Organizational Influences on the Organization and Project Performance

The Impact of Conformity, Commitment and Trust

Claudia Gutierrez

Preface

This research was conducted at the Department of Production and Quality Engineering at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. This report constitutes the final deliverable of the master thesis for the Master of Science of Project Management. The initial subject of study, stated in the master assignment, proved to be of such broadness and complicatedness that we had to refine the scope of work at different stages of this project. Furthermore, the master assignment requests to format this report in compliance with a project management journal. This report is not formatted as a paper; otherwise it would lack the proper structure of a master thesis. Instead, I have formatted this report as academic paper following the International Journal of Project Management's submission requirements and included as Appendix C. All the deviations from the master assignment were discussed and agreed upon between my supervisor Professor Bassam Hussein, and me. The decisions we made were founded on valid arguments, as we comprehensively reviewed the organizational and project management literature, and in the methodological issues we experienced during the project.

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Bassam Hussein, who supported this investigation throughout its development. As an engineer, with experience in technical tasks, this master thesis is my most significant experience in conducting research within a social science. Bassam's guidance and feedback was essential to develop this study and to learn how to conduct research in social sciences.
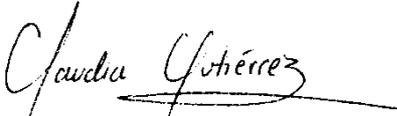
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MASTER THESIS
Spring 2014
for Claudia Gutierrez

Impact of organizational influences on project performance and outcome through its life cycle
-An empirical investigation-

The purpose of the assignment is to identify and analyze how and to what extent organizational influences shape project performance and outcome through its-life cycle. The assignment also aims to identify possible countermeasures that could be implemented in order to reduce the impact of these influences.

Organizational influences are usually reflected in numerous factors, including style, structure, competence, shared values, norms and beliefs, policies and procedures, the view of relationships with authority, and work ethics, to mention but a few.

Tasks

- Conduct a condensed and comprehensive literature review that covers types and categories and impact of organizational influences. The study should also look into similar research work that addresses the same or similar purpose.

- Identify relevant research methods that fit for the purpose of the assignment,

- Identify possible case studies (type of projects), respondents, informants and means to collect the empirical data from informants and respondents,

- Develop relevant instruments, interview guides, and questionnaires that can be used to collect relevant data from informants and case study,

- Through methods identified above, the student shall identify most prominent organizational influences in each project life cycle. Discuss and analyze their impacts, and elaborate on possible countermeasures that could be used address these organizational influences.

The assignment solution must be based on any standards and practical guidelines that already exist and are recommended. This should be done in close cooperation with supervisors and any other responsibilities involved in the assignment. In addition it has to be an active interaction between all parties.

Within three weeks after the date of the task handout, a pre-study report shall be prepared. The report shall cover the following:

- An analysis of the work task's content with specific emphasis of the areas where new knowledge has to be gained.
- A description of the work packages that shall be performed. This description shall lead to a clear definition of the scope and extent of the total task to be performed.
- A time schedule for the project. The plan shall comprise a Gantt diagram with specification of the individual work packages, their scheduled start and end dates and a specification of project milestones.

The pre-study report is a part of the total task reporting. It shall be included in the final report. Progress reports made during the project period shall also be included in the final report.

The report should be edited as a double-spaced high quality research paper with abstract, keywords, introduction, literature review, research method, findings/results, discussions, conclusions and references. In addition to appendices. Referencing and the formatting should comply with for example international journal of project management, project management journal or any other project management journal.

The recommended size of the paper (abstract-conclusions) should be around 12 000 words.

Equipment and software developed during the project is a part of the fulfilment of the task. Unless outside parties have exclusive property rights or the equipment is physically non-moveable, it should be handed in along with the final report. Suitable documentation for the correct use of such material is also required as part of the final report.

The student must cover travel expenses, telecommunication, and copying unless otherwise agreed.

If the candidate encounters unforeseen difficulties in the work, and if these difficulties warrant a reformation of the task, these problems should immediately be addressed to the Department.

The assignment text shall be enclosed and be placed immediately after the title page.

Deadline: 10 June 2014.

Five bound copies of the final report and one electronic (pdf-format) version are required according to the routines. Please see NTNU Trykk web page for further information: http://www.ntnu.no/trykk/masteroppgave.

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**DEPARTMENT OF PRODUCTION
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Summary

Organizational Influences is an umbrella concept that refers to factors in the social and organizational context that impact the project setting. Shared values are organizational influences and a level of organizational culture. This investigation explores the impact of three shared values, namely conformity, commitment and trust, on the organization and project performance. The exploration was done using a qualitative approach. Thus, several semi-structured interviews were conducted to managers in various industries. The findings show that contextual factors shape the meaning of shared values in the organization, which in turn impact the project performance. Contrary to commitment and trust, conformity impacts in a negative manner. Conformity is a practiced value that causes loss of motivation, engagement, and confidence. It negatively affects project team performance and causes irrational selection of project managers and team members. Commitment is a promoted and practiced value that becomes more critical in troubleshooting. It maintains project team members focused on project goals and drives creative solutions. Contractor commitment encourages open communication and honest reporting between stakeholders, which in turn, increases the client trust. Trust is a practiced value, fundamental in relationships, and it is related to expectations on others competences and behaviours. Trust helps dealing with uncertainty in the project setting, improves team effectiveness and help reducing cost and the complicatedness of project's plans and schedules. A strategy to manage the impacts of conformity, commitment and trust on the project setting is proposed, which positions the project manager as strategist. Rather that predict outcomes, this investigation is aimed to provide insights into the impacts of shared values so that the project managers can use this knowledge to deal with the complex social context where the project is submerged.

Keywords: Organizational influences, organizational culture, shared values, promoted value, practiced value, conformity, commitment, trust, project performance, impact.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

1. Introduction

In this chapter we present an introduction to this investigation, which includes the background for our work, the scope of work, objectives, main challenges and we outline the structure of the report.

1.1. Background

In the last years, there has been a strong and increasing tendency among project management researchers to move away from the traditional views of predictability and linearity in project practice to one that highlights the complex nature of human interrelations (Small & Walker, 2011). The underlying assumption under this tendency, which is referred as *Rethinking Project Management* (Cicmil, Williams, Thomas, & Hodgson, 2006), is that the project is a complex setting embedded in a social-cultural and project organizational context (Small & Walker, 2011), and characterized by human interactions and tension between predictability and control (Cicmil et al., 2006). Considering the projects as submerged in such complicated context, there are emerging factors that impact the project development; for example, affecting methods for staffing, managing, and executing the project (Project Management Institute, 2013). These factors are referred as *Organizational Influences*, and thus we believe that exploring them, and their possible impact on the organization and project performance, contributes to the understanding of the *project actuality* (Cicmil et al., 2006); in other words, the understanding of the project as a social process in constant change (Small & Walker, 2010). Thus, this master thesis has resulted from our desire of contributing to such understanding; and consequently, our main purpose with this investigation is to provide the project manager with a better understanding and awareness of the possible impacts of organizational influences on the organization and

project performance, so that such knowledge can help the project practitioner to improve the day-to-day work and deal with the complexity of the social context.

1.2. Scope of Work

This research was initially conceived having as scope of work the impact of organizational influences as a whole on the organization and project performance. The Project Management Institute (2013) provides a list of five generic organizational influences that affect the project development, which includes: Organizational culture and Style, structures, process assets, communications, and Enterprise environmental factors. However, after we had comprehensively reviewed the organizational literature, we came to the conclusion that most of these factors are artifacts of organizational culture and, thus, more visible manifestations of shared values, and basic assumptions (Schein, 1990). These influences conform, altogether, the organizational culture. This conclusion led us to limit the research to organizational culture; and consequently, taking as theoretical framework Schein (1990) levels of culture, we narrow it down to shared values. However, shared values was still an extremely broad concept, and we found ourselves in the need of selecting a set of values so that we could keep a realistic scope of work, having into consideration the time constrains of this research. The values that we were to select should be meaningful for the project management praxis, and moreover, meaningful within the context of project actuality. In the autumn of 2013, we conducted a literature synthesis of organizational factors impacting project management complexity (Gutierrez & Hussein, 2013) where we found out that conformity and commitment are factors influencing the managerial complexity. Therefore, taking the perspective of shared values, we decided to explore the influence of conformity and commitment in this investigation. Moreover, commitment itself is regarded as a project success factor (J. K. Pinto & Prescott, 1988) and, thus, its meaningfulness for the

project management praxis. Trust is the third and final value we included in our set of explored shared values. Its inclusion in this investigation is because of its criticality for positive relationships between stakeholders in the project setting (Project Management Institute, 2013) and ,considering the interconnectedness of human actors in the project actuality, we believe that understanding the impact of trust on the project development can add valuable knowledge in this research area. The narrowing of the scope of work is depicted in Figure 1 and it is explained and argued simultaneously as the literature review and the data collection are presented.

Figure 1. Narrowing of Scope of work

Thus, this investigation is exploratory in nature, being the subject of study the impact of shared values on the organization and project performance, where we focus on three shared values: conformity, commitment, and trust.

1.3. Objectives

This master thesis has the following five objectives:

1. Conduct a comprehensive literature review to understand the conceptualizations of organizational influences, organizational culture, and shared values.

2. Conduct a comprehensive literature review to identify the impact of conformity, commitment and trust on the organization and project performance.

3. Conduct a comprehensive empirical investigation to identify the impact of impact of conformity, commitment and trust on the organization and project performance.

4. Identify, analyze and discuss the impact of impact of conformity, commitment and trust on the organization and project performance.

5. Recommend a strategy to manage the impact of impact of conformity, commitment and trust on the project performance.

1.4. Challenges

Exploring the subject of study of this investigation proved to be a challenging project. First of all because this research did not develop in a linear but in an iterative manner, as we had to reshape the scope of work during the entire life cycle of the project; and secondly, because throughout this project we faced challenges of both methodological and human nature. We have briefly listed and explained the more significant challenges in Figure 2:

Limiting the scope of work	• Required a time-consuming extended review of both organizational and project management literature. • It was reshaped at various phases of the project
Sample of participants and Data Collection	• Difficult to find people willing to talk about their organizations in an open and honest manner. • Interviewer did not have previous experience on interviewing
Data Analysis	• Vast amount of information • Identify and ignore statements that were the result of personal frustration. • The impact of shared values was, in general, not stated explicitly. • The multidimensional, multilayered and dynamic nature of values difficulted the identification of impacts. • Avoid speculation

Figure 2. Research Main Challenges

These challenges were managed between the candidate and the supervisor of this investigation by means of numerous reviews and meetings, and agreement upon each direction taken in the research.

1.5. Report Structure

This report is structured in chapters that respond to the investigation's objectives as follows:

- Chapter one is the *Introduction* itself, where we briefly introduce the background of this study, subject of study and the objectives.

- Chapter two corresponds to the *Literature Review*. We begin this chapter presenting the definition of organizational influences, and follow with the definition of organization culture. Consequently, we present our arguments for choosing to explore shared values as organizational influences. This chapter is closed with the review of organization and project management literature about the impact of shared values (conformity, commitment, trust) on the organization and project performance.

- Chapter three presents the *Research Methodology*, where we explain the research methodology, the research method, and the tactics we used to accomplish integrity, validity, reliability and generalizability of data.

- Chapter four corresponds to the *Findings and Discussions*, here we present our results and discuss them in light of organizational and project management literature.

- Chapter five is the *Recommendations*, where we recommend a strategy to manage the impacts of shared values.

- Chapter 6 presents the *Conclusions*. Here we present the final conclusions of our work.

2. Literature review

In this chapter we present a brief review of the organizational and project management literature applicable to the subject of study. First, we introduce the concept of organizational influences . We follow with the definition of organizational culture, and present Schein (1990) framework of levels of culture. We continue with the literature of the impact of organizational culture on the project performance. Next, we use Schein's framework to limit the scope of work to shared value and choose three focal shared values: conformity, commitment and trust. Finally, we review the literature about the definitions of these shared values along with their impact on the organizational and project performance.

2.1. Organizational influences

The Project Management Institute (2013) uses the term organizational influences to describe a set of factors that emerge in the broader context where the project is embedded and impact the project development, affecting the methods for staffing, managing and executing the project. The Project Management Institute (2013, p. 19) provides the following generic list of organizational influences:

- Organizational culture and Style

- Organizational structures

- Organizational process assets

- Organizational communications

- Enterprise environmental factors

Initially, we intended to use this list as provided by the Project Management Institute (2013); but it is evident that it is a concept of such broadness that it would not be realistic to explore all the factors in the list in one single research. Furthermore, several organizational researches

(i.e. Hofstede, 1998; Schein, 1990) have suggested frameworks of organizational culture, where organizational structure, style, communications and process assets are manifestations of deeper assumptions or values and these, altogether, constitute the organizational culture. We believe that these frameworks are a more appropriate approach to the subject of organizational influences. Base on this argument, we have focused this research towards organizational culture as an organizational influence.

2.2. Organizational Culture

Various definitions of organizational culture have been proposed in the organizational and project management literature, some examples are shown in Table 1. Nevertheless, a general consensus has not been achieved because researchers use diverse theoretical approached, assumptions, and interpret similar cultural phenomena in different ways (Belassi, Kondra, & Tukel, 2007).

Literature	Definition
Schein (1990)	A pattern of basic assumptions that are invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with problems of external adaptation and internal integration and that have worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.
Hofstede (1991)	The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from others
Alvesson (2002)	An umbrella concept for a way of thinking which takes a serious interest in cultural and symbolic phenomena. It includes values and assumptions about social reality, but these are less central and less useful than meanings and symbolism in cultural analysis.
Yazici (2009)	The set of values, beliefs, and behavioral norms that guide how members of the organization get work done.

Table 1. Examples of definitions of organizational culture

We have decided to approach the subject of organizational culture using Schein (1990) framework. The author (ibid) proposed three levels of culture that vary in the degree of visibility to an external agent to the organization, as it is shown in Figure 3. Schein (1990) also pointed out that the confusion about the definition of culture results from not differentiating these levels.
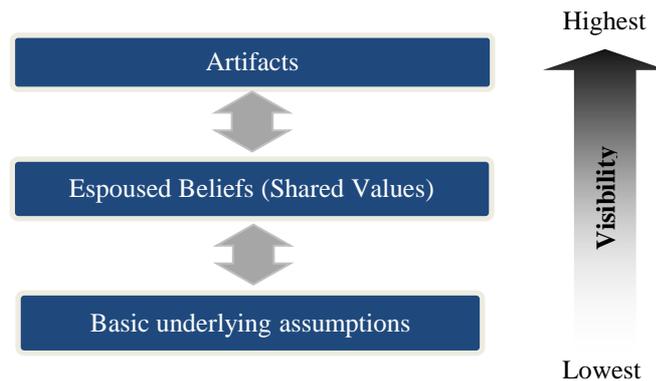
Figure 3. Schein's organizational culture levels. Source: Schein (1990)

Basic underlying assumptions are the essence of culture, whilst observable artifacts and shared espoused beliefs are the culture's manifestation. Artifacts and espoused beliefs are visible manifestations because they can be described when observed from outside the organization, but in order to understand their real meaning one has to work within the organization. According to Schein (1990), each level is described as follows:

- **Artifacts**: Correspond to the phenomena that one can observe. These are more tangible products or practices that describe how the organization works, and formalize behaviors into routines; some examples are the organizational structure, organizational processes, technology, stories, formalized rituals, and published values.

- **Espoused beliefs**: Correspond to shared values and/or beliefs. They are born from individual's own assumptions, for example leaders or founders, who are able to influence the group to adopt his/her assumptions as shared values or beliefs about what the right or

wrong approach to a problem is. Consequently, the group would verify the validity of them by taking joint action and it successful, they will be part of the shared group knowledge.

- **Basic underlying assumptions**: These are taken for granted beliefs, and thus, any behavior that is not based on those basic assumptions is perceived as inconceivable. They are non-confrontable, non-debatable, and unconscious, which makes them very difficult to be changed.

In Schein (1990) framework, organizational structure, style, communications and assets all are part of organizational culture and correspond to more visible manifestations at the level of artifacts; therefore, the essential organizational influence is, in fact, organizational culture. Furthermore, we believe that that most of the research done on organizational culture is actually at the middle level of Schein's framework, making the concept of organizational culture tantamount to shared values or espoused beliefs. Alvesson (2002) argues that many organizational researches have generalized the concept of organizational culture when in fact they are only referring to particular aspects such as shared values, or styles. We believe that this situation is evident in the way that most of the organizational literature has classified organizational culture. For example, Cooke and Szumal (1993) classify organizational culture based on promoted norms and expectations; and Goffee and Jones (1998) based on solidarity and sociability. Moreover, the project management literature has used those classifications in an attempt to establish the impact of organizational culture on organizational project performance.

Given the previous review of the concept of organizational culture, we now have the arguments to explain how we are using the terms of shared values or espoused beliefs, organizational culture, and organizational influences throughout this research:

1. We use the term *shared values* to refer to espoused beliefs because, based on Schein (1990) definition, the terms are synonymous. Also people seem to be more receptive to the term of shared values as it is easier to understand.

2. We explore shared values as organizational influences because it is a dimension of organizational culture.

Therefore, this research explores the impact of shared values, as organizational influences, on the organizational and project performance. These shared values are a dimension of organizational culture (Schein, 1990), which in turn is an organizational influence (Project Management Institute, 2013), as we depicted in Figure 4:

Figure 4. Shared values as organizational influences. Own representation.

As shared values is a broad term that includes innumerable values or beliefs, we were in the need of limiting the scope of work to a set of values. These are conformity, commitment and trust. We selected them considering their meaningfulness for the project management praxis, as we explained in the introduction. Before reviewing the literature about their definitions and impacts on the organization and project performance, first we present a general overview of the impact of the organizational culture on the organization and project performance. We present the subsequent section so that the reader gets to know how

the literature has used the concept of organizational culture as a whole and link it to project outcomes, when it is actually referring to a single dimension of Schein (1990) framework. This reinforces our arguments for choosing shared values instead of organizational culture.

2.2.1. Impact of organizational culture on organizational and project performance

Regardless of the perspective, it has been widely recognized that organizational culture impacts organizational and project performance (i.e. Shore, 2008; Wiewiora, Murphy, Trigunarsyah, & Brown, 2014; Yazici, 2009). The project management literature has mainly direct its efforts to study the impact of organizational culture in two areas: knowledge and technology transfer, and work team effectiveness (Yazici, 2009). Similarly, great focus has been given to the study of variables at project-level such as team communication style, cooperation, and project structure in relation to organizational culture (Belassi et al., 2007).

Some project management literature aims to establish the connection between organizational culture and other organizational aspects. As an example, Yazici (2009) examined the link between project management maturity, organizational culture, and perceived project performance. Using Cameron and Quinn (2011) typology of organizational culture, Yazici (2009) found that the clan and market cultures improve project and business performance, contrary to adhocracy and hierarchical cultures. According to the authors (ibid) the emphasis of a market culture on winning and success stimulates competitiveness; this factor has a strong interaction with project maturity model, and all together leads to business performance. A clan culture creates a positive climate characterized by horizontal communication, empowerment, participation and involvement; this has a positive influence on business and project performance. Nevertheless, for a project to achieve success, Yazici (2009) suggests that both clan and market cultures need to be dominant.

