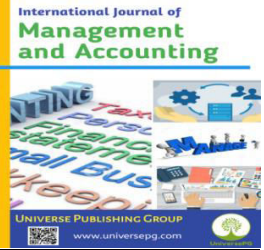




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The Effect of Change Management Practices on the Budget Compliance for Projects: The Case Study of Digital Ambassadors Program

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Abstract

The study examines the effect of change management practices mainly the leadership, communication strategies, stakeholder engagement on the budget compliance for the Digital Ambassadors Program (DAP) under the Rwanda Information Society Authority (RISA). A descriptive research design was adopted with a sample of 397 respondents drawn from the digital ambassadors, supervisors, officers, and senior management for the program. Using multiple regression analysis, the study found a significant positive relationship between change management practices and budget compliance, with an adjusted R^2 of 0.432 ($F = 86.833$, $p = 0.000$). The results indicate that effective leadership, clear communication, and proactive stakeholder engagement contribute to adherence to project budgets. The study concludes that integrating robust change management practices enhances financial discipline in project execution and recommends strengthening change communication frameworks and leadership alignment for better fiscal outcomes.

Keywords: Change management practices, Digital ambassadors program (DAP), and Rwanda.

1. Introduction

Change management is a pivotal discipline that significantly influences project and organizational performance, especially in the rapidly evolving business landscape of the 21st century (Asikhia *et al.*, 2021). It is defined as a planned process designed to assist groups and individuals in adapting to and navigating continuous changes in their working environments (Rahman, 2021; Deepaware *et al.*, 2023). This encompasses a comprehensive approach to constantly renewing an organization's direction, structure, and capabilities to effectively meet the ever-changing demands of both internal and external

customers (Asikhia *et al.*, 2021). When integrated with project management, change management specifically addresses the human element of transitions, ensuring smoother adoption, maximizing sustainability, and ultimately yielding a better return on investment (Otundo Richard, 2021). Despite their recognized importance, many projects continue to experience cost overruns due to weak integration of change management principles. According to recent reports, most of the infrastructure and IT projects spend 20 to 45 percent more than the proposed budget. The effect of the overruns is not only related to financial losses but also the disappointment from the people involved

in the project, the reputation of the company, the project managers involved and the people funding the project (Tubei, 2024; Mumtaz *et al.*, 2025). In one in six IT change projects in one study there was cost overrun of 200% on average which led to millions of dollars loss (Eide Bailly, 2024). In Rwanda, the Digital Ambassadors Program (DAP) implemented by RISA aims to promote digital literacy across the country, but like many large-scale initiatives, they face challenges in maintaining budget discipline (RISA, 2025). This study explores how leadership, communication strategies, and stakeholder engagement as key components of change management affect budget compliance in DAP implementation.

Research Objective

To examine the effect of change management practices (leadership, communication strategies, and stakeholder engagement) on the budget compliance for the Digital Ambassadors Program.

Research Question

To what extent do change management practices (leadership, communication strategies, and stakeholder engagement) influence budget compliance in the Digital Ambassadors Program?

Research Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant effect of change management practices on the budget compliance of the Digital Ambassadors Program.

H₁: There is a significant effect of change management practices on the budget compliance of the Digital Ambassadors Program.

Ethical Clearance

Informed consent was given from all the participants, confidentiality and anonymity was respected to protect the privacy of the respondents. The data collected were only used for the academic purpose and the

answers from the respondents were strictly used while analyzing the data.

2. Review of Literature

Existing studies emphasize that effective change management is essential for achieving project objectives within financial constraints. Zou and Lee, (2008) found that formal change justification procedures reduce cost escalation in projects. Similarly, Mohammed, (2021) demonstrated that proactive change management enhances cost and time performance in Nigerian construction projects. In the Rwandan context, Karangwa *et al.* (2023) established a positive association between change management practices and sustainability of water supply projects.

Theoretical underpinnings such as the ADKAR Model (Hiatt, 1998) highlight awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement as critical stages to achieving successful organizational change. These findings reinforce the need for effective leadership, structured communication, and stakeholder engagement in maintaining budget compliance in projects such as DAPS.

