identify the similarities in the collected data in the thematic analysis approach (Clarke, Braun and Hayfield, 2015).

A thematic approach will significantly be effective when different views, experiences, opinions, and values of managers of different PMOs working in a multi-project environment are compared. The approach will help in highlighting the pattern of differences and similarities between the different participants selected for the data collection. The approach will further give insights into the unanticipated links between the selected subjects.

4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

The research will follow ethical consideration. In ethical consideration, a guideline is provided to the researcher, when he/she is going for an interview or collecting any sort of data, the subjects must be informed and their privacy must be maintained. The data collected from different surveys, questionnaire, interviews, group discussions, and observations must be kept secure, and the chances of the theft of the data must be minimized by taking considerable precautions (Connelly, 2014).

In the research the data collected from the participants will consent, they will be aware of all the aspects of the research, and no pieces of information, regarding how the data will be used, will be hidden from them. The participants' anonymity and confidentiality will persevere, their names and identity will not be revealed without their permission.

In the research, all the secondary researches conducted to find relevant information for the research will be given the required credit, the researcher will pay his/her respect and recognise the contribution of other researchers in his/her research.

5. RESEARCH LIMITATION

The first limitation for the research will be that the sample size of the study considers only managers, and employees are absent, thus some nature of valuable information that only employees could have given may be missed. The topic of the research is very specific, thus there may occur problems when conducted secondary researches, the existing knowledge on the topic may not be significant enough to be considered for the research.

The fieldwork will not be included in the research, the researcher will not be visiting and monitoring the working environment. Some nature of quantitative research could have been conducted, questionnaires could have been sent to different PMO and project management

managers across the globe via emails, their experiences, knowledge and opinions could have added valuable information in the research.

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