11

Belassi et al. (2007) identified three dimensions of organizational culture: organization's work environment, management leadership, and organization's results orientation; and establish their relatedness with NPD performance. The authors (ibid) conclude that positive performance is achieved when there is a positive working environment, strong leadership, and employees are encouraged to participate and exert maximal effort. Belassi et al. (2007) point out that organizational culture has also indirect impacts on performance through project-level variables, and other organizational practices. Departing from Belassi et al.'s (2007) dimensions, Gu, Hoffman, Cao, and Schniederjans (2014) added a fourth dimension (institutional collectivism) to examine the link between organizational culture, environmental pressures, and project performance in IT projects. The authors (ibid) suggest that organizational culture impacts IT performance, and is moderated by environmental pressures (competitive pressure and regulatory pressures), as each dimension is positively related to project performance when environmental pressures increase.

2.2.2. The impact of shared values

As we have previously explained, shared values correspond to a level of organizational culture that is more visible to an external observer (Schein, 1990). Based on this notion, shared values can be considered organizational influences. Thus, in this research, we explore three shared values and their impact on the organization and project performance; which are conformity, commitment, and trust.

▪ **Conformity**

Conformity is *a subject's behavior or attitude following those of the object* (Song, Ma, Wu, & Li, 2012). The object can be internal or external such as organizations, individuals, subgroups and the own individual's instinct and experience. Conformity involves

social pressures, which relate to the influence that individuals have over one other (DeZoort & Lord, 1997); examples are compliance pressures, obedience and peer pressure.

Conformity has been described in terms of *informative influence* and *normative influence* (i.e. Hornsey, Majkut, Terry, & McKimmie, 2003) . Informative influence occurs when the individual relies on others to determine what is correct so that it is used to define a position in the situation of limited information. Normative conformity is the result of normative influence. This type of conformity has been given significant attention in the organizational and project management literature (i.e. Hornsey et al., 2003; Hussein & Hafseld, 2013a). Normative conformity is the result of a strategic effort of the individual to be accepted and to avoid social rejection, hostility or disapproval from others (Hornsey et al., 2003), regardless of whether the object of conformity is right of wrong (DeZoort & Lord, 1997), and it can be used to minimize conflicts with senior managers who have the power to promote. During this research we will refer to conformity in terms of normative conformity.

Normative conformity has a direct impact on the organization's creative and innovative capacity, and consequently it affects the organization's responses to stressful situations and changes, as Pech (2001) suggests. The author (ibid) explains that a dominant culture of conformity perpetuates the status quo and followership, and thus generates "more of the same". According to Pech (2001) organizations fostering conformity promote those who conform to their traditions and maintain the behaviors considered appropriate by managers; and in the long run, these organizations become extremely failure and risk averse. Thus, conformity hinders creative and innovation because it encourages predictability and conservatism: first because creative people that do not conform are not promoted, instead they are censured or stigmatized; and second because people learn that job safety and security is found in predictable conformist behaviors.

Hussein and Hafseld (2013b) explore the case of a conformist organization. This organization stigmatized as uncooperative anyone who tried to provide critical comments or to stick-out. It is not surprising that the organizational artifacts were a more tangible manifestation of conformity: the organizational style was extremely authoritarian with a rigid hierarchical organizational structure. To cope with such a demand of compliance and diminish the risk of being punished by top management, people learned to remain silent when having different opinions or comments; in other words, they became conformist due to conformist pressure. With regard to the project manager role, Chong and Syarifuddin (2010) suggest that a project manager that experience conformity pressure has more tendency to continue a failing project. This conformity can have two underlying causes: The project manager's fear to social rejection, and second his/her perception of diffusion of blame. The last occurs when the project manager is committed to common group goals, then he/she perceives that the consequences of a group decision can be shared by all group members (Chong & Syarifuddin, 2010); thus believing that the blame won't fall on him/her shoulders if the project fails.

- **Commitment**

According to Nijhof, de Jong, and Beukhof (1998) conformity can be defined as:

"A sense of loyalty to and identification with the organization, the work and the group to which one belongs. This feeling is expressed in the motivation to bring effort into one's work, the motivation to take responsibility and a willingness to learn."

Conformity can be divided into organizational commitment and task commitment as shown in Figure 5. The first one refers to the acceptance of organizational values and to the willingness to stay, and the second to the effort one puts into one's work (Nijhof et al., 1998).
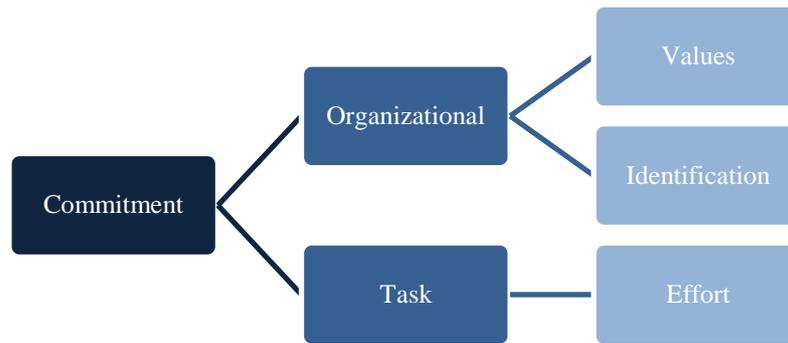
Figure 5. General classification of commitment

Nijhof et al. (1998) definition of conformity suggests that commitment involves identification. The literature has denominated Attitudinal or affective organizational commitment (AOC) to the phenomenon that occurs when the goals of the individuals and the organizations become increasingly integrated or the identity of the individual is linked to the organization (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). AOC is widely believed to encourage behaviors that are beneficial for the organization such as performance and the employee permanency or intention to stay in the organization (Riketta & Landerer, 2002). Thus, assuming two individuals in the same organization, one with high AOC and the other with low, the difference would be that the person with high AOC is intrinsically motivated to behave in line with the organizational norms and would work hard for the organization, whilst the one with low AOC would try to maximize the financial rewards while minimizing effort.

Other forms of commitment have been proposed in the organizational literature (i.e. Allen & Meyer, 1996; Wiener, 1982) such as behavioral commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. This classification is mainly based on the individual's reason to commit: continuance commitment related to the cost of leaving the organization, group or project; while normative commitment is based on the obligation to remain in the group. However, affective commitment is considered the form of commitment

15

with the strongest and most consistent relation to desirable outcomes (Mei-Yung, Chong, Ng, & Cheung, 2004).

The impact of commitment on project performance has been given significant attention in the project management literature. Mei-Yung et al. (2004) argue that affective commitment improves the project performance because people are more attached and involved in the project, and also want to stay in the organizational for the particular project. Fowler and Horan (2007) identified a combination of top management commitment and project team commitment as a force driving the success development of IS projects, and reveled that a high level of commitment is promoted and maintained by means of the communication techniques used by the project manager, such as regularly issuing status reports and direct contact with the people involved in the project development. The authors (ibid) claim that the importance of project team commitment in IT project success has been disregarded to a large extent in the literature. Latonio (2007) suggests that the organization should demonstrate commitment by developing project mindsets, understanding and believing in project management, and gaining leadership and management support. Regarding top management commitment, the studies of J. K. Pinto and Prescott (1988) of success factors are well known. The authors (ibid) identified top management support as a critical success factor and suggested its dominance in the planning phase of the project life cycle because, at this stage, is when the project team attempts to determine the availability of sufficient resources. J. Pinto (2010) argues top management support impacts the level of organizational resistance to change, and that it involves aspects such as allocation of resources and project management's confidence. McLeod and MacDonell (2011) emphasize the importance of top management in projects as it plays various roles in the organization, for example influencing attitudes, encouraging user participation, creating a positive context for

change, overseeing the development of the project, managing political conflicts, and ensuring the availability of resources. Although commitment is evidently a positive influence on the project performance, it is necessary to find a balance because over-commitment can lead to wasting resources and ineffective over-control (Chollet, Brion, Chauvet, Mothe, & Géraudel, 2012).

- **Trust**

Trust is an aspect of relationships and can be defined as the willingness to assume risk (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). It is a complex concept because it is multi-layered, multi-disciplinary, and multi-dimensional and also changes over time (Lau & Rowlinson, 2011). Trust impacts decision making because decisions are made in light of the level of trust and the perceived risk; moreover such decisions are also referred as *risk taking in relationship* (RTR) (Mayer et al., 1995). Similar to the use of trust for dealing with risk, control is considered an alternative mechanism for dealing with risk in relationships (Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). Nevertheless, the challenge with trust and control lies on finding the right mixture of both because, as Atkinson, Crawford, and Ward (2006) explain, having total control over activities is not desirable as it can lead project participants to feel that they are not trusted and can have consequences of moral hazard nature.

Trust involves a cultural component, so what could be considered as trust by one person might not be the same for another (Lau & Rowlinson, 2011). Similarly, culture and trust are perceived as enablers of knowledge-sharing behaviors (Wiewiora et al., 2014). According to Lewis (2007) information sharing is influenced by the interaction between organizational structure, processes, culture, and individual beliefs; while interpersonal trust enables the quality of communications required in such interaction. On a similar vein, Maurer (2010) concludes that trust between project team members positively impacts the

acquisition of external knowledge because it grants access to novel ideas and insights, which in turn promotes product innovation. In the project performance, the impact of trust can also be observed on its role in uncertainty management (Atkinson et al., 2006). According to Atkinson et al. (2006), trust generates more open communication and therefore more accurate risk calculations; improves confidence which results in effectiveness at the project team level, and more honest specifications and estimates that lead to improved planning. Given these benefits of trust, the authors (ibid) suggest to include a trust audit in the uncertainty management process.

Based on the previous literature review, we have developed Table 2 which presents the impacts of conformity, commitment and trust on the organization and project development. In this table the impacts we are referring to are considering a *high level of* each value

Shared value	Impact on the organization*	Impact on Project development*
Conformity	Loss of creativity capacity Loss of innovative capacity Loss of capacity to respond and adapt to changes Increases resistance to change	Negatively affects project team performance Negatively impacts assignation of tasks Negatively impacts allocation of project team members and project manager
Commitment	Increases motivation Reduces resistance to change	Positively impacts allocation of resources Results in better project team performance
Trust	Increases motivation Encourages openness and honesty in communications Helps to build confidence	Helps dealing with uncertainty Improves project planning Results in project team effectiveness Promotes knowledge-sharing

Table 2. Impact of conformity, commitment and trust (literature review) *Assuming a high level of the value

3. Research Methodology

This chapter presents a description of the methodology, methods, ethical guidelines, and quality criteria we followed throughout this study. We provide detailed explanations of why we chose a specific methodology and methods. Furthermore, we present the tactics we followed to ensure the quality of work, along with the factors that limited this study.

3.1. Methodology Selection

The general research area of this investigation is organizational influences. This constitutes our main area of interest and our emphasis is to explore it in order to gain understanding and insights that could become the basis of future researches. Having recognized the organizational character of the research area, we identified the need of using a qualitative research methodology as it enables the acknowledgment of complexity, ambiguity, and dynamism in human phenomena (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). Consequently, we used a qualitative phenomenology methodology due to the exploratory nature of this study. This type of qualitative research is focused on the understanding of the living experience of individuals by exploring the meaning of a phenomenon (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). We argue that the qualitative phenomenological approach is appropriate for this research because it allows the researcher to systematically study and learn about phenomena that are typically difficult to observe or measure (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). The explored phenomenon or subject in this study is the impact of organizational influences on the organization and project performance. We explored this phenomenon by collecting, analyzing and understanding the perception of project practitioners.

3.2. Research Questions

Once we had identified the methodology, we developed a series of research questions that encircle the phenomenon we wanted to explore. Thus, the following questions served as guidance to the study and helped us to remain focused on the scope of work:

1. How do managers perceive the impact of shared values on the organization?

2. How do managers perceive the impact of shared values on the project performance?

3. How have managers handled the impacts of shared values either positively or negatively?

3.3. Research Method

The research method corresponds to the techniques used to acquire and analyze data to create knowledge (Petty et al., 2012). Data collection was performed by means of semi-structured interviews. We selected the participants using both convenience and purposive sampling methods. Regarding the data analysis method, we used thematic analysis. Below we explain the research methods in detail.

▪ **Data collection**

Data collection was done throughout nine in-depth individual interviews. Therefore, we developed a research instrument of 10 open-ended questions in order to conduct semi-structured interviews. We chose this method of gathering data because of its flexibility, as it would allow us to clarify, recognize new statements, and create new questions based on what has already been heard (Westbrook, 1994). The research instrument was divided into three sections consisting of a section of informant's demographic profile, and two exploratory sections designed to encourage the discussion of the impact of shared values first on the organization, and second on the project performance; this instrument is presented in Appendix A. The questions in the instrument are about values in general; and, in order to reveal information about conformity, commitment and trust, the interviewer guided the conversation

asking additional questions about these values when the informants provided evidence related to them. The reasons for this were:

1. The informants may have not been aware of the existence of conformity in their organizations. This is a value that we had to unveil by guiding the conversation. Moreover, conformity itself was not mentioned by the informants; but the fears, the pressures, and conformist behaviors were mentioned, which proves that the informants do not know their selves that those aspects are related to conformity.

2. We aimed for openness in the conversation, and then asking about specific values would have limited such openness.

Furthermore, question seven in the research instrument was initially included because we intended to find out the predominance of the values in the project life cycle, as requested in the Master Assignment. After the first couple of interviews, we observed that asking about such predominance was confusing for the informants, and that it was a very ambitious task. Therefore, upon agreement, we decided not to perform that task.

At the beginning of each interview, we held a brief discussion with the informants to clarify the purpose and scope of the research. The interviews lasted between 1 to 1 ½ hours, and were held as follows: six were done face-to-face in either the interviewees' work places or in a public place, and three interviews were done using voice-over-IP services.

▪ **Sampling Method**

The sampling method we used involved both convenience and purposive. This means that we selected the sample of informants according to the relevance of study, but also to our ease and convenience (Petty et al., 2012). The criterion we used to select the informants was that they should hold or had held a managerial position in projects. We did not target the research to a specific industry, sector, project, or a more specific managerial position because

of two main reasons: First, our aim is to lay the ground for future researches that could be targeted based on the findings of this study; and second, because it is indeed complicated to get managers willing to speak openly about their organizations, which was truly needed in order to effectively explore the organizational influences. Therefore, we sent invitations to participate in the research to the managers that we knew, regardless of the type of industry, age, or managerial level. The final sample of informants consisted of nine managers currently holding a managerial position within project management. Table 3 shows the most important results of the demographic profiles:

Informant	Type of Industry	Type of organization	Nationality	Informant location	Age range	Managerial level	Years in projects
1	Environment	Consultancy	International	Norway	36 - 41	Middle	15
2		Non-profit	International	Norway	36 - 41	Middle	7
3		Public sector Norwegian	International	Norway	26 - 30	Senior	5
4	Oil and Gas	Service provider Profit Private International	International	USA	41 - 45	Middle	3
5			International	Norway	> 45	Middle	10
6			International	Norway	31- 36	Middle	3
7	Oil and Gas	Operator Profit Public/private Norwegian	International	Norway	31- 36	Middle	10
8	Oil and Gas	Service provider Profit Private Norwegian	Norwegian	Norway	41 - 45	Senior	6
9	IT	Consultancy Profit Private Norwegian	International	Norway	31- 36	Middle	3

Table 3. Demographic Profile

- **Data analysis**

We used a thematic analysis method to analysis the gathered data. In order to do so, we first transcribed the recorded interviews. This step took us around 4-6 hours per interview. The second step was to read the transcripts several times to get familiarized with the information. Once this was done, we identified patterns in the informants' answers. The next step was to label sections, paragraphs or sentences on the transcripts according to those patterns. After clustering the information, we were able to organize, compare, and analyze it to present the findings.

3.4.   Ethical and Advisory Guidelines

Our priority throughout this research was to ensure the anonymity of the informants and their organizations. This was essential in the research in order to get the informants to speak more freely about the subject of study. For this reason, we refer to the informants throughout this research as informants 1 to 9. Additionally, we asked for permission to record the interviews with audio recording software in order to facilitate the interviewer's job and to enhance the data collection and analysis. All the informants accepted to get recorded. We guaranteed the elimination of these files ones feedback upon this research is received, and the informants will get a notification of the elimination of the files.

3.5.   Quality

The quality of the findings was evaluated with regard to integrity, reliability, validity and transferability. The tactics we used to ensure we accomplish high quality are listed in Table 4:

Criterion	Description (Petty et al., 2012)	Tactics
Integrity	The extent to which the findings reflect the focus of the enquiry and not bias of the researcher	• Members checking: 1. Transcripts were sent to the informants before the data analysis was done in order to get feedback about any possible deviation from the informants meaning. 2. Findings were sent to supervisor to be evaluated • Peer debriefing: findings were presented to and discussed with person outside the context to get insights and explore other options
Reliability	The extent to which the study could be repeated and variations understood	• Voice record are kept until feedback is received • Transcripts were made
Validity	The degree to which the findings can be trusted or believed by the participants of the study	• Peer debriefing • Patterns identification, labeling and written reflections were reviewed in an iterative manner. • Members checking
Transferability	The extent to which the findings can be applied in other context or with other participants	• Common criterion on sampling: managers within projects

Table 4. Criteria for quality evaluation

A shortcoming of the data collection that may affect the quality of this study, was the inexperience of the interviewer in conducting interviews. To improve the ability of the interviewer, literature on interviewing techniques was read ahead and a trial interview was conducted.

This study presented limitations that affect its transferability or generalizability. This is because it is strongly context specific. Looking at Table 3, where we summarized the informants' demographic profiles, it is possible to notice that environmental factors impact this research to a great extent because it was mostly performed within the norwegian context. Secondly, the majority of the informants were international managers, so the data we have gathered is mainly the perception of internationals within a norwegian context.

To conclude this chapter, we are confident on that we collected the necessary data to explore the impact of shared values on the organization and project performance. The sampling methods, data collection and analysis were done following as set of criteria to ensure a good quality of work, and we believe that we have achieved it keeping in mind the limitations of this research.

4. Findings and Discussions

The subject explored in this research is the impact of organizational influences on the organization and project performance. Departing from the Project Management Institute (2013) list of organizational influences, we decided to focus on organizational culture. We used Schein (1990) levels of organizational culture to narrow down the scope of work to shared values. Furthermore, this study is limited to three values:

- Conformity
- Commitment and,
- Trust

We conducted a review of the organizational and project management literature that shows that these values directly impact the organization, which in turn influence the project development. For example, trust improves quality of communications which in turn promotes knowledge-sharing in the project setting.

This study was conducted by means of semi-structured interviews to nine managers. In this chapter we present the results we obtained and, simultaneously, we discuss them by drawing upon organizational and project management literature. The data obtained from the informants provided us with a rich and vast amount of information, to the extent that we uncovered unforeseen data that proved to be strongly related to the subject of study. We have therefore decided to shed the light on these uncovered data as well, thus, this chapter are presented in two main sections:

1. The contextual factors that appear to shape the shared values, namely national context, diversity, leaders and top management.

2. The impact of the shared values on the organization and project performance

Throughout the data analysis, we were able to see the enormous impact that the contextual factors have on the shared values. We found that they influence how the shared values are understood and experienced. Therefore, this first section is included as it helps to understand the shared values and their impact.

The second section presents the impact of the shared values on the organization and project performance and, thus, it constitutes the core of this investigation. We clarify that, although the informants stated explicitly some impacts, we found ourselves in the need of inferring most of the impacts on the organization and project performance. This was done by associating the results to the organizational and project management literature. Furthermore, all the informants acknowledged that the shared values impact the project performance, but they failed to articulate how this occurs. We observed that the impact of shared values on the project performance is the indirect result of the impact on the organization; therefore, this could explain why the informants could not identify the impacts on the project development.

4.1. Contextual factors shaping the shared values

The findings show that three factors influence how the organization perceives, understands and interprets the shared values, which in turn shapes the practices that reflect such beliefs. These are national context, cultural diversity and leaders and top management. We briefly present how the findings have revealed that the influence of each contextual factor occurs.