3. Methodology

A descriptive quantitative design was used with a sample of 397 respondents from the digital ambassadors, officers, supervisors, and senior management for the Digital Ambassadors Program selected via simple random and purposive sampling. A validated Likert-scale questionnaire measured leadership, communication, stakeholder engagement, and budget compliance. Data were analyzed using SPSS regression: $BC = \beta_0 + \beta_1(LDS) + \beta_2(CS) + \beta_3(SE) + \epsilon$.

4. Results and Discussion

H₀: There is no significant effect of Change management practices on the budget compliance of the Digital Ambassadors Program.

Table 1: Model Summary Three.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.661 ^a	.437	.432	.56851
a. Predictors: (Constant), Stakeholder Engagement, Communication Strategies, Leadership.				

The results indicated that the adjusted R² is 0.432 representing 43.2% indicating that, leadership communication strategies, and stakeholder engagement are

meaningful predictors of budget compliance for the DAP. It observed that out 44% of the variability of the budget compliance is explained by the three Change

management practices. The remaining 56% is due to other factors that are not included in the model two.

This means that there is a room for improvement.

Table 2: Anova Table for Model Three.

ANOVA ^a Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	84.195	3	28.065	86.833	.000 ^b
	Residual	108.597	336	.323		
	Total	192.793	339			
a. Dependent Variable: Budget Compliance.						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Stakeholder Engagement, Communication Strategies, Leadership.						

From ANOVA Table, the F-test is 86.833 has a p-value = 0.000. This implies that all Change management practices jointly have positive and significant effect on the budget compliance of the digital ambassador’s program. Therefore, H₀ There is no significant

effect of Change management practices (leadership, communication strategies, stakeholder engagement) on the budget compliance of the Digital Ambassadors Program is not accepted at all levels of significance.

Table 3: Coefficient Table for Model Three.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.045	.192		5.434	.000
	Leadership	.185	.064	.184	2.878	.004
	Communication Strategies	.161	.061	.162	2.631	.009
	Stakeholder Engagement	.362	.059	.386	6.133	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Budget Compliance.						

From the coefficient table, leadership has a significant effect on the budget compliance of the Digital Ambassadors Program ($\beta= 0.184$, $t= 2.878$, $sig.=0.004$). This means that 1-unit increase in leadership is associated with a 0.184 increase in budget compliance of the program, considering other factors constant. From the coefficient table, communication strategies have a significant effect on the budget compliance of the Digital Ambassadors Program ($\beta= 0.162$, $t= 2.631$, $sig.=0.009$). This means that 1-unit increase in communication Strategies is associated with a 0.162 increase in budget compliance, considering other factors constant.

From the coefficient table, stakeholder engagement has a significant positive effect on the budget compliance of the Digital Ambassadors Program ($\beta= 0.386$, $t= 6.133$, $sig.=0.000$). Specifically, 1-unit increase in stakeholder engagement is associated with a 0.386 increase in budget compliance, holding other factors constant. The findings suggest that stakeholder engagement is a strongest predictor of the budget compliance of the DAP.

The regression results for Hypothesis Three indicate that leadership, communication strategies, and stakeholder engagement collectively explain 43.2% of the variability in budget compliance of the Digital Ambassadors Program (Adjusted R² = 0.432). The ANOVA results (F = 86.833, $p < 0.001$) confirm that these change management practices jointly have a statistically significant effect on budget compliance. Among the predictors, stakeholder engagement was the strongest determinant ($\beta = 0.386$, $p < 0.001$), followed by leadership ($\beta = 0.184$, $p = 0.004$) and communication strategies ($\beta = 0.162$, $p = 0.009$). This suggests that involving stakeholder’s actively in decision-making, supported by effective leadership and clear communication, significantly enhances adherence to budget allocations.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that change management practices significantly improve the budget compliance in the Digital Ambassadors Program. Strong leadership, effective communication, and stakeholder involvement increase financial discipline during the

project implementation. It is recommended that RISA institutionalize formal change management frameworks provides training for project leaders on change communication, and establishes stakeholder feedback loops to sustain fiscal control across future projects.

6. Author Contributions

Authors admit collaboration throughout the entire research process.

7. Acknowledgement

The authors sincerely appreciate the Rwanda Information Society Authority for giving us approval to collect data from there.

8. Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare there are no conflicts of interest to this study.

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