▪ **National Context**

The findings show that, within Norwegian organizations, the understanding and practice of shared values is strongly influenced by the meaning of those values in the Norwegian culture rather than what the internationals believe. Consequently, these

organizations might need to teach those meanings to the international employees and also, to behave in a way that reflects them. For example, informant 7 explained about openness:

"Some of us are not open by nature so it is kind of hard to be open to try to communicate in a good manner with people. So we are trying to be open because we are not born like that".

On the other hand, we found that in international organizations with a majority of international employees, the impact of the norwegian context is on the artifacts; this means that the organizations have to adapt their practices to what is believed in the norwegian society in order to comply with local regulations; but the meaning of shared values is not necessary the same as the norwegian. The findings with regard to the norwegian context are summarized in Table 5:

Type of organization	Impact on organizational influences	Main differences on shared values
Norwegian	Shared values and beliefs follow norwegian culture	Organizations teach internationals their beliefs
International	Artifacts must adapt to shared values and beliefs of the norwegian culture	Organizations perceive and keep different meanings of shared values

Table 5. Summary of national context impact

▪ **Cultural Diversity**

Seven of our informants included cultural diversity as a factor that influences their work and organizations. Diversity is seen as strength but it also comes with challenges because the different understandings and worldviews may lead to conflicts, confusion, or misunderstanding among employees. These challenges emerge because each person has own national values that are very difficult to change, as informant 7 expressed:

"Although we have the organization values, each of us has values that come with the culture, and each of use refers to them as normal or accepted. Then, it varies sometimes on how we perceive the information and the actions from different people."

- **Leaders and top management**

The findings show that when leaders and top management promote the shared values, they also add their personal understandings; in other words, they shape the value according to their individual values. The findings reveal that people in the organization could end up adapting wrong beliefs when the leaders and top management' personal understanding distort the real meaning of values. Informant 1 said about this:

"People take over certain behaviors that are not nice, and may be they are not that kind of people but the system is that. So the system is maintained by this attitudes zipping through the whole organization."

Knowing that shared values are a dimension of organizational culture, the findings support the notion of the influence of contextual factors on organizational culture, which has been acknowledged in the general management literature (i.e. Hofstede, 1991; Hofstede, 1998). In this regard, Hofstede (2014) suggests that national culture and personality of founder are some of the factors shaping organizational culture. In the project management literature, Shore (2008) states that the organizational culture develops within the context of executive leadership and national culture.

4.2. The impact of shared values on the organization and project performance

The shared values we explored are commitment, conformity and trust. We consider necessary to clarify three concepts as we use them throughout this and the subsequent chapters; these are promoted value, practiced value, and congruence and are described in Table 6.

Concept	Description
Promoted values	They are what the organization is ought to be. The informants perceive them as the organizational values written in policies or ethics codes, or openly fomented by leaders and top management with the purpose of achieve good performance.
Practiced Values	They are what the organization really is, and these could be both negative and positive.
Congruence	Occurs when the values are both promoted and practiced. We found that the main reason for non-congruence is individual perception (leaders and top management) distorting the meaning of a value.

Table 6. Promoted, practiced and congruence concepts

The findings also exposed several shared values in addition to conformity, commitment and trust. These are promoted values and, together with conformity, commitment and trust, impact the organization and project setting. In Table 7, we have listed these shared values:

Informants	Promoted Shared values		
Informants 1,2 and 3 **(Same organization)**	Credibility Transparency Accountability	Collaboration Honesty Sustainability	Integrity
Informants 4,5 and 6 **(Same organization)**	Efficiency/performance driven Transparency	Ownership Collaboration Safety	Integrity Accountability
Informant 7	Openness Efficiency/performance	Courageous Caring	Hands on
Informant 8	Openness Humor	Safety	
Informant 9	Openness Reliability	Ownership Proactivity	Responsibility

Table 7. Other promoted shared values

We will mention some of these shared values when deemed necessary throughout this study as they do interact with conformity, commitment and trust. However, we won't provide further analysis. First of all because it becomes a complex and time consuming task that

demands more time than the allowed for this research; and secondly, and basically our main reason, such an extended analysis gets out of our limited scope of work.

In a general manner, the findings show that the shared values, being shaped by national context, diversity and leaders and top management, impact the project performance. We have depicted this mechanism in Figure 6 and we will explain such impacts in the following subsections.
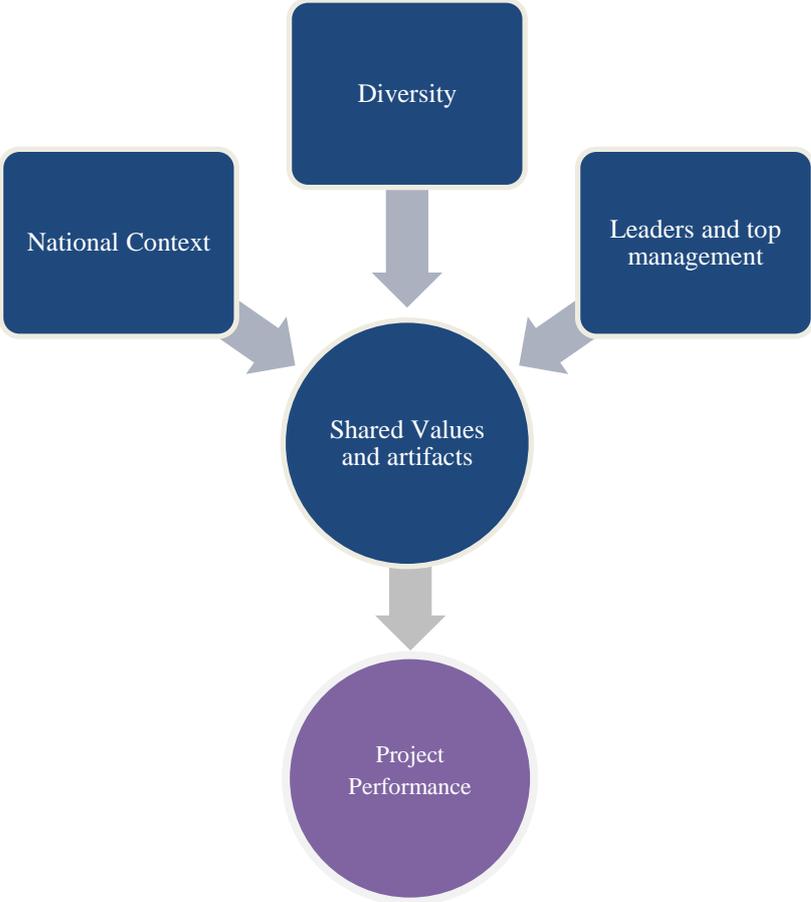
Figure 6. Combined influence of contextual factors and shared values. Own representation

This general finding of the impact of shared values on the project performance supports Shore (2008) who suggests that the outcome of a project is influenced by cultural, leadership, project, management, and behavioral factors. Moreover, the author (ibid) argues that the

project leadership and organizational culture influence project planning, execution and control.

The next step in this chapter is to present and discuss the impact of conformity, commitment and trust on the organizational and project performance. Before moving into the next section, we point out that we do not aim to predict outcomes because the values have proved to be interconnected with each other and with other values that we did not explore in this research; for example commitment and integrity appear to improve communication between stakeholders in the project setting, simultaneously the level of trust is increased and feeds back to a more open and transparent communication. Therefore, we strongly consider that the impacts of shared values are difficult to predict due to their interconnectedness and dynamics. Nevertheless, our aim is to give some light on some of the possible impacts of those values, these impacts are summarized in Table 8. We highlight that the impacts are suggested considering a *high level of* each shared value.

Shared value	Key aspects	Impact on the organization*	Impact Project performance*
Conformity	▪ Conformity pressures lead to normative conformity ▪ Response to fear to be stigmatized, rejected, censured and/or punished	▪ Loss of motivation ▪ Loss of engagement ▪ Loss of confidence on own capabilities ▪ Negatively impacts continuous improvement capacity	▪ Irrational allocation of resources ▪ Irrational assignation of project manager and team members ▪ Negatively affects project team performance
Commitment	▪ Multilayered ▪ Can evolve to loyalty or affective commitment ▪ Requires rewards	▪ Improves employee performance ▪ Reduces attrition	▪ Facilitates troubleshooting ▪ Encourages honest reporting ▪ Encourages openness and transparency in communication ▪ Better project team performance ▪ Enhances allocation of resources
Trust	▪ Multilayered ▪ Depends on competences and integrity ▪ Complemented and supplemented with control mechanisms	▪ Improves quality of working relationships ▪ Facilities decision making	▪ Improves quality of stakeholders relationships ▪ Helps dealing with uncertainty ▪ Encourages information sharing ▪ Encourages openness and transparency in communication

Table 8. Impacts of conformity, commitment and trust   *Considering a high level of the respective shared value

4.2.1. The impact of conformity

The findings show that conformity pressures, exerted by top management, may lead to a shared value of normative conformity among the staff. Such pressures include the use of authority, punishment and threatening to make people think and behave in a way that is aligned with top management's interpretation of promoted values. As informant 1 claimed:

"People take over certain behaviors that are not nice, and may be they are not that kind of people but the system is that"

The findings reveal that the main reason for normative conformity is fear. People fear the consequences of not conforming such as getting resources cut, being demoted, stigmatized, or not being included in good projects. Consequently, people have learned to remain silent when having critical comments or feedback that could be perceived as threats. Informant 2 provided us with insights into this situation:

"From the staff perspective you better be careful about who you criticize and what you say because it can reflect bad on you; you can be taken out of projects, or projects are not given to you. Things happen so fluently and you might find yourself to the sideline, suddenly all these cool projects happening "why I was not invited to the meeting."

The previous finding supports the notion of normative conformity as a strategic effort to avoid rejection, punishment, or being stigmatized (i.e. DeZoort & Lord, 1997; Hornsey et al., 2003). Additional, it provides evidence of the use of conformity as a selection criterion (Pech, 2001). This situation occurs when top management decides on allocation of resources and selection of project managers based on those who display a conformist behavior. Informant 1 said about this situation:

"If you stay in favor you will get some nicer work and more money because it is about funding, you have to do a lot of internal politics as well to get your own project or you own ideas promoted."

According with Pech (2001) the use of conformity as a selection and promotion criterion is an organizational performance anomaly that discourages individualism and leadership, and consequently hinders creativity and innovation. The data did not explicitly expose loss of creativity or innovation due to conformity in the project setting, because the organization where we strongly evidenced this value, conducts inter-organizational projects; thus, creativity takes place outside the focal organization. However, we suggest that the findings have exposed that the use of conformity as a selection criterion hinders individualism, because of two circumstances:

1. Normative conformity made people fear not to be included in good projects or not getting founding if providing negative feedback. Then, they have found their selves obligated to remain silent and behave alike in order to avoid punishment. In other words, conformity has fostered homogeneity.

2. The ideas of people, who have shown defiance or counter-conformity to conformity pressures, are not taken into consideration and they are stigmatized, censured, or punished.

The findings show that normative conformity directly impacts the individual performance of the employees. The three most relevant impacts exposed in the findings are loss of motivation, loss of engagement and loss of confidence on own abilities and contributions. Informant 1 and 2 respectively said about such impacts:

"We were not taken into account, not allowed to develop ourselves. Then your motivation goes down."

"They [people] *become cynical and unengaged. They do not care about the job. Cynical is when you do not believe in positive development, new ideas, the value of your contributions, your work."*

Consequently, loss of motivation, loss of engagement and loss of confidence appear to hinder learning and continuous improving ability. Informant 2 explained this situation:

"People do not do anything, they do not say anything, they do not show up to staff meeting; they do their job like 90% so they do not get fired."

These findings support the notion of conformity as an element that influences learning and continuous improvement (Ahmed, Loh, & Zairi, 1999). The influence occurs in two ways:

1. Conformity is a motivationally cultural value (Jetu & Riedl, 2013; Schwartz, Hammer, & Wach, 2006). Thus, conformity can be considered as a motivational factor that affects learning and continuous improvement (Ahmed et al., 1999).

2. According to Ahmed et al. (1999) norms that create high conformity expectations negatively influence learning and continuous improvement because they decrease individual creative performance.

We believe that, as it has been already suggested in the literature (Jetu & Riedl, 2013), the impacts of conformity on motivation, engagement, confidence, learning and continuous improvement capacity, are reflected in the overall project team performance. Jetu and Riedl (2013) propose a conceptual framework where conformity is one of ten motivationally distinct values[1] that influence three dimensions of project team success, namely *project team spirit*, *project team learning and development* and *project team leadership*. According to the

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[1] Jetu and Riedl (2013) divided values into two groups: personally focused values (achievement, power, hedonism, stimulation and self-direction) and socially focused values (security, conformity, tradition, universalism and benevolence)

authors (ibid), conformity provides a weak contribution to project team performance, and it may negatively influence beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the project team.

Based on the previous findings, we believe that conformity indirectly affects the overall project performance, basically because of its role as motivational value (Jetu & Riedl, 2013; Schwartz et al., 2006) influencing project team performance. In line with this thoughts, the project management literature has acknowledged the strong link between motivation and project performance (i.e. Peterson, 2007), and the Project Management Institute (2013) has recognized that the overall success of the project depends upon the project's team commitment, and this in turn is directly related to their level of motivation. Based on the findings and the literature we have reviewed, we suggest that conformity has a dominant role as motivational value, adversely affecting engagement, confidence, learning and continuous improvement; which in turn appears to negatively influence the project team performance and overall project success. This suggestion is depicted in Figure 7:
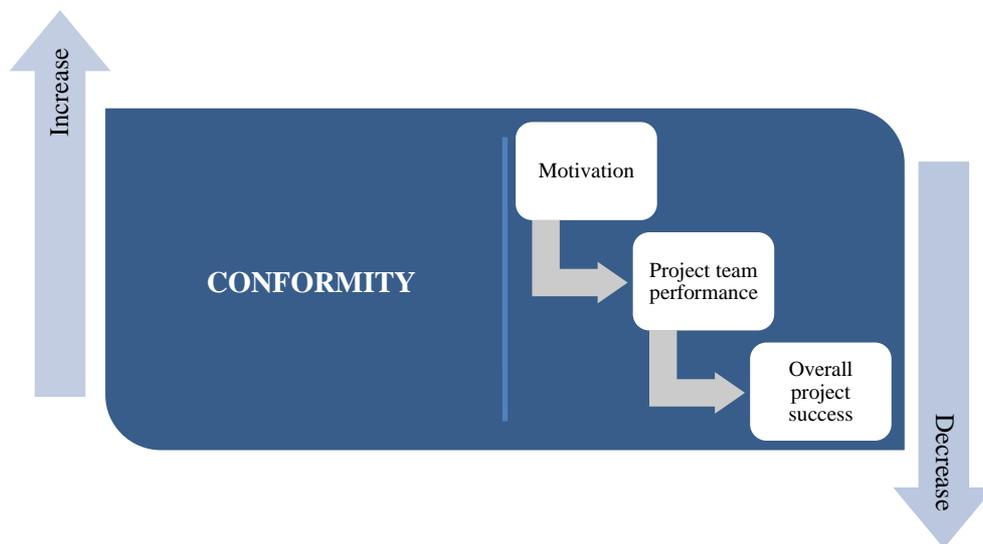

Figure 7. Impact of conformity on motivation. Own representation

To wrap up this section, the findings show that normative conformity is a response to conformity pressures exerted by top management. Normative conformity is rationally

assumed because of fear to be punished, censured, stigmatized or rejected. Additionally, the findings revealed that normative conformity is used as selection and promotion criteria, and we proposed that this organizational anomaly (Pech, 2001) hinders individualism. The impact of normative conformity on the organization is directly on the individual's motivation, engagement, and confidence, which in turn affects learning and continuous improvement ability. Finally, we suggested that the impacts on individual performance are reflected in the project team performance, which in turn may affect the overall project success.

4.2.2. The impact of commitment

The findings show that commitment is a heavily promoted shared value throughout the sample organizations of this study. Although we inquired about the level of commitment as a shared value (groups and organization), the informants kept emphasizing that commitment varies from person to person. So this variation makes it difficult to determine a level of commitment as shared value. Informant 6 explained this situation:

"I think it [commitment] *varies. You always have people who are just interested on doing the minimum and people go out of their way to show the best service quality, so I cannot really generalize at the staff level."*

The findings suggest that loyalty and commitment are perceived as equal constructs. For example, informant 5 explained in connection to commitment:

"We are proud of what we are doing and we are proud to say that we work for this organization, and to do the job they do. Being proud is a value that is really experienced in a worldwide scale to a point that we fight for what we belief."

We argue that the previous statement provides evidence of a shared value of loyalty. Niehoff, Moorman, Blakely, and Fuller (2001) define loyalty in terms of behaviors that demonstrate

pride in the organization and defend it towards criticism, as our findings have exposed.

Nevertheless, loyalty still remains loosely defined and is not sufficiently understood

(Coughlan, 2005; Kumar & Shekhar, 2012); moreover, same as in the findings, some authors

have treated loyalty and commitment as synonymous (Coughlan, 2005). Other authors have

conceptualized loyalty as affective commitment (i.e. Wallace, 1997). Therefore, rather than

the same concepts, loyalty can be considered a dimension of commitment. We agree with

such conceptualization given the high degree of attachment and identification with the

organization showed by various informants when we inquired about commitment.

The findings show that commitment requires rewards. For example, informant 5

stated when we asked about commitment in the organization:

"You are not complaining because you have to work, the other way around you feel like

working. I think everybody recognizes that we work hard but that we recognize that we get

compensated the way we want. So the rewards come with the high working."

The need of rewards to build commitment has been acknowledged in the organizational

literature, for example Wallace (1997) argues that affective commitment is formed as an

emotional response on the basis of rewards. Similarly, Powers (2000) suggest that employee

loyalty (or affective commitment) will only result from perceived increase in employee

outcomes[2], such as benefits, recognition, or status. In this regard, the findings show that

commitment decreases when people are "betrayed" by the organization; meaning that when

the employee outcomes are negatively impacted. Informant 4 explained about this:

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[2] Employee outcomes include personal growth, companianship, belonging, experience, pay and satisfaction
(Powers, 2000)

"When you are betrayed you feel you spend too many time, years, hours, you lose so many things for this company, and you are just another number. Unfortunately this is what we are: just a number in the system."

Additionally, the findings suggest that a high level of commitment helps to reduce attrition in the organization. Informant 6 said about this:

"I think you will see a high level of commitment from management up because if the people would not get align with the company ideas, then they would have left the company before reaching a senior level"

This finding support previous studies that suggest that increased commitment decreases turnover intentions and, consequently, lowers attrition (i.e. Erickson & Roloff, 2007).

In agreement with Fowler and Horan (2007), the findings reveled that a combination of project team commitment and top management commitment is necessary to achieve the desirable project outcomes. In the findings, this situation became more evident during project crisis because commitment appeared to kick-in under those circumstances. Informant 5 said on this regard:

"Even under these conditions [limited resources, lack of training]*, the high level of commitment helped the team to execute the project and meet the client expectations"*

Similarly, top management's level of commitment appears to suddenly increase in project crisis or problems. This means that they rapidly act to provide resources to solve such situations. Informant 6 explained about this:

"I was provided with everything I could reasonably ask and expect. I definitely got the support that I needed whenever we have an issue, and we did have major situations, so management was very quick at reacting and helping us."

Based on these findings, we suggest that a dominant impact of commitment on the project performance is on troubleshooting. This critical success factor refers to the ability to handle unexpected crisis and deviations form the plan (J. K. Pinto & Prescott, 1988). We argue that commitment becomes more critical during troubleshooting because of the difficultly and time consuming nature of the troubleshooting process (Schaafstal, Schraagen, & Marcel van, 2000), which could be a stressful situation for the project team members. We argue that commitment enhances the ability of handling crisis because it helps the team members to remain focused on the project goals and, consequently to find creative solutions, using the available resources and current knowledge, to reach those goals. The literature refers to this attitude as *goal commitment* and, it is defined as the personal determination to try for a goal or keep trying for a goal (Mei-Yung et al., 2004). Additionally, these evidences support previous studies that show that commitment encourages creativity, loyalty, efficacy, and duty (Mei-Yung et al., 2004). Given these impacts, we suggest that a high level of commitment positively impacts overall project team performance as shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Impact of commitment on project team performance. Own representation

Furthermore, the findings show that high commitment was demonstrated by means of honest reporting of project status to relevant stakeholders and openness and transparency in communication. Referring to a particular project, informant 5 exemplified this situation:

"During execution there was a big mistake made by the team leader, this person called the client and me immediately and explained the situation"

This findings support the notion that commitment influence individuals' inclinations to communicate or report project status (Korzaan, 2009). This behavior has been linked to goal commitment (i.e. Abdel-Hamid, Sengupta, & Swett, 1999) , then people that is committed to project goals tend to make decisions to share information regardless if it is negative or positive, as the findings exposed in troubleshooting.

In this section we have shown that commitment is a heavily promoted shared value. Also, we provided evidence of loyalty, and suggested that a high level commitment, along with an increase in expected employee outcomes (i.e. rewards, benefits) drives loyalty. We found that a combination of project team commitment and top management commitment are necessary to achieve the desire project outcomes, and that the impact of commitment appear to become stronger during troubleshooting because it helps to keep motivation, focus on the project goals, and improves creativity and efficiency. Thus, we suggested that a high level of commitment positively impacts overall project team performance. Finally, we revealed that high commitment positively influence communication and reporting of project status.

4.2.3. The Impact of Trust

Trust is promoted in the organization in the form of collaboration, integration and teamwork, but it does not mean that the value is necessarily practiced. Trust is a multi-dimensional, complex concept (Lau & Rowlinson, 2011), and so the findings have provided evidence of this feature as we found different types of trust and layers depending on the trustor and trustee; for example there may be high trust between project team members but low between functional units or between client-contractor. Informant 2 provided us with an example of a project, between a Middle Eastern client (United Arabic Emirates) and a

Norwegian consultancy, which exemplified the multidimensional and multilayered nature of trust: the internal trust in the project team was very high, while there was evident lack of trust between the consultants and the client. Informant 2 stated:

"We were in a situation where there was a fundamental lack of trust because they [the client] *were exploiting us. And when you have not trust, you rather become a little less transparent so you keep control."*

The findings show that trust impacts the amount of shared information and also the informality of communication because more control mechanisms were put into place to protect against opportunistic behaviors. This involves actions such as an increase of formal written communication and hiding information. Informant 2 explained on this regard:

"While with other partners or clients I would be completely open "here are my books, here is how much money I spent, this is what I do well and what I did not", and with them it was a little different".

These findings support previous studies that have acknowledged the important influence of trust on the quality of communication and information sharing in project relationships (i.e. Kadefors, 2004; Lewis, 2007). According to Kadefors (2004), spontaneous interaction and information sharing are benefits of trusted-based project relations. Nevertheless trust and, thus, its impacts on communication and information sharing, involve a cultural component (Lau & Rowlinson, 2011; Lewis, 2007; Wiewiora et al., 2014). However, the influence of culture on trust is a relatively new area of research, and various authors such Schoorman et al. (2007) have recognized that considerable work is needed in this area.

On the other hand, good communication and information sharing have been recognized as factors that contribute to the development of trust (Karlsen, Græe, & Mona Jensvold, 2008). This seems paradoxical given our previous findings, so we will attempt to

43

explain this situation by bringing back our findings of commitment. We found that high contractor commitment encourages more open and transparent communication and honest reporting; therefore, we argue that this situation increases the level of trust and that, consequently, trust impacts back to positively affect the openness of communication, and the amount of shared information in the relationship, as we show in Figure 9:

Figure 9. Combined impact of commitment and trust. Own representation

Likewise, our suggestion has been previously explored in the project management literature. For example, Karlsen et al. (2008) argue that commitment is also a factor that helps building trust in project-stakeholders relationships, and thus, helps to create a positive atmosphere that increases the probability of project success. Moreover, Kocoglu, Imamoglu, and Ince (2011) argue that trust and commitment are two intertwined and complementary relationship builders and enhancers, which in turn lead to open communication and effective sharing of information.

In organizations with a matrix organizational structure, the findings provided evidence of lack of trust between functional units. Informant 7 claimed on this subject:

"They [other units] *are not fulfilling and doing what they supposed to do, so we have to do an extra check to ensure that things are ok"*

The findings show that lack of trust results from broken expectations. This interconnectedness between expectations and trust has been acknowledged in the

44

organization and project management literature (i.e. Han & Harms, 2010; Kramer, 1999). In this regard, trust in a team context is considered the result of employee expectations on peers' behaviors (Chattopadhyay & George, 2001; Coughlan, 2005). Furthermore, we believe that the situation of lack of trust due to broken expectations leads to loss of confidence. According to Forrester and Drexler (1999) the result of functional units not following through and doing what they say they are going to do is little confidence across units, skepticism between teams, and taking matters into own hands, as the findings showed. Therefore, we suggest that the impact of trust at the organizational level is on the quality of co-workers relationships because broken expectations and, thus, lack of trust, lead to negative emotions among team members, which are considered a feature of conflict situations (Han & Harms, 2010). We clarify that the informants did not explicitly mention conflicts resulting from lack of trust, but we perceived negative emotions when the informants referred to the lack of trust towards other functional units.

Lack of trust is reflected in the implementation of additional control measures, as informant 7 explained:

"Now we have a bigger focus, and we just don't trust sometimes, so we have to do the check ourselves: we use technical support people to help us with the understanding, they go through the scope of work before we sanction the project."

Similarly, the findings show that controls are used even though there is a high level of trust. Such controls are regarded as accountability artifacts used to hold people accountable of their actions. For example, informant 5 explained:

"I believe in people, in their capabilities, and I trust them. However, in order to mitigate the risk, we have processes and procedures that have to be followed. I give people a task but I

don't tell them how to do it, I just ask for the end result in an efficient way; and if it is not

done when it is needed then they are hold accountable"

The previous findings serve as an example of the complementary and supplementary relationship between trust and control (Das & Bing-Sheng, 1998). Moreover, we agree with Inkpen and Currall (2004) who suggest that "*trust and control coevolve over time, with trust influencing control and being influenced by the type of control",* and, that during their evolution over time, they impact other concepts. Although the authors (ibid) suggestion was proposed within the realm of joint ventures, we believe that the same situation is applicable to projects in matrix organizations as observed in the results.

Various studies have explored the benefits of trust on dealing with uncertainty (i.e.(Atkinson et al., 2006). These benefits include reduced control costs, improved team effectiveness, and better planning. In connection with this study and the previous findings, we suggest that lack of trust adversely impacts the project performance in various manners:

1. Increased costs because the project team has to put in place additional control mechanisms to double check the deliverables of other units.

2. Reduces team effectiveness because additional control measures involve additional time, and because confidence within and between teams decreases.

3. Increased complicatedness of the project planning because of the additional control artifacts that have to be included in plans and schedules.

We believe that the findings support the notion of trust as a factor in dealing with uncertainty, and we argue that gaining understanding about the impacts of trust and the mechanisms how it is build or breach is a useful competence for the project manager when it comes to uncertainty management. Moreover, such competence is also relevant to stakeholders' management. Garcia de Madariaga and Valor (2007) argues that "*Stakeholder management*

is a question of balancing the different stakeholder interests and creating added value through trust, commitment, social norms, and so on". In line with this argument we suggest that trust, as a factor shaping working relationships, can be used to add value to the diverse stakeholders relationships.

The findings reveal that trust influences decision making. For example, in the manager-subordinate relationship, the manager decides on assignation of responsibilities depending, to a large extent, on the trust towards the employee. Informant 4 said about this:

"It is a manager's problem to decide what responsibility to give away. And some people get the challenge very well and you know that you can give more responsibilities to them, other ones do not do it that well and you cannot give and cannot trust them."

This finding support the notion of trust as a factor impacting decision making (Mayer et al., 1995). In a relationship, a decision or risk taking (Mayer et al., 1995) is the result of assessing the perceived risk and of evaluating the level of trust towards the trustee. In this regard, we found that the level of trust given by a party in a relationship depends on two factors: competences and integrity. With regard to competences, the managers refer not only to the ones that the individual possess, but to the potential that the person has to develop them. So the manager trusts in an individual that shows drive, initiative, proactivity and the capacity to learn and develop technical skills. Informant 4 said about this:

"Trust affect how I delegate responsibilities, it is not about them having experience. I have people less experienced, with few years at the company that I trust a lot and I give them more responsibility than I give to more seniors. I do not hesitate to give responsibilities to people that show that they can do it and keep asking for more"

The second factor that impacts the level of trust is integrity. With integrity the informants refer to a variety of values including honesty, responsibility and ownership. Therefore, the

47

manager trusts when the person is willing to take ownership, follows the right procedures and process, speaks with the truth and report honestly. However, this factor seems to be rarely lacking, as informant 6 stated:

"When it [trust] *comes down to trusting to tell an honest and accurate account of events, I think we do have the honesty and integrity as a company and that most people are very trustful"*

These results partially support previous studies suggesting that three factors determine how much trust an individual can earns: individual's abilities, integrity, and benevolence (Schoorman et al., 2007). Moreover, (Schoorman et al. (2007)) argue that the same three factors contribute to trust in a group or organization.

To summarize, the findings show that trust is a multidimensional value as it has been acknowledged in the project management literature (i.e. Lau & Rowlinson, 2011). Trust is a fundamental value for shaping stakeholders' relationships and making decisions. Between organizations, trust influences the quality of communication and the amount of shared information in project-based relations. Within organizations, the findings reveal that trust and control complement and supplement each other. Within individuals, trust depends on perceived competences and integrity of the trustee. Finally, high trust brings various benefits that can be used to deal with uncertainty in the project development, such as improve team effectiveness and reduction of costs.

5. Recommendations

In this chapter we propose a strategy to manage the impacts of shared values on the project performance. This strategy has an underlying limitation: we assume that the project manager possesses enough authority in the project to implement such strategy. In chapter four, we showed that the shared values impact the project performance. Now, we include project manager leadership as a factor that also influences the project, as it is shown in Figure 10:
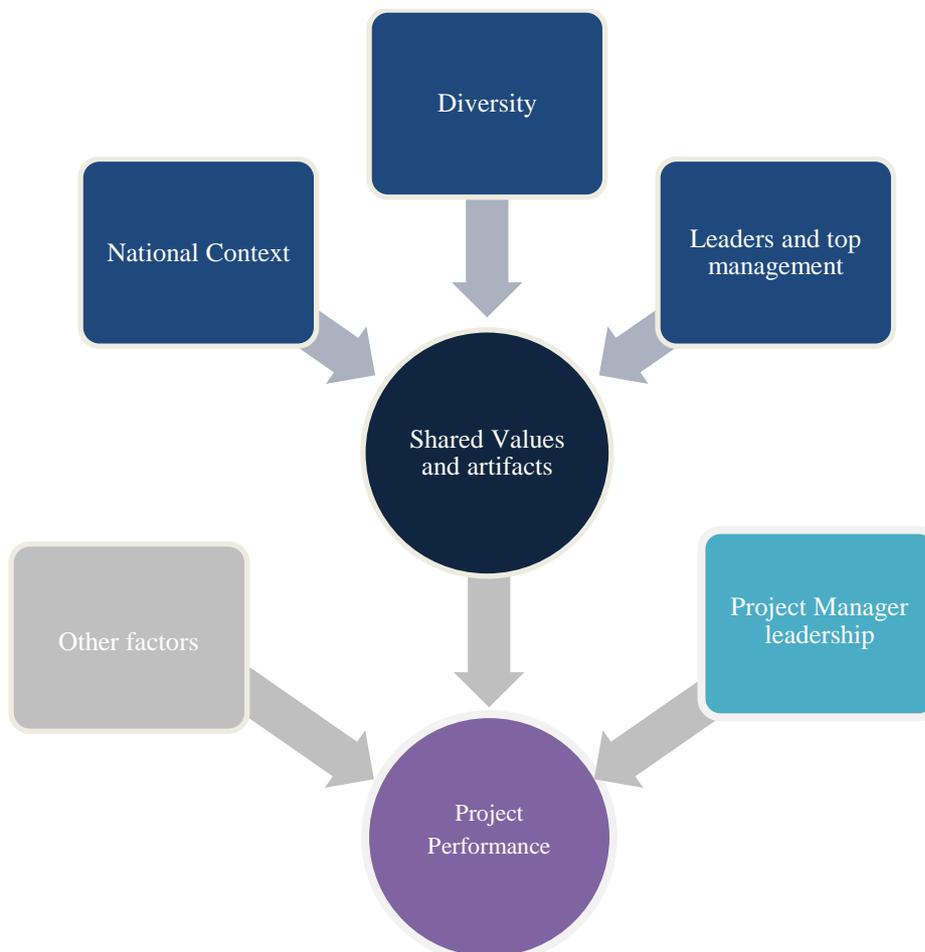
Figure 10. Influences on the project performance. Own representation.

In the previous figure, we have included other factors to refer to other influences of a non-cultural nature unexplored in this research.

The leadership role of the project manager is in creating an effective working environment for the project team (Vittal & Kanungo, 2008), so we believe that realistic strategies to manage the impact of shared values can mainly be implemented under the project manager leadership by creating such an effective environment. Moreover, we agree with Small and Walker (2011) who argue that, although the existence of contextual constrains, "*the project manager is in a leadership position with "power of" effect the interconnections of team players*". Having said this, we suggest a strategy that involves two main actions:

- *Action 1:* Moderate the impact of external shared values to the project team
- *Action 2:* Promote and practice high trust and commitment inside the project team

The way we visualize such strategy is depicted in Figure 11:
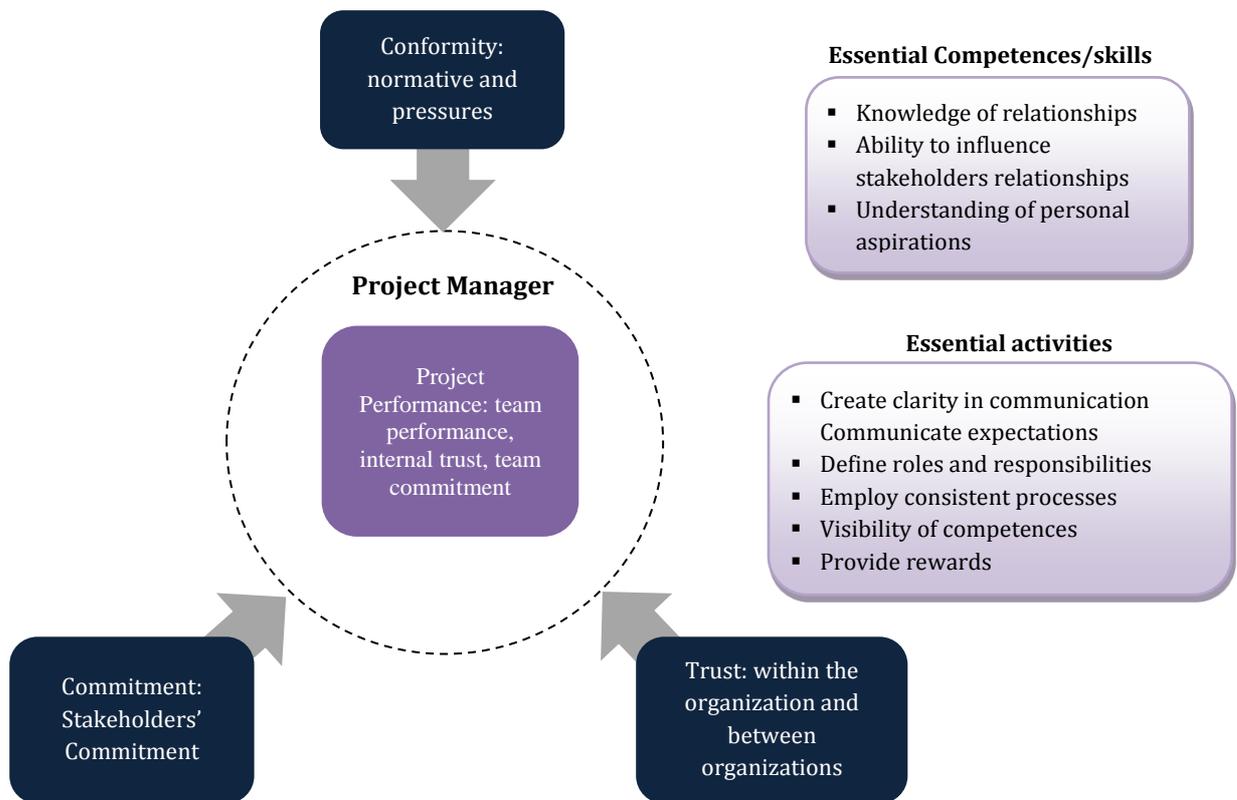
Figure 11. Recommended strategy. Own representation.

5.1. Recommended Strategy Action 1

In the first action, we propose that the project manager could act as a moderator of the degree of impact of shared values on the project performance. This first action was actually experienced by informant 1:

"Right now I have a good manager who shelters his own staff from what is happening outside, so we are in a little protected bubble and I feel that difference greatly."

According to Bourne (2005) , there are hidden energies or influences that can be used by the project manager and project team. We add that there are also energies that should be isolated, for example conformity pressures. Thus, in this moderator role, the project manager should:

- Minimize the impact of conformity pressures and normative conformity
- Maximize the positive impacts of trust and commitment

This action 1 requires that he project manager understands the stakeholders' relationships, visualizes and reflects upon their impact, and ensures that the political influences are addressed (Small & Walker, 2011). Therefore, we suggest that the moderator role depends on two major competences:

1. Knowledge of relationships (Small & Walker, 2011)
2. Ability to influence stakeholders relationships (Small & Walker, 2011)

We believe that knowledge of relationships and the ability of influencing them are two competences especially important when dealing with the negative impacts of conformity. We suggest that, by creating an environment isolated of external pressures (i.e. conformity pressures from top management) through the use of those two competences, people could open up and, at least inside the project setting, feel free of fears to be punished, censured or stigmatized. This reduction on external pressures would lead to increased motivation,

engagement, and thus improved project team performance. However, this isolated environment is temporary in nature; then, we believe that this suggestion comes with various potential threats:

- Decrease in motivation in the termination phase.

- The team members may delay important project activities in the termination phase, so that they can remain longer in the project.

- When the project is finalized, loss of motivation and engagement as team members would face again the same pressures from top management.

We consider that the same competences would indirectly moderate the impact of diversity and national context on the project setting. Here, we are proposing that knowledge of relationships and ability to influence them involve an effort to get familiarized with the stakeholders' cultural background and an ability to empathize with people of different cultures; this last ability is referred as cultural literacy (Iles & Hayers, 1997). In this line of thoughts, we strongly believe that this is a fundamental competence of the project manager, considering the social-cultural complexity of the project actuality.

5.2. Recommended Strategy Action 2

The second action has the purpose of encouraging the positive impacts of shared values within the project setting by promoting and practicing high trust and commitment. To accomplish this, we consider that the project manager should facilitate a set of people-related factors to enable project performance (Anantatmula, 2010). We have borrowed four factors

from Anantatmula (2010), which are essential to foster commitment and trust[3] within the project, these are explained in Table 9:

People-related factors	Description
1. **Create clarity in communication**	Clear and early definition of project goals and outcomes
2. **Define roles and responsibilities**	Unambiguous definition of project team members roles and responsibilities
3. **Communicate expectations**	Defining project outcomes and expectations from all stakeholders and communicate them
4. **Employ consistent processes**	Consistent and formal project management process

Table 9. People-related factors. Source: Anantatmula (2010)

5.2.1. Promoting high commitment within the project

We believe that fostering commitment also requires that the project manager role is to understand personal aspirations of team members, and determine how the project can help the team member to get close to his/her personal goals. Thus, this is a two ways direction situation: how the project team could add value to the project but also how the project could add value to the person. Additionally, we showed that high commitment requires rewards; thus, we consider that including rewards for example such as recognitions or offering future opportunities in projects, can increase the level of commitment to the project. We have represented how we believe that these factors altogether lead to high commitment in Figure 12:

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[3] *Establish trust* is a people-related factor per se, however (Anantatmula, 2010) explains that it is an end result of the other people- related factors.
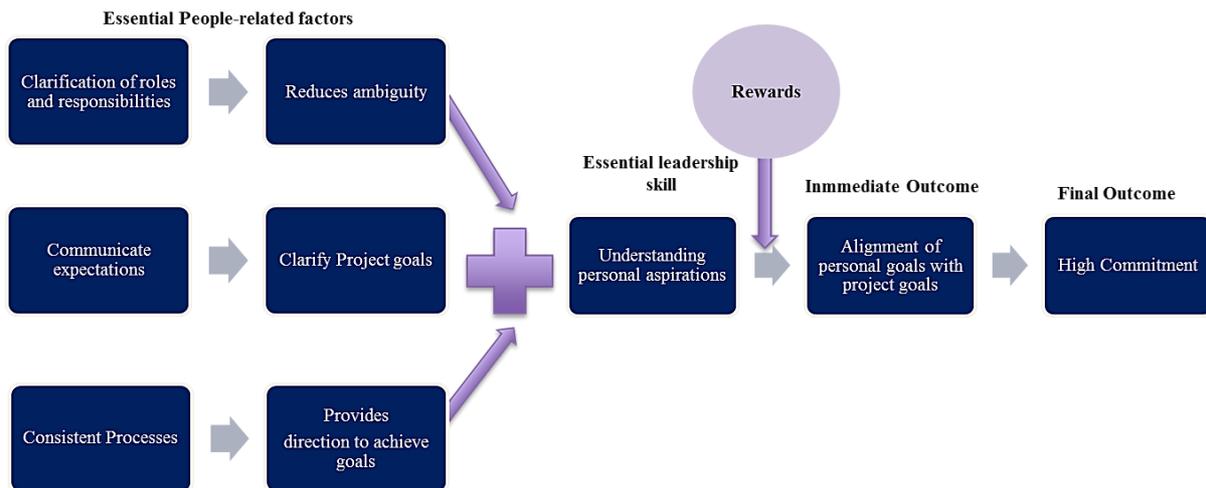
Figure 12. Suggestion to promote and practice high level of commtiment. Own representation. People-related factors taken from Anantatmula (2010)

5.2.2. Promoting and practicing trust within the project

Anantatmula (2010) suggests that establishing trust requires predictability and openness through communicating expectations and having established process, and openness and transparency through clarity of communication. Here we assume that establishing trust refers to both promoting and practicing the value. In the chapter four, we showed that trust depends of competences and integrity; however trust in the team has to be built faster because the team members are aware that they have to trust other so that the project move forward[4] (Atkinson et al., 2006). This means that people do not know each other well-enough to evaluate others' integrity; therefore, we add that, to establish trust, the project manager should make visible the competences of each member within the project team, along with team building activities, so that trust is rapidly built based on knowledge of competences. We have represented how we believe that these factors altogether help to establish trust within the project team in Figure 13:

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[4] This phenomenon is called swift trust (Debra, Karl, & Roderick, 1996)
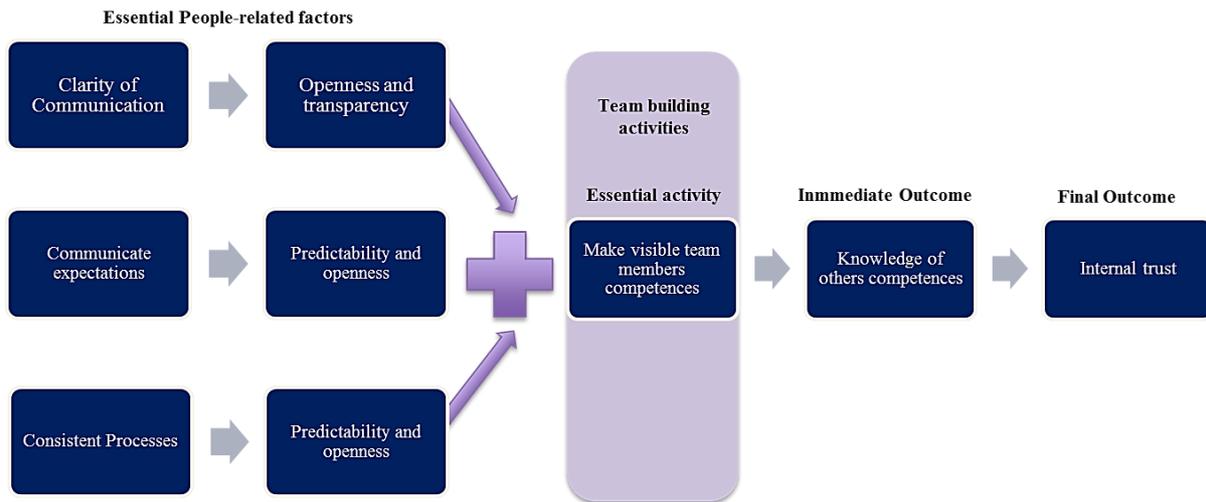
Figure 13. Suggestion to promote and practice trust. Own representation. People-related factors taken from Anantatmula (2010)

To summarize this section, the strategy we have proposed includes two main actions. These actions involve the development of certain leadership competences, namely knowledge of relationships and influence on relationships, along with the facilitation of people-related factors. Our purpose with such strategy is first to moderate the impact of shared values external to the project setting, and second to foster the positive impact of shared values from within the project. This strategy is clearly based on the belief that the project manager has enough authority in the project and, thus, throughout leadership, can aim for affecting the stakeholder's relationships (Small & Walker, 2011) and their influence on the project performance.

6. Conclusions

In this investigation, we explored the impact of conformity, commitment and trust on the organization and project performance. These three shared values proved to be complex concepts: there are innumerably definitions in the literature as well as classifications, and the values involve a level or degree of, and change with time (i.e. trust is built, trust is lost, commitment could be broken with betrayal). Additionally, diversity, national culture and leaders and top management shape the perception of values and the associated artifacts. These features make the shared values multilayered, multidimensional and dynamic. Thus, we recognize that the exploration of the subject of study was a challenging task because one can incur in methodological issues and confusions due to the variety of definitions and classifications, the disagreement of researches about such concepts (i.e. loyalty and commitment); and because people have different perceptions or ideas of what conformity , commitment, and trust are. Nevertheless, we know that those values exist, regardless of the type or level; therefore, rather than predict them, our purpose with this research was to shed the light on the impacts of conformity, commitment and trust.

Conformity is a practiced value that causes loss of motivation, engagement and confidence. For obvious reasons, conformity is not a promoted value; instead, through the use of diverse pressures, top management creates an environment of conformity so that the status quo, their beliefs and their power are maintained. By doing so, top management is shaping an organizational culture of homogeneity that hinders learning and the continuous improvement; in other words, conformity creates a risk-averse organization where people would only do what they know the best, being afraid of anything different and censuring anyone that displays non-conformist behaviors. When conformity is used as a selection and promotion

criterion, top management may be punishing and censuring individuals with leadership skills and innovative ideas and, with this, censuring the innovative and creative organizational capacity, and bringing up "leaders" that only can "follow the book". The consequences on the project are significant: poor project team performance, irrational allocation of resources and irrational assignation of project managers and project team members. We strongly believe that conformity adversely impacts overall project success. Because of its feature of motivational value, conformity[5] would negative impact individual and group attitudes; and secondly, assignation of project personnel based on conformists' behaviors would considerably affect project success, given that both project manager's attitude and leadership competences impact project success (Müller & Turner, 2010). We showed that conformity hinders individualism, which is an antecedent of loss of creativity and innovation at the organizational level. Thus, conformity is extremely counterproductive considering its impacts performance, and it is especially negative in industries that require high creativity and innovation, such as NPD. Moreover, at the long term, the conformity that is the result of rational reflection will become *the unchangeless experience* (Song et al., 2012) of the organization and, consequently, the organization may become unable to change and continuously improve to keep up to speed to the rapid pace of the markets.

Commitment is both a promoted and practiced value, but its practice involves a *level or degree of* the value that depends on the group or individual. Commitment acts as a driving force of individuals' and project team's performance, especially in project crisis, as it helps people to remain focused on the project goals and find creative solutions with the available resources. Additionally, high contractor commitment is materialized into open communication and honest reporting of project status. We believe that this situation increases

[5] We remind the reader that this is conformity due to fear, as it was exposed in chapter 4. One would argue that conformity due to rewards would increase motivation, but here we are not exploring that situation.

the level of trust on the contractor, which in turn increases the client's support towards the

project; this situation also involves a high perceived degree of contract's integrity.

Commitment requires rewards that can vary from monetary to experience and recognitions.

This means that commitment is reciprocal between the individual and the organization, and

as soon as that reciprocity is broken, so is the commitment. Thus, it would be naïve to think

that a person would blindly commit without rewards, each person has personal interest and

needs[6] that take priority and should be satisfy; so if the project manager aims to build

commitment, he/she should understand the personal aspirations of project team members to

identify how he/she can foster commitment.

Trust is not a promoted value; instead leaders and top management promote values

such as collaboration, integration, openness, and transparency expecting that those values

help to build trust. We believe that the promotion of those values to build trust is because by

practicing them, people have the opportunity to know others' competences and integrity,

which are factors that influence trustworthiness. The practice of trust also involves a level of

the value that depends on the parties involved in the relationships (i.e. functional units,

project team members). We believe that the most important impact of trust is on

stakeholders' relationships, which in turn leads to various impacts at the organizational and

project level. Basically, trust is a fundamental factor in decision making; then, in a

relationship, trust is one of various factors that is assessed for any type of transaction between

the involved parties. Trust is based on expectations; hence, it can be easily lost as the

expectations are broken. Consequently, it is complemented and supplemented with control

mechanisms. The benefits of a high level of trust in the relationship are directly seen in open,

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[6] The Kano Model could be used to understand project team member's needs. Additionally, in this model, needs change with time, then we could argue that rewards have to be adjusted to satisfy changing needs, and, consequently, to foster commitment.

transparent and honest communications; and improved confidence within the project as expectations are fulfilled. Therefore, trust can help dealing with uncertainty in the project because reduces the complicatedness of plans and schedules and reduces cost as less control is in place, and increases team effectiveness. Considering the temporary nature of project settings, we believe that in order to build trust faster the project managers should provide visibility of competences of each project team members, so that trust is initially built in knowledge of others' competences.

Based on the underlying assumption that the project manager has enough authority in the project, we believe that he/she could moderate the impact of conformity, commitment and trust. This role requires knowledge on relationships and the ability to influence them. Therefore, the project manager should aim for:

- Minimizing the impact of conformity, including the pressures, to establish an isolated environment pressures and, in turn, decreasing fears and increasing motivation
- Maximizing the impacts of trust and commitment.

Simultaneously, the project managers should promote and foster the practice of commitment and trust in the project team by means of communication, clarity of roles, consistent processes, clear expectations, understanding of personal aspirations and visibility of team members' competences. We recognize that this is a strategy temporary in nature, as it would last as long as the project does and that, consequently, there are potential threats, such as decrease of motivation in the termination phase because project team members may be afraid of leaving the "protected bubble" they have been in. Nevertheless, a strategy at the organizational level is clearly more complex and may require to treat the shared values separately; for example we believe that managing the impact of conformity require a deep organizational change, staring from leaders and top managers as they are the ones promoting

shared values but also the ones exerting pressures to conform. Thus, envisioning and proposing such kind strategy is out of the scope of this study, and will require an entire investigation.

As we mentioned before, we did not aim to predict impacts, instead the contribution of this research in providing insight on how conformity, commitment and trust affect both the organization and project performance. The originality of this study is the simultaneous investigation at the organizational and project level, so that connections between situations and the mechanisms on how shared values reach the project performance are visualized. Additionally, we introduced two concepts: promoted value and practiced value. We believe that the relevancy of these concepts is that, by identifying if a value is promoted or practiced and how it is done, the leaders and the project managers could manage the impact of shared values, and also influence the organization and project cultures to achieve positive outcomes. We consider that an investigation that explores the congruence between promoted and practiced values in the organization or the project, could help to develop strategies to improve performance. Moreover, this investigation lays the ground for possible studies, for example focusing in one value and targeting the investigation to a specific industry sector (i.e. conformity in NPD) so that its impact can be explored in a deeper degree. To conclude, this research adds valuable knowledge for the understanding of the project actuality (Cicmil et al., 2006). While conducting this investigation, we visualized the project as an entity were complex social process occurs, where many actors with different perceptions are in constant interactions; therefore we believe that the knowledge of organizational influences and their impact could help the project manager to deal with the complex social context, the interconnectedness of human relationships and how they affect the project performance; and, consequently, to improve the managerial task.

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APPENDIX A: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

SECTION 1: Informants' Demographic profile

1. Please indicate your age range:

☐   26 to 30

☐   31 -36

☐   36- 41

☐   41- 45

☐   over 45

2. What is your management level in the current position:

☐   Middle management

☐   Senior Management

3. How many years in your current position? _____

4. How many employees report directly to you? _____

5. How many years of experience managing projects? _____

6. What is your organization's industry type?

_____

7. What is the average duration of a project (product or service) ?

_____

8. What is the average size of the project team?

SECTION 2: Interview Questions at the organizational level

1. What values and/or beliefs are important or promoted in the organization?

2. What values and/or beliefs are really practiced in the organization?

3. What values and/or beliefs do you feel should be practiced?

4. Do you feel there is congruence between the values/beliefs that are promoted, practiced and needed?

5. How those values/beliefs have facilitated or hindered your day-to-day work?

6. What have you or the organization done to manage those impacts?

SECTION 3: Interview Questions at the project level

Recall your last completed project and the values/beliefs you have just mentioned

7. Visualize the project life cycle as a linear process consisting of four basic stages as shown in the figure below:
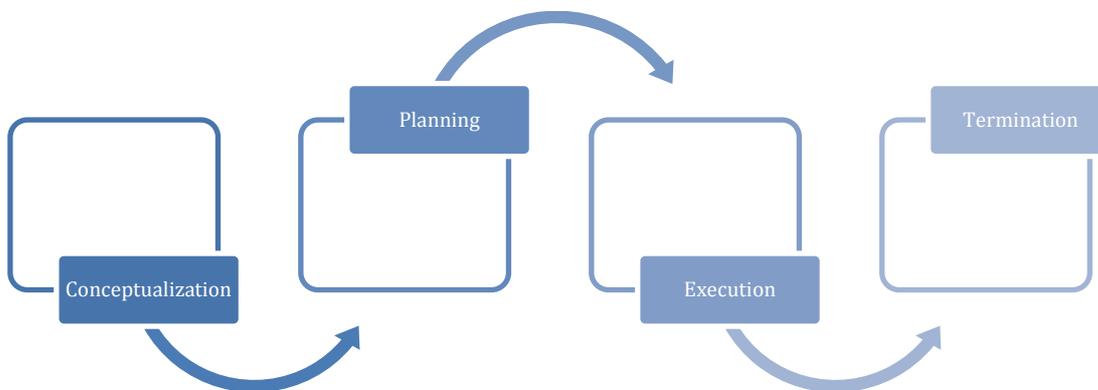
How do you perceive that these values/beliefs impacted the project development?

8.   How this project performed in terms of cost, time and/or quality (Project management success)?

9.   Do you feel that these values/beliefs are the reason behind the cost, time and/ or quality results?

10. What did you or the organizations do to manage those impacts? Anything you feel could have been done in addition?

APPENDIX B: MASTER THESIS PRESTUDY

Impact of Organizational Influences on Project Performance and Outcome through its Life Cycle

1. Description

1.1. Background. As part of the specialization project TPK4500 in the autumn of 2013, a list of organizational factors impacting project management complexity was developed. The list includes the following factors:

- Lack of requirement management competences
- Lack of project management competences
- Sociocultural diversity
- Top management fails to perform its roles in the project: Support, commitment, understanding and oversees
- Rigid hierarchical organizational structure
- Lack of organization process assets
- Organizational culture challenges
- National culture

In the project, it was concluded that the interrelatedness, dynamics and temporary nature of these factors complicates the managerial task, and therefore could have consequences on project performance and outcome. The list is limited because the specialization project was developed as a literature synthesis. Consequently, the suggested impacts of these factors on project performance and outcome were limited to the findings based on the literature review.

The topic chosen for this master thesis has resulted from the need of performing an empirical investigation to determine the realities of the organizational influences. We aim to gain better understanding and insight into the project actuality (Cicmil et al., 2006); this means that we see projects as complex social settings, and we are interested in understanding the lived experience of project members. In addition, the literature review done in the autumn of 2013 suggested that that the factors have a temporary nature; then, it is of our interest to examine how these factors affect the project in its life cycle, and identify possible countermeasures to cope with them.

1.2. Scope. First of all, this thesis is limited only to organizational influences that affect the project organization; this means that we will not review how factors of other nature (i.e. technological) influence project performance and outcome. We clarify that by project organization we refer to the core of actors or focal entity that has been constructed intentionally (Artto & Kujala, 2008) to perform the project. This entity represents the organization that is responsible for the detailed planning and execution of a project (Hussein & Hafseld, 2013b).

A project organization is composed by a group of actors with their own worldviews, culture, believes, background; but at the same time the project organization is influenced by factors such as the organizational culture, rules, values, believes, structure, power and authority balance, just to mention a few. These elements shape the project development during the entire life cycle. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to examine, review, analyze how the organizational influences shape project performance and outcome in the project life cycle, and suggest possible countermeasures. This means that it would be necessary to decide on which model of Project Life Cycle will be used during the investigation.

The research method has still not been selected, however it is clear that we will dig into the lived experiences of project management practitioners by means of interviews and/or questionnaires. The research instrument will be elaborated in the course of this thesis.

1.3. Tasks and necessary knowledge: The five tasks mentioned below are as per the official assignment received from the IPK department. For each task, the areas where knowledge has to be gained, have been indentified.

- **Task 1:** Conduct a condensed and comprehensive literature review that covers types and categories and impact of organizational influences. The study should also look into similar research work that addresses the same or similar purpose.
Knowledge to be gained: It is necessary to look for literature that has addressed the topic with regard to the project life cycle if possible, then it is necessary to recall the knowledge of the stages/phases of the life cycle and choose a model that will be used during the investigation.

- **Task 2:** Identify and relevant research methods that fit for the purpose of the assignment
Knowledge to be gained: types of research methods

- **Task 3:** Identify possible case studies (type of projects), respondents, informants and means to collect the empirical data from informants and respondents

Knowledge to be gained: how to perform interviews, which means to collect data exist and could be used having into consideration several constrains (geographical distance, time distance, financial)

- **Task 4:** Develop relevant instruments, interview guides, and questionnaires that can be used to collect relevant data from informants and case study.

Knowledge to be gained: how to develop questionnaires, how to choose the right questions

- **Task 5:** Through methods identified above, the student shall identify most prominent organizational influences in each project life cycle. Discuss and analyze their impacts, and elaborate on possible countermeasures that could be used address these organizational influences.

Knowledge to be gained: what kind of strategies has been used successfully in project management to cope with those organizational influences, then it is necessary to perform a literature review in this topic. As part of task 4, it is necessary to identify what is currently done by the practitioners and if it is successful or not. The possible countermeasures would be the result of successful strategies used by the participants in the study, and strategies found in the project management literature.

1.4. Objectives. Based on the previous task, seven objectives have been identified as listed below.

1. Identify and select a project life cycle model that will be later used in the research to classify the organizational influences.

2. From the literature review identify how organizational influences affect the project development in the project life cycle. For example, has a specific factor more impact in an early phase than in closeout?

3. Elaborate an instrument to perform the research, for example a questionnaire; and decide on how the interviews or distribution of the instrument will be carried on. This involves identifying the individual that could be interviewed etc.

4. Conduct research on the topic using the instrument.

5. Based on the results/ information gathered, elaborate a list of organizational influences. The list developed in TPK4505 could be taken as starting point.

6. Classify the identified organizational influences according to the project life cycle.

7. Suggest possible countermeasures to cope with the organizational influences

2. Milestones

A total of 11 milestones have been set for the duration of this master thesis. These are as follows:

	Milestone	Date
Milestone 1	Prestudy delivered	21-Jan-14
Milestone 2	Literature review done and discussed	07-Feb-14
Milestone 3	Research Instrument elaborated and approved	25-Feb-14
Milestone 4	Participants identified and contacted	05-Mar-14
Milestone 5	Distribution mechanism identified	10-Mar-14
Milestone 6	Empirical investigation performed	04-Apr-14
Milestone 7	Organizational influences listed, categorized and approved	28-Apr-14
Milestone 8	Countermeasures proposed and approved	07-May-14
Milestone 9	Draft review	21-May-14
Milestone 10	Final version ready	02-Jun-14
Milestone 11	Master thesis submitted	07-Jun-14

Table 1. Milestones master thesis

3. Work breakdown

The work has been broken down into 26 activities corresponding to nine main deliverables. Table 2 and figure 1 show the activities.

Breakdown	Description	WBS	Code
Master Thesis TPK 4905			**1.0.**
Deliverable 1	**Define topic**		**1.1.**
	Define main tasks and activities	1.1.1.	
	Elaborate and deliver prestudy	1.1.2.	
Deliverable 2	**Perform literature review**		**1.2.**
	Search for relevant academic literature	1.2.1.	
	Read and understand literature	1.2.2.	
	Perform analysis of literature	1.2.3.	
	Discuss analysis	1.2.4.	
	Write preliminary analysis	1.2.5.	
Deliverable 3	**Review literature about research methods**		**1.3.**
	Search for relevant literature	1.3.1.	
	Read and understand documentation	1.3.2.	
Deliverable 4	**Develop instrument**		**1.4.**
	Elaborate the instrument	1.4.1.	
	Discuss proposed instrument	1.4.2.	
Deliverable 5	**Perform empirical investigation**		**1.5.**
	Identify and contact potential participants	1.5.1.	
	Determine a mechanism to distribute instrument	1.5.2.	
	Perform the investigation	1.5.3.	
Deliverable 6	**Analyze results**		**1.6.**
	Perform analysis of information	1.6.1.	
	List and categorize organizational influences		
	Discuss analysis and results	1.6.2.	
	Write analysis and results	1.6.3.	
Deliverable 7	**Elaborate countermeasures**		**1.7.**
	Propose possible countermeasures	1.7.1.	
	Discuss proposed countermeasures	1.7.2.	
	Write analysis	1.7.3.	
Deliverable 8	**Elaborate draft**		**1.8.**
	Make draft version	1.8.1.	
	Review draft version	1.8.2.	
	Make corrections	1.8.3.	
Deliverable 9	**Elaborate final report**		**1.9.**
	Make final version	1.9.1.	
	Submission of final version	1.9.2.	

**Table 2.** Work breakdown
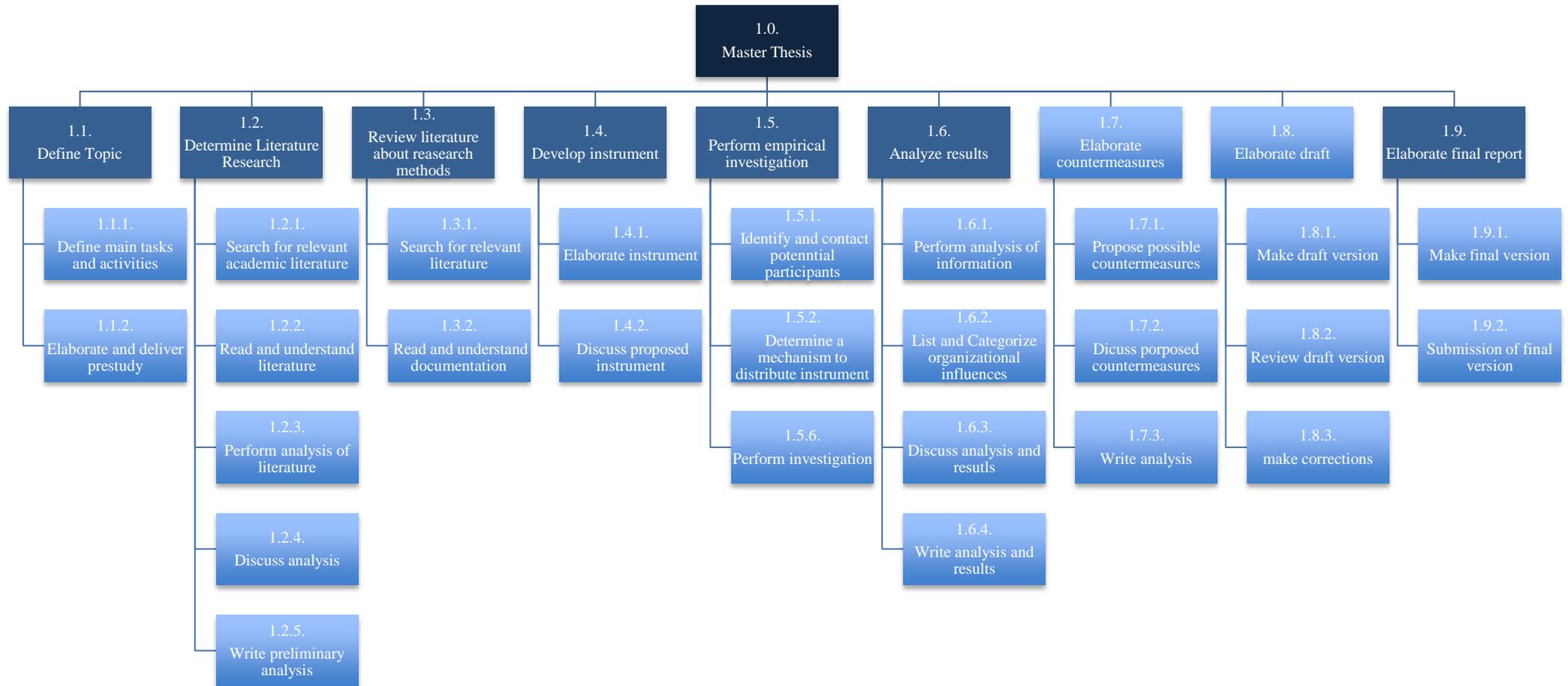
Figure 1. Work breakdown structure

4. Activity duration and Resource Needs

Table 3 displays the duration in days of each activity and the resource needs in hours. The master thesis is planned for a total of 97 working days and 596 man hours.

Code	Activity	Duration- days	Predecesor	Resource Hours	Responsibility
A	Define main tasks and activities	3	-	12	Claudia, Bassam
B	Elaborate and deliver prestudy	3	A	16	Claudia
C	Search for relevant academic literature	4	B	30	Claudia
D	Read and understand literature	4	C	24	Claudia
E	Perform analysis of literature	4	D	25	
F	Discuss analysis	1	E	2	Bassam, Claudia
G	Write analysis	3	F	19	Claudia
H	Search relevant literature about research methods	1	G	8	Claudia
I	Read and understand documentation	1	H	8	Claudia
J	Elaborate research instrument	4	I	24	Claudia
K	Discuss proposed instrument	2	J	4	Claudia, Bassam
L	Identify and contact potential participants	7	K	43	Claudia, Bassam
M	Determine mechanism to distribute mechanism	2	L	16	Claudia
N	Perform investigation	20	M	128	Claudia
O	Perform analysis of information	5	N	32	Claudia
P	List and categorize organizational influences	4	O	24	Claudia
Q	Discuss analysis and results	2	P	6	Claudia, Bassam
R	Write analysis and results	3	Q	19	Claudia
S	Propose countermeasures	3	R	21	Claudia
T	Discuss proposed countermeasures	1	S	2	Claudia, Bassam
U	Write analysis	2	T	16	Claudia
V	Make draft version	5	U	32	
W	Review draft version	3	V	19	Claudia, Bassam
X	Make corrections	3	W	21	Claudia
Y	Make final version	4	X	26	
Z	Submission of final version	3	Y	19	Claudia
		Total days =97		**Total hr= 596**	

Table 3. Activity duration and Resource needs

5. Resource loading per week

Activity	Duration days	Week 3 January 13-19							Week 4 January 20-26							Week 5 January 27- February 2						
		Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
A. Define main tasks and activities	3			4	4	4																
B. Elaborate and deliver prestudy	3								8	8												
C. Search for relevant academic literature	4										6	8	8			8						
D. Read and understand literature	4																5	6	5	8		
Total week hr		12							38							32						

Activity	Duration days	Week 6 February 3-9							Week 7 February 10-16							Week 8 February 17- 23						
		Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
E. Perform analysis of literature	4	8	5	6	6																	
F. Discuss analysis	1					2																
G. Write analysis	3								8	5	6											
H. Search relevant literature about research methods	1											8										
I. Read and understand documentation	1												8									
J. Elaborate research instrument	4															8	5	6	5			
K. Discuss proposed instrument	2																			2		
Total week hr		27							35							26						

Activity	Duration days	Week 9 February 24-March 2							Week 10 March 3-9							Week 11 March 10-16						
		Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
K. Discuss proposed instrument	2	2																				
L. Identify and contact potential participants	7		5	6	5	8			8	5	6											

Task	hr	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
M. Determine mechanism to distribute mechanism	2											8	8									
N. Perform investigation	20															8	5	6	5	8		
Total week hr		**26**							**35**							**32**						

		Week 12 March 17-23							Week 13 March 24-30							Week 14 March 31- April 6						
		Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
N. Perform investigation	20	8	5	6	5	8			8	5	6	5	8			8	5	6	5	8		
Total week hr		**32**							**32**							**32**						

		Week 15 April 7- 13							Week 16 April 14 -20							Week 17 April 21- 27						
		Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
O. Perform analysis of information	5	8	5	6	5	8			Eastern													
P. List and categorize organizational influences	4															8	5	6	5			
Q. Discuss analysis and results	2																			3		
Total week hr		**32**							**0**							**27**						

		Week 18 April 28-May 4							Week 19 May 5-11							Week 20 May 12-18						
		Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
Q. Discuss analysis and results	2	3																				
R. Write analysis and results	3		8	6	8																	
S. Propose countermeasures	3					8			8	5												

Task	hr	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
T. Discuss proposed countermeasures	1										2											
U. Write analysis	2											8	8									
V. Make draft version	5															8	5	6	7	8		
Total week hr				**33**							**31**							**34**				

		Week 21 May 19- 25							Week 22 May 26- june 1							Week 23 June 2-8						
		Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su
W. Review draft version	3	8	5	6																		
X. Make corrections	3				8	8			8													
Y. Make final version	4									6	6	6	8									
Z. Submission of final version	3															8	5	6				
Total week hr				**35**							**34**							**19**				

Figure 2. Resource loading per week

## 6. Gantt diagram with milestones
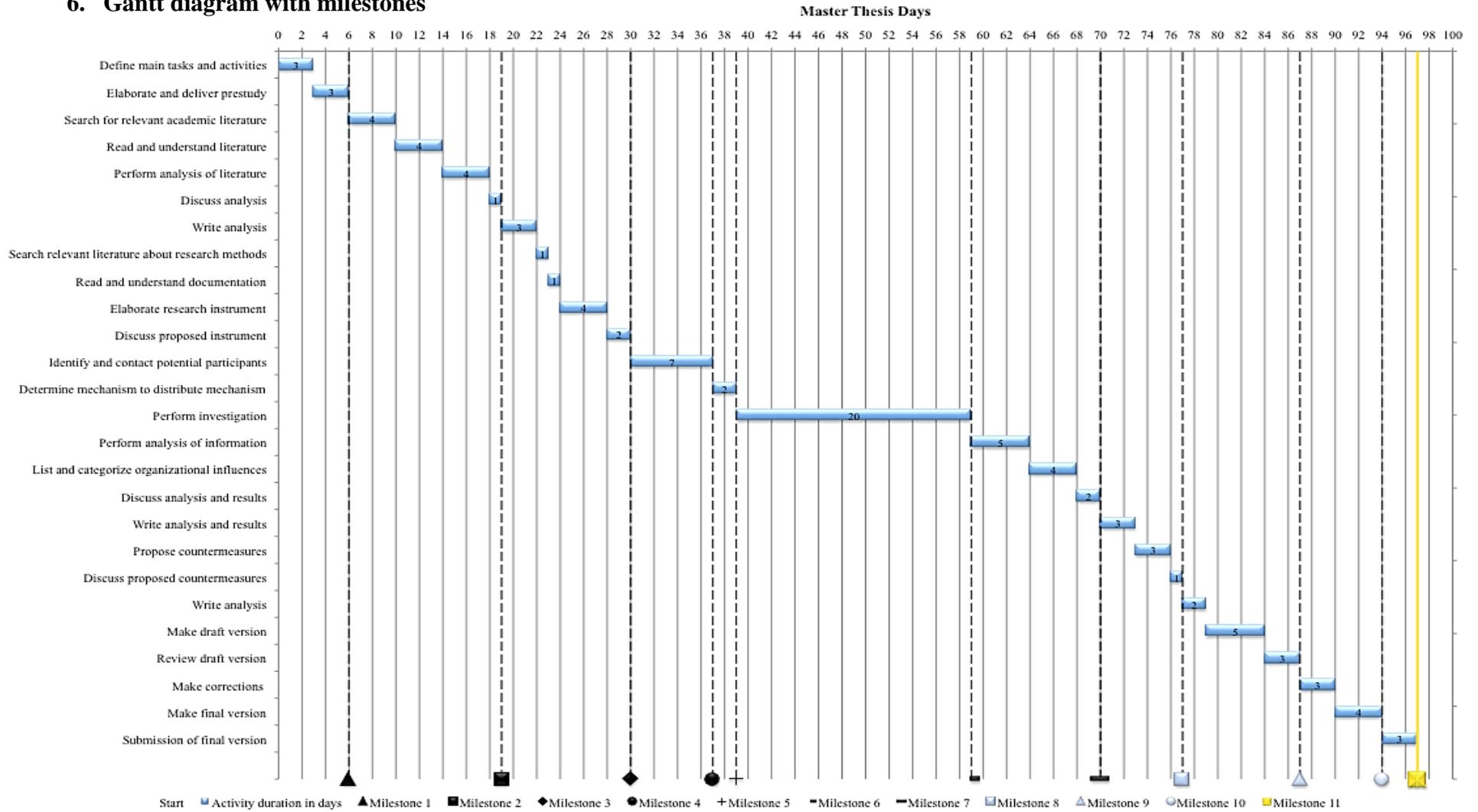
Figure 3. Gantt diagram with milestones

7. Resource Requirements

- **Human Resources:** To develop this master thesis, it is necessary the assigned student, the assigned project supervisor, and the individuals that will participate in the empirical study such as project manager or other practioners of project management.

- **Financial Resources**: It might be expected that the empirical investigation requires travelling to other cities, this will be decided in a later stage when the distribution of the instrument is decided. But in case that it is absolutely necessary, the student shall pay herself for the incurred expenses.

- **Technological Resources:** It is crucial the access to valid and reliable literature in project management. The main resources correspond to data bases and search engines such as:

  - NTNU Universitetsbiblioteket (BYBSYS)
  - **www.engineeringvillage.com**
  - **search.proquest.com**

8. Risks and Concerns

- **Wrong Selection of literature**: The chosen literature must respond to the needs of this thesis, and be valid and reliable from an academic point of view. Once an analysis is performed, it is necessary to agree with the supervisor upon the findings.

- **Poor quality instrument:** the instrument must be at the level of a master thesis. For example including questions that really dig into the problem of organizational influences and result in valid, reliable and good information. It is necessary that the supervisor reviews and approves the instrument before it is distributed.

- **Difficulties finding participants:** A minimum number of participants must be determined with the supervisor having into consideration the research method, for example if it requires travelling to other cities, which could be very expensive; also it is necessary to develop a preliminary list and ask first about their willingness to participate.

9. Acceptance Criteria

1. The report should be edited as double-spaced high quality research paper. Referencing and the formatting should comply with the example international journal of project management, project management journal or any other project management journal.
2. The recommended size of the paper (abstract- conclusions) should be around 12000
3. The instrument to be used must have been discussed and agreed upon with the supervisor.
4. The final list of organizational influences, the categories and the countermeasures, should have been discussed and agreed upon with the supervisor.

APPENDIX C: REPORT AS ACADEMIC PAPER

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Organizational Influences on the Organization and Project Performance

The Impact of Conformity, Commitment and Trust

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Abstract

Organizational Influences is an umbrella concept that refers to factors in the social and organizational context that impact the project setting. Shared values are organizational influences and a level of organizational culture. This investigation explores the impact of three shared values, namely conformity, commitment and trust, on the organization and project performance. The exploration was done by means of semi-structured interviews. The findings show that conformity is a practiced value that decreases project team performance and causes irrational selection of project personnel. Commitment is a promoted and practiced value that becomes critical in troubleshooting. Trust is a practiced value that is fundamental in stakeholders' relationships. A strategy to manage the impacts of these values is proposed. This investigation is aimed to provide insights into the impacts of shared values so that the project managers can use this knowledge to deal with the complex social context where the project is submerged.

Keywords: Organizational influences, organizational culture, shared values, promoted value, practiced value, conformity, commitment, trust, project performance, impact.

1. Introduction

In the last years, there has been a strong and increasing tendency among project management researchers to move away from the traditional views of predictability and linearity in project practice to one that highlights the complex nature of human interrelations (Small & Walker, 2011). The underlying assumption under this tendency is that the project is a complex setting embedded in a socio-cultural context and characterized by human interactions and tension between predictability and control (Cicmil et al., 2006). Considering the projects as submerged in such complicated context, there are factors that impact the project development. These factors are referred as *Organizational Influences* (Project Management Institute, 2013). We believe that exploring them, contributes to the understanding of the project as a complex social process. Thus, this study has resulted from our desire of contributing to such understanding; and our objective is to provide the project practitioners with better understanding and awareness of the possible impacts of organizational influences, so that such knowledge can help them to improve their day-to-day work and deal with the complexity of the social context.

The concept of organizational influences is of such broadness that we had to limit our scope of work. After we had comprehensively reviewed the organizational literature, we came to the conclusion that most of the organizational influence listed by the Project Management Institute (2013) are artifacts of organizational culture. Therefore, we limited the research to organizational culture; and consequently, taking as theoretical framework Schein (1990) levels of culture, we narrow it down to shared values. However, shared values was still an extremely broad concept, thus we selected a set of values meaningful for the project management praxis. In a literature synthesis conducted by Gutierrez and Hussein (2013), conformity and commitment are factors influencing managerial complexity. Taking the perspective of shared values, we decided to explore the influence of conformity and commitment. Moreover, commitment is a project success factor (J. K. Pinto & Prescott, 1988) and, thus, its meaningfulness for the project management praxis. Trust is the third and final value we included because of its criticality for positive relationships between stakeholders in the project setting (Project Management Institute, 2013) and ,considering the interconnectedness of human actors in the project

as a social process, we believe that understanding the impact of trust on the project development could add valuable knowledge in this research area. Thus, this investigation is exploratory in nature, being the subject of study the impact of organizational influences on the organization and project performance, where we focus on three shared values: conformity, commitment, and trust.

2. Literature Review

The Project Management Institute (2013) uses the term organizational influences to describe factors that affecting the methods for staffing, managing and executing the project. The Project Management Institute (2013, p. 19) lists the following organizational influences: Organizational culture and Style, Organizational structure, Organizational process assets, Organizational communications and Enterprise environmental factors. It is evident that this is a concept of such broadness that it would not be realistic to explore all the listed factors in one single research. Furthermore, various organizational researches (i.e. Hofstede, 1998; Schein, 1990) suggest frameworks to understand organizational culture, where organizational structure, style, communication and process assets are manifestations of deeper assumptions or values, and these altogether constitute the organizational culture. We believe that these frameworks are a more appropriate approach to the subject of organizational influences.

2.1. Organizational Culture

Various definitions of organizational culture have been proposed in literature, some examples are shown in Table 1. However, a general consensus has not been achieved because researchers use diverse theoretical approached, assumptions, and interpret similar cultural phenomena in different ways (Belassi et al., 2007).

Literature	Definition
Schein (1990)	A pattern of basic assumptions that are invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with problems of external adaptation and internal integration and that have worked well enough to be considered valid.
Hofstede (1991)	The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one organization from others
Alvesson (2002)	An umbrella concept for a way of thinking which takes a serious interest in cultural and symbolic phenomena.

Table 1. Examples of definitions of organizational culture

We will approach the subject of organizational culture based on Schein (1990) who proposed three levels of culture that vary in the degree of visibility to an external agent to the organization, as it is shown in Figure 1. According to Schein (1990), each level is described as follows:
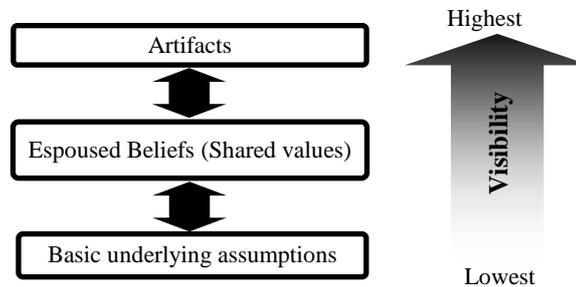

Figure 1. Schein's levels of organizational culture. Source: Schein (1990)

Artifacts: These are more tangible products or practices that describe how the organization works, for example organizational structure, processes and published values.

Espoused beliefs: Correspond to shared values and/or beliefs. They are born from individual's own assumptions, for example leaders or founders, who are able to influence the group to adopt his/her assumptions as shared values or beliefs about what the right or wrong approach to a problem is.

Basic underlying assumptions: These are taken for granted beliefs. They are non-confrontable, non-debatable, and unconscious, which makes them very difficult to be changed.

In Schein (1990) framework, organizational structure, style, communications and assets correspond to more visible manifestations of organizational culture at the level of artifacts; therefore, the essential organizational influence is, in fact, organizational culture. Furthermore, we believe that most of the research done on organizational culture is at the middle level of Schein's framework. Alvesson (2002) argues that many organizational researches have generalized the concept of organizational culture when in fact they are only referring to particular aspects such as shared values. We believe that this situation is evident in the classifications of organizational culture; for example, Cooke and Szumal (1993) classify organizational culture based on promoted norms and expectations; and Goffee and Jones (1998) based on solidarity and sociability. Therefore, instead of exploring organizational culture as a whole, we explore the impact of shared values on the organizational and project performance because they are organizational influences, as we depicted it in Figure 2:

Figure 2. Shared values as organizational influences

2.1.1. The impact of Shared values

To keep a realistic scope of work, we chose a set of shared values meaningful in project management praxis. These are conformity, commitment and trust.

- **Conformity**

Conformity is *a subject's behavior or attitude following those of the object* (Song et al., 2012). The object can be organizations, individuals or subgroups. Conformity involves social pressures, which relate to the influence that individuals have over one other (DeZoort & Lord, 1997); examples are compliance pressures, obedience and peer pressure.

Conformity has been described in terms of normative influence (i.e. Hornsey et al., 2003) . Normative conformity is the result of normative influence and has been given significant attention in literature (i.e. Hornsey et al., 2003; Hussein & Hafseld, 2013a). Normative conformity is the result of a strategic effort of the individual to be accepted and to avoid social rejection, hostility or disapproval from others (Hornsey et al., 2003), regardless of whether the object of conformity is right of wrong (DeZoort & Lord, 1997). Normative conformity has a direct impact on the organization's creative and innovative capacity, and consequently it affects the organization's responses to stressful situations and changes, as Pech (2001) suggests. The author (ibid) explains that a dominant culture of conformity perpetuates the status quo and followership. Hussein and Hafseld (2013b) explore the case of a conformist organization. This organization stigmatized as uncooperative anyone who tried to provide critical comments or to stick-out. To cope with such a demand of compliance and diminish the risk of

90

being punished by top management, people learned to remain silent when having different opinions or comments, becoming conformist due to conformist pressure. With regard to the project manager role, Chong and Syarifuddin (2010) suggest that a project manager that experience conformity pressure has more tendency to continue a failing project.

- **Commitment**

According to Nijhof et al. (1998) conformity can be defined as *"a sense of loyalty to and identification with the organization, the work and the group to which one belongs."* This definition of conformity involves identification. The literature has denominated Attitudinal or Affective Organizational Commitment (AOC) to the phenomenon that occurs when the goals of the individuals and the organizations become increasingly integrated or the identity of the individual is linked to the organization (Mowday et al., 1979). AOC is believed to encourage behaviors that are beneficial for the organization such as performance and intention to stay in the organization (Riketta & Landerer, 2002). Other forms of commitment have been proposed in the organizational literature (i.e. Allen & Meyer, 1996; Wiener, 1982) such as continuance and normative commitment. However, affective commitment is considered the one with the strongest and most consistent relation to desirable outcomes (Mei-Yung et al., 2004).

The impact of commitment on project performance has been given significant attention in the project management literature. Mei-Yung et al. (2004) argue that affective commitment improves the project performance because people are more attached and involved in the project, and also want to stay in the organizational for the particular project. Fowler and Horan (2007) identify a combination of top management commitment and project team commitment as a force driving the successful development of IS projects. J. K. Pinto and Prescott (1988) identified top management support as a critical success factor and suggested its dominance in the planning phase of the project life cycle. McLeod and MacDonell (2011) emphasize the importance of top management in projects as it plays various roles in the organization, for example influencing attitudes, creating a positive context for change, overseeing the development of the project, and ensuring the availability of resources.

- **Trust**

Trust is defined as the willingness to assume risk (Mayer et al., 1995). It is a complex concept because it is multi-layered, multi-disciplinary, and multi-dimensional and changes over time (Lau & Rowlinson, 2011). Trust impacts decision making because decisions are made in light of the level of trust and the perceived risk (Mayer et al., 1995). Trust and controls coevolve (Inkpen & Currall, 2004); nevertheless, the challenge is to find the right mixture of both because total control can lead project participants to feel that they are not trusted and can have consequences of moral hazard nature (Atkinson et al., 2006).Trust involves a cultural component, so what could be considered as trust by one person might not be the same for another (Lau & Rowlinson, 2011). Similarly, culture and trust are perceived as enablers of knowledge-sharing behaviors (Wiewiora et al., 2014). According to Lewis (2007) interpersonal trust enables the quality of communications. In the project performance, the impact of trust can also be observed on its role in uncertainty management. According to Atkinson et al. (2006), trust generates more open communication and therefore more accurate risk calculations; improves confidence which results in effectiveness at the project team level, and more honest specifications and estimates that lead to improved planning.

Table 2 summarizes the impacts of conformity, commitment and trust according to the literature. In this table the impacts are considering a high level of each value.

Shared value	Impact on the organization*	Impact Project development*
Conformity	Loss of creativity capacity	Negatively affects project team performance
	Loss of innovative capacity	
	Loss of capacity to respond and adapt to changes	Negatively impacts assignation of tasks
	Increases resistance to change	Negatively impacts allocation of project team members and project manager
Commitment	Increases motivation	Positively impacts allocation of resources
	Reduces resistance to change	Improves project team performance
Trust	Increases motivation	Helps dealing with uncertainty
	Improve quality of communications	Improves project planning
	Helps to build confidence	Improves in project team effectiveness
		Promotes knowledge-sharing

Table 2. Impact of conformity, commitment and trust (literature review) *Assuming a high level of value

3. Methodology

We used a qualitative phenomenology methodology, considering the organizational character of organizational influences as research area, and the exploratory nature of this study.

Data collection was done throughout nine individual interviews that lasted between 1 to 1 ½ hours. We developed a research instrument of 10 open-ended questions to conduct semi-structured interviews. The research instrument was divided into three sections consisting of informant's demographic profile, and two exploratory sections to discuss the impact of shared values on the organization and the project performance. The sampling method involved both convenience and purposive. The criterion we used to select the informants was that they should hold or had held a managerial position in projects. We did not target the research because it was complicated to get managers willing to speak openly about their organizations, which was truly needed to effectively explore organizational influences. The final sample of informants consisted of nine managers currently holding a managerial position within project management. Seven of the informants were international managers working in Norway, one a norwegian manager working in Norway, and one international manager working in USA. Our priority throughout this research was to ensure the anonymity of our informants and their organizations. Thus, we refer to the informants throughout this research as informants 1 to 9. All the interviews were recorded upon informants' acceptance, and we guaranteed the elimination of the recordings after five months.

We used a thematic analysis method for data analysis. First, we transcribed the interviews. Second, we read the transcripts several times to get familiarized with the information. Third, we identified patterns in the informants' answers. Fourth, we labeled sections according to those patterns. After clustering the information, we were able to organize, compare, and analyze it. This study presented limitations that affect its generalizability. This is because it is strongly context specific, as it was mostly performed within the Norwegian context. Secondly, the majority of our informants were international managers, so the data we have gathered is mainly the perception of internationals within a Norwegian context.

4. Findings and Discussions

In this section we present the results we obtained and, simultaneously, we discuss them by drawing upon organizational and project management literature. The data obtained from the informants provided us with a vast amount of information, to the extent that we uncovered unforeseen data strongly related to the subject of study. We have therefore decided to shed the light on these uncovered data as well, thus, this section is presented in two parts:

1. The contextual factors that appear to shape the shared values
2. The impact of the shared values on the organization and project performance

4.1. Contextual factors shaping the shared values

The findings show that three factors influence how the organization understands the shared values, which in turn shapes the organizational artifacts. These are national context, cultural diversity and leaders and top management.

▪ National Context

The findings show that, within norwegian organizations, the understanding and practice of shared values correspond to the meaning of those values in the Norwegian culture. These organizations might need to teach those meanings and practices to the international employees. For example, informant 7 explained about openness:

"*Some of us are not open by nature so it is kind of hard to be open to try to communicate in a good manner with people. So we are trying to be open because we are not born like that*".

In international organizations with a majority of international employees, the impact of the norwegian context is rather on the artifacts; thus, the organizations have to adapt their practices to what is believed in the Norwegian society. These findings are summarized in Table 3 Table 5:

Type of organization	Impact on organizational influences	Main differences on shared values
Norwegian	Shared values and beliefs follow norwegian culture	Organizations teach internationals their beliefs
International	Artifacts must adapt to shared values and beliefs of the norwegian culture	Organizations perceive and keep different meanings of shared values

Table 3. Summary of national context impact

- Cultural Diversity

Seven of our informants claimed that cultural diversity is factor that influences their work and organizations. Diversity is seen as strength but it also comes with challenges because the different understandings and worldviews may lead to conflicts, confusion, and/or misunderstanding. These challenges emerge because each person has own national values, which are very difficult to change; as informant 7 expressed:

"Although we have the organization values, each of us has values that come with the culture, and each of use refers to them as normal or accepted. Then, it varies sometimes on how we perceive the information and the actions from different people."

- Leaders and top management

The findings show that when leaders and top management promote shared values , they add their personal understanding. The findings revealed that people in the organization could end up adapting wrong beliefs when the leaders and top management' distort the real meaning of values. Informant 1 said about this:

"People take over certain behaviors that are not nice, and may be they are not that kind of people but the system is that. So the system is maintained by this attitudes zipping through the whole organization."

Knowing that shared values are a dimension of organizational culture, the findings support the notion of the influence of contextual factors on organizational culture, which has been acknowledged in the general management literature (i.e. Hofstede, 1991, 1998). Hofstede (2014) suggests that national culture and personality of founder are factors shaping organizational culture. In the project management literature, Shore (2008) states that the organizational culture develops within the context of executive leadership and national culture.

4.2. The impact of shared values on the organization and project performance

We consider necessary to clarify three concepts as we use them throughout this study; these are promoted value, practiced value, and congruence, as described in Table 6 4.

Concept	Description
Promoted values	These are what the organization is *ought to be*, correspond to the values written in policies or ethics codes, or openly fomented by leaders and top management.
Practiced Values	These are what the organization *really is,* and could be both negative and positive.
Congruence	Occurs when the values are promoted and practiced. The reason for non-congruence is individual perception (leaders and top management) distorting the meaning of a value.

Table 4. Promoted, practiced and congruence concepts

In a general manner, the findings show that shared values, shaped by national context, diversity and leaders and top management, impact the project performance. This supports Shore (2008) who suggests that the outcome of a project is influenced by cultural, leadership, project, management, and behavioral factors. The combined influence of contextual factors and shared values is depicted in Figure 3:
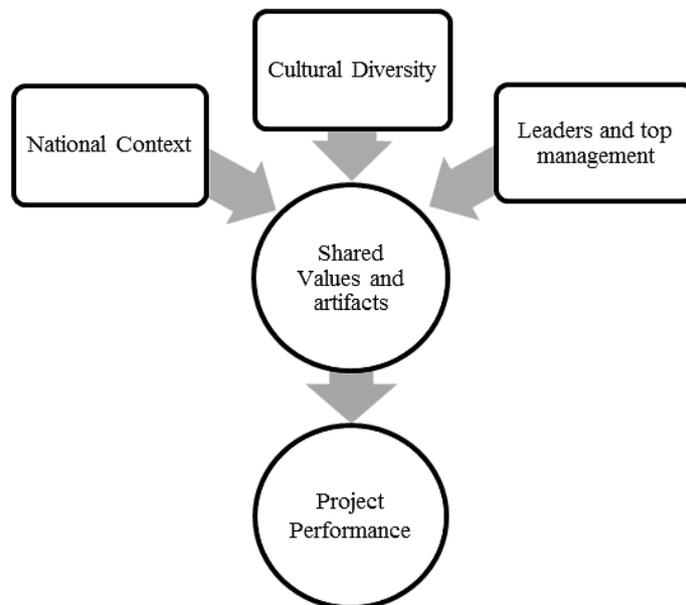

Figure 3. Combined influence of contextual factors and shared values. Own representation.

We clarify that we do not aim to predict outcomes because the values proved to be interconnected with each other and with other values that we did not explore in this research; for example commitment and integrity improve communication between stakeholders in the project setting, consequently the level of trust is increased and feeds back to more open and transparent communication. Therefore, we strongly consider that the impacts are difficult to predict due to interconnectedness and dynamics. Nevertheless, our aim is provide insights on the possible impacts of those values. These impacts are summarized in Table 5 considering a high level of each value.

Shared value	Key aspects	Impact on the organization*	Impact Project performance*
Conformity	▪ Conformity pressures lead to normative conformity ▪ Response to fear to be stigmatized, rejected, censured and/or punished	▪ Loss of motivation ▪ Loss of engagement ▪ Loss of confidence on own capabilities ▪ Negatively impacts continuous improvement capacity	▪ Irrational allocation of resources ▪ Irrational assignation of project manager and team members ▪ Negatively affects project team performance
Commitment	▪ Multilayered ▪ Can evolve to loyalty or affective commitment ▪ Requires rewards	▪ Improves employee performance ▪ Reduces attrition	▪ Facilitates troubleshooting ▪ Encourages honest reporting ▪ Encourages openness and transparency in communication ▪ Better project team performance ▪ Enhances allocation of resources
Trust	▪ Multilayered ▪ Depends on competences and integrity ▪ Complemented and supplemented with control mechanisms	▪ Improves quality of working relationships ▪ Facilities decision making	▪ Improves quality of stakeholders relationships ▪ Helps dealing with uncertainty ▪ Encourages information sharing ▪ Encourages openness and transparency in communication

Table 5. Impacts of conformity, commitment and trust. * Assuming a high level of value

4.2.1. The impact of conformity

The findings show that conformity pressures, exerted by top management, may lead to a shared value of normative conformity among the staff. Such pressures include the use of authority, punishment and threatening to make people think and behave in a way that is aligned with top management's interpretation of promoted values, as informant 1 claimed:

"People take over certain behaviors that are not nice, and may be they are not that kind of people but the system is that"

The findings reveal that the main reason for normative conformity is fear. People fear the consequences of not conforming such as getting resources cut, being demoted, stigmatized, or not being included in good projects. Informant 2 provided us with insights into this situation:

"From the staff perspective you better be careful about who you criticize and what you say because it can reflect bad on you; you can be taken out of projects, or projects are not given to you."

The previous finding supports the notion of normative conformity as a strategic effort to avoid rejection, punishment, or being stigmatized (i.e. (DeZoort & Lord, 1997; Hornsey et al., 2003). Additional, it provides evidence of the use of conformity as a selection criterion (Pech, 2001). Informant 1 said about this situation:

"If you stay in favor you will get some nicer work and more money because it is about funding, you have to do a lot of internal politics as well to get your own project or you own ideas promoted."

According with Pech (2001) the use of conformity as a selection and promotion criterion is an organizational performance anomaly that discourages individualism and leadership, and consequently hinders creativity and innovation. The data did not explicitly expose loss of creativity or innovation because the organization where we strongly evidenced this value, conducts inter-organizational projects; thus, creativity takes place outside the focal organization. However, we believe that the findings show that the use of conformity as a selection criterion hinders individualism, because of two circumstances:

1. Normative conformity fosters homogeneity because people have found their selves obligated to remain silent and behave alike to avoid not being included in good projects or not getting resources.

2. The ideas of people who do not conformity are ignored.

The findings show that normative conformity directly impacts employee performance. The three most relevant impacts exposed in the findings are loss of motivation, engagement and confidence on own abilities and contributions. Informant 2 said about this:

"They [people] *become cynical and unengaged. They do not care about the job. Cynical is when you do not believe in positive development, new ideas, the value of your contributions, your work."*

Consequently, loss of motivation, engagement and confidence appear to hinder learning and continuous improving ability, as informant 2 stated:

"People do not do anything, they do not say anything, they do not show up to staff meeting; they do their job like 90% so they do not get fired."

These findings support the notion of conformity as a motivational factor that influences learning and continuous improvement (Ahmed et al., 1999). Furthermore, we believe that, as it has been already suggested in the literature (Jetu & Riedl, 2013), the impacts of conformity on motivation, engagement, confidence, learning and continuous improvement capacity, are reflected in the overall project team performance. According to Jetu and Riedl (2013), conformity provides a weak contribution to project team performance and it may negatively influence beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the project team. In line with this thoughts, the project management literature has acknowledged the strong link between motivation and project performance (i.e. Peterson, 2007), and the Project Management Institute (2013) has recognized that the overall success of the project depends upon the project's team commitment, and this in turn is directly related to their level of motivation. Therefore, we suggest that conformity has a dominant role as motivational value, adversely affecting engagement, confidence, learning and continuous improvement; which in turn negatively influence the project team performance and overall project success. This suggestion is depicted in Figure 4:
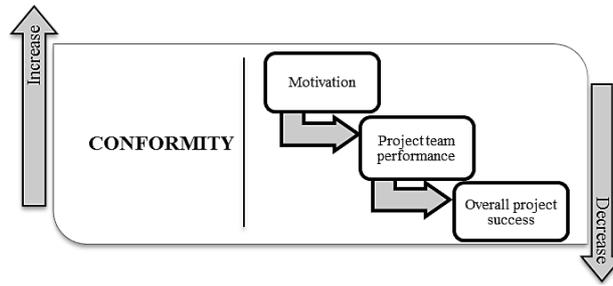
Figure 4. Impact of conformity on motivation. Own representation

4.2.2. The impact of commitment

The findings show that commitment is a heavily promoted shared value throughout the sample organizations. Although we inquired about the level of commitment as a shared value, the informants emphasized that commitment varies from person to person, as Informant 6 explained:

"I think it [commitment] *varies. You always have people who are just interested on doing the minimum and people go out of their way to show the best service quality, so I cannot really generalize at the staff level."*

The findings suggest that loyalty and commitment are perceived as equal constructs. For example, informant 5 explained in connection to commitment:

"We are proud of what we are doing and we are proud to say that we work for this organization, and to do the job they do. Being proud is a value that is really experienced in a worldwide scale to a point that we fight for what we belief."

We argue that the previous statement provides evidence of a shared value of loyalty. Niehoff et al. (2001) define loyalty in terms of behaviors that demonstrate pride in the organization and defend it towards criticism, as the findings showed. Nevertheless, same as in the findings, some authors have treated loyalty and commitment as synonymous (Coughlan, 2005). We agree with some authors that conceptualize loyalty as affective commitment (i.e. Wallace, 1997), given the high degree of attachment and identification with the organization showed by several informants.

The findings show that commitment requires rewards. For example, informant 5 stated:

"You are not complaining because you have to work, the other way around you feel like working. I think everybody recognizes that we work hard but that we recognize that we get compensated the way we want. So the rewards come with the high working."

The need of rewards to build commitment has been acknowledged in the organizational literature, for example Wallace (1997) argues that affective commitment is formed as an emotional response on the basis of rewards. Similarly, Powers (2000) suggest that employee loyalty will only result from perceived increase in employee outcomes[7], such as benefits, recognition, or status. In this regard, the findings show that commitment decreases when people are betrayed by the organization; meaning that when the employee outcomes are negatively impacted. Informant 4 explained about this:

"When you are betrayed you feel you spend too many time, years, hours, you lose so many things for this company, and you are just another number. Unfortunately this is what we are: just a number in the system."

Additionally, the findings suggest that a high level of commitment helps to reduce attrition in the organization. Informant 6 said about this:

"I think you will see a high level of commitment from management up because if the people would not get align with the company ideas, then they would have left the company before reaching a senior level"

This finding support previous studies that suggest that increased commitment decreases turnover intentions and, consequently, lowers attrition (i.e. Erickson & Roloff, 2007).

Supporting Fowler and Horan (2007) study, the findings show that a combination of project team commitment and top management commitment is necessary to achieve desirable project outcomes. This situation became more evident during project crisis because commitment appeared to "kick-in". Informant 5 said on this regard:

"Even under these conditions [limited resources, lack of training]*, the high level of commitment helped the team to execute the project and meet the client expectations"*

[7] Employee outcomes include personal growth, companionship, belonging, experience, pay and satisfaction (Powers, 2000)

Similarly, top management's level of commitment appears to increase in project crisis because they rapidly act to provide resources to solve such situation. Informant 6 explained about this:

"I was provided with everything I could reasonably ask and expect. I definitely got the support that I needed whenever we have an issue, and we did have major situations, so management was very quick at reacting and helping us."

Therefore, we suggest that a dominant impact of commitment on project performance is on troubleshooting. This critical success factor refers to the ability to handle unexpected crisis and deviations form the plan (J. K. Pinto & Prescott, 1988). We argue that commitment becomes more critical during troubleshooting because enhances the ability of handling crisis: it helps the team members to remain focused on the project goals and to find creative solutions using the available resources and current knowledge. The literature refers to this attitude as *goal commitment* and, it is defined as the personal determination to try for a goal or keep trying for a goal (Mei-Yung et al., 2004). Additionally, these evidences support previous studies that show that commitment encourages creativity, loyalty, efficacy, and duty (Mei-Yung et al., 2004). Given these impacts, we suggest that a high level of commitment positively impacts overall project team performance as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. . Impact of commitment on project team performance. Own representation

Furthermore, the findings show that high commitment was demonstrated by means of honest reporting of project status to relevant stakeholders and openness and transparency in communication. Referring to a particular project, informant 5 exemplified this situation:

"During execution there was a big mistake made by the team leader, this person called the client and me immediately and explained the situation"

This findings support the notion that commitment influence individuals' inclinations to communicate or report project status (Korzaan, 2009). This behavior has been linked to goal commitment

(i.e.(Abdel-Hamid et al., 1999) , then people that is committed to project goals tend to make decisions to share information regardless if it is negative or positive, as the findings exposed in troubleshooting.

4.2.3. The Impact of Trust

The findings show that trust is promoted in the organization in the form of collaboration, integration and teamwork. Trust is a multi-dimensional, complex concept (Lau & Rowlinson, 2011), and the findings have provided evidence of this feature as we found different levels of trust and layers depending on the trustor and trustee; for example there may be high trust between project team members but low between functional units. Informant 2 provided us with an example of a project, between a Middle Eastern client (United Arabic Emirates) and a Norwegian consultancy, that exemplifies the multidimensional and multilayered nature of trust: the internal trust in the project team was high, while there was evident lack of trust between the consultants and the client. Informant 2 stated:

"We were in a situation where there was a fundamental lack of trust because they [the client] *were exploiting us. And when you have not trust, you rather become a little less transparent so you keep control."*

The findings show that trust impacts the amount of shared information and also the informality of communication because hiding information was practiced and more control mechanisms were put into place to protect against opportunistic behaviors. Informant 2 explained on this regard:

"While with other partners or clients I would be completely open "here are my books, here is how much money I spent, this is what I do well and what I did not", and with them it was a little different".
These findings support previous studies that have acknowledged the important influence of trust on the quality of communication and information sharing in project relationships (i.e. Kadefors, 2004; Lewis, 2007). According to Kadefors (2004), spontaneous interaction and information sharing are benefits of trusted-based project relations. As the findings show in the previous example, trust involves a cultural component (Lau & Rowlinson, 2011; Lewis, 2007; Wiewiora et al., 2014).

However, the influence of culture on trust is a relatively new area of research and considerable work is still needed (Schoorman et al., 2007) .

On the other hand, good communication and information sharing are factors that contribute to the development of trust (Karlsen et al., 2008). This seems paradoxical given the previous findings, so we will attempt to explain this situation by bringing back the impacts of commitment. We found that high contractor commitment encourages more open and transparent communication and honest reporting; therefore, we believe that this situation increases the level of trust and that, consequently, trust impacts back to positively affect the openness of communication, and the amount of shared information in the relationship, as we show in Figure 6:
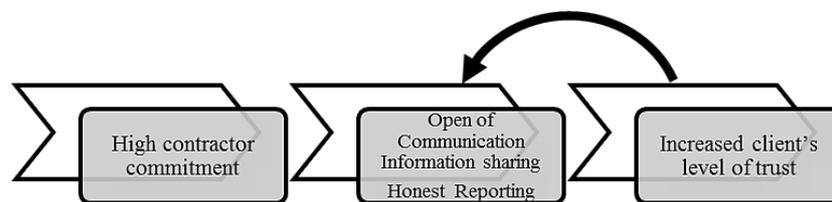
Figure 6. Combined impact of commitment and trust. Own representation

Likewise, this suggestion has been previously explored in the project management literature, for example Kocoglu et al. (2011) argue that trust and commitment are two intertwined and complementary relationship builders and enhancers, which in turn lead to open communication and effective sharing of information.

In organizations with a matrix organizational structure, the findings provided evidence of lack of trust between functional units. Informant 7 claimed on this subject:

"They [other units] *are not fulfilling and doing what they supposed to do, so we have to do an extra check to ensure that things are ok"*

The findings show that lack of trust results from broken expectations. In this regard, trust is considered the result of employee expectations on peers' behaviors (Chattopadhyay & George, 2001; Coughlan, 2005). Furthermore, we believe that lack of trust leads to loss of confidence. According to Forrester and Drexler (1999), little confidence across units, skepticism between teams, and taking matters into own hands are the result of functional units not following through and doing what they

say they are going to do, as it was exemplified in our findings. We suggest that the impact of trust is on the quality of co-workers relationships because it may cause negative emotions among team members, which are considered a feature of conflict situations (Han & Harms, 2010). We clarify that the informants did not mention conflicts resulting from lack of trust, but we did perceive negative emotions when the informants referred to the lack of trust towards other functional units.

Lack of trust is reflected in the implementation of additional controls, as informant 7 explained:

"Now we have a bigger focus, and we just don't trust sometimes, so we have to do the check ourselves: we use technical support people to help us with the understanding, they go through the scope of work before we sanction the project."

Similarly, the findings show that controls are used even though there is a high level of trust. Such controls are regarded as accountability artifacts used to hold people accountable of their actions. For example, informant 5 explained:

"I believe in people, in their capabilities, and I trust them. However, in order to mitigate the risk, we have processes and procedures that have to be followed. I give people a task but I don't tell them how to do it, I just ask for the end result in an efficient way; and if it is not done when it is needed then they are hold accountable"

The previous findings serve as an example of the complementary and supplementary relationship between trust and control (Das & Bing-Sheng, 1998). Moreover, we agree with Inkpen and Currall (2004) who suggest that "*trust and control coevolve over time, with trust influencing control and being influenced by the type of control*". Although the authors (ibid) suggestion was proposed within the realm of joint ventures, we believe that it is applicable to projects in matrix organizations as observed in the results.

Various studies have explored the benefits of trust on dealing with uncertainty (i.e. Atkinson et al., 2006), such as reduced control costs, improved team effectiveness, and better planning. In connection with this study and the previous findings, we suggest that lack of trust adversely impacts the project performance in various manners:

- Increased costs because of the additional controls to double check the deliverables of other units.

- Reduces team effectiveness because additional controls involve additional time, and because confidence within and between teams decreases.
- Increased complicatedness of the project planning because additional controls have to be included in plans and schedules.

The findings reveal that trust influences decision making. For example, in the manager-subordinate relationship, the manager decides on assignation of responsibilities depending, to a large extent, on the trust towards the employee. Informant 4 said about this:

"It is a manager's problem to decide what responsibility to give away. And some people get the challenge very well and you know that you can give more responsibilities to them, other ones do not do it that well and you cannot give and cannot trust them."

This finding support the notion of trust as a factor impacting decision making, as decisions are the result of assessing the perceived risk and of evaluating the level of trust towards the trustee (Mayer et al., 1995). The findings show that the level of trust given by a party depends on two factors: competences and integrity. With regard to competences, the informants also referred to the potential to develop them. Thus, the manager trusts in an individual that shows initiative, proactivity and the capacity to learn and develop skills. Informant 4 said about this:

"Trust affect how I delegate responsibilities, it is not about them having experience.. I do not hesitate to give responsibilities to people that show that they can do it and keep asking for more"

The second factor that impacts the level of trust is integrity. With integrity the informants refer to a variety of values including honesty, responsibility and ownership. Therefore, the manager trusts a person that takes ownership, follows the right procedures and process, speaks with the truth and reports honestly. These results partially support previous studies suggesting that three factors determine how much trust an individual can earns: individual's abilities, integrity, and benevolence (Schoorman et al., 2007).

5. Recommendations

In this section we propose a strategy to manage the impacts of shared values on the project performance. This strategy has a limitation: we assume that the project manager possesses enough authority in the project to implement such strategy. The stating point of this strategy is to include project manager leadership as a factor that also influences the project, as it is shown in Figure 7:
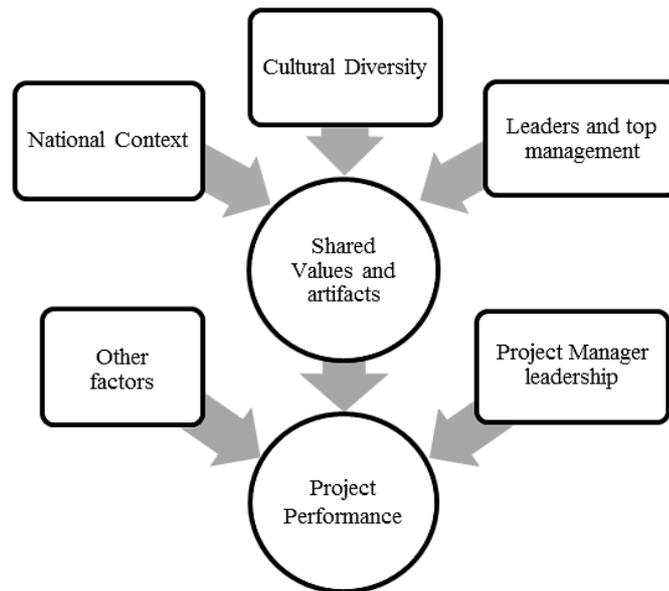

Figure 7. Influences on the project performance. Own representation.

In the previous figure, we have included other factors to refer to other influences of a non-cultural nature unexplored in this research.

The leadership role of the project manager is in creating an effective working environment for the project team (Vittal & Kanungo, 2008), so we believe that realistic strategies to manage the impact of shared values could be implemented under the project manager leadership by creating such an effective environment. Having said this, we suggest a strategy that involves two main actions:

- *Action 1:* Moderate the impact of external shared values to the project team
- *Action 2:* Promote and practice high trust and commitment inside the project team

The way we visualize such strategy is depicted in Figure 8:
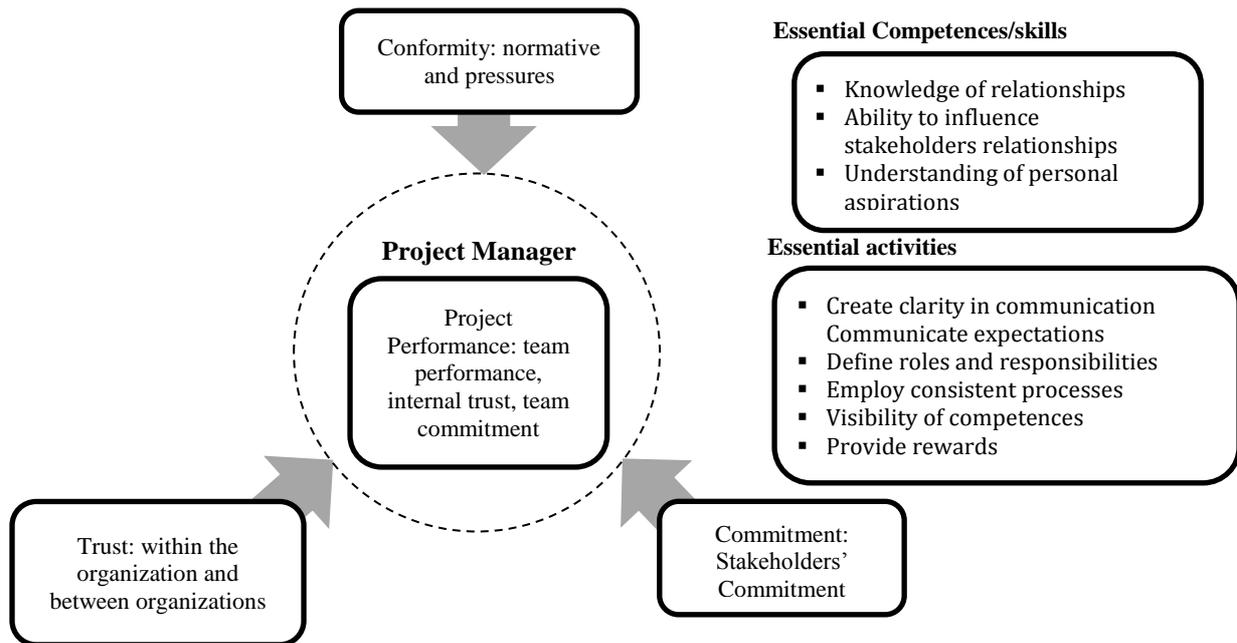
Figure 8. Recommended strategy. Own representation.

5.1. Recommended Strategy Action 1

We propose that the project manager moderates the degree of impact of shared values on the project performance. This first action was actually experienced by informant 1:

"Right now I have a good manager who shelters his own staff from what is happening outside, so we are in a little protected bubble and I feel that difference greatly."

According to Bourne (2005) , there are hidden energies or influences that can be used by the project manager and project team. We add that there are also energies that should be isolated, for example conformity pressures. Thus, the project manager should:

- Minimize the impact of conformity pressures and normative conformity
- Maximize the positive impacts of trust and commitment

This action requires that the project manager understands the stakeholders' relationships, visualizes and reflects upon their impact, and ensures that the political influences are addressed (Small & Walker, 2011). Therefore, we suggest that the moderator role depends on two major competences: Knowledge of relationships and the ability to influence stakeholders relationships (Small & Walker, 2011).

We believe that using these two competences to create an environment isolated of conformity pressures is especially important when dealing with the negative impacts of conformity because people could open up and, at least inside the project setting, feel free of fears to be punished or stigmatized. This reduction on external pressures would lead to increased motivation and ,thus, improved project team performance. However, this isolated environment is temporary in nature; then, we believe that this suggestion comes with various potential threats such as decrease in motivation in the termination phase, team members may delay project activities in the termination phase to remain longer in the project and, when the project is finalized, loss of motivation and engagement as team members would face again conformity pressures from top management.

5.2. Recommended Strategy Action 2

This action has the purpose of encouraging the positive impacts of shared values within the project setting by promoting and practicing high trust and commitment. To accomplish this, we consider that the project manager should facilitate a set of four people-related factors that we have borrowed from Anantatmula (2010), which are essential to foster commitment and trust[8] within the project, these are explained in Table 6:

People-related factors	Description
Create clarity in communication	Clear and early definition of project goals and outcomes
Define roles and responsibilities	Unambiguous definition of project team members roles and responsibilities
Communicate expectations	Define and communicate project outcomes and expectations from all stakeholders
Employ consistent processes	Consistent and formal project management process

Table 6. People-related factors. Source: Anantatmula (2010)

5.1.1. Promoting high commitment within the project

We believe that fostering commitment also requires that the project manager understands personal aspirations of team members, and determine how the project can help the team member to get close to

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[8] *Establish trust* is a people-related factor per se, however (Anantatmula, 2010) explains that it is an end result of the other people- related factors.

personal goals. We showed that high commitment requires rewards; thus, we consider that including rewards would increase the level of commitment to the project. This suggestion is represented in Figure 9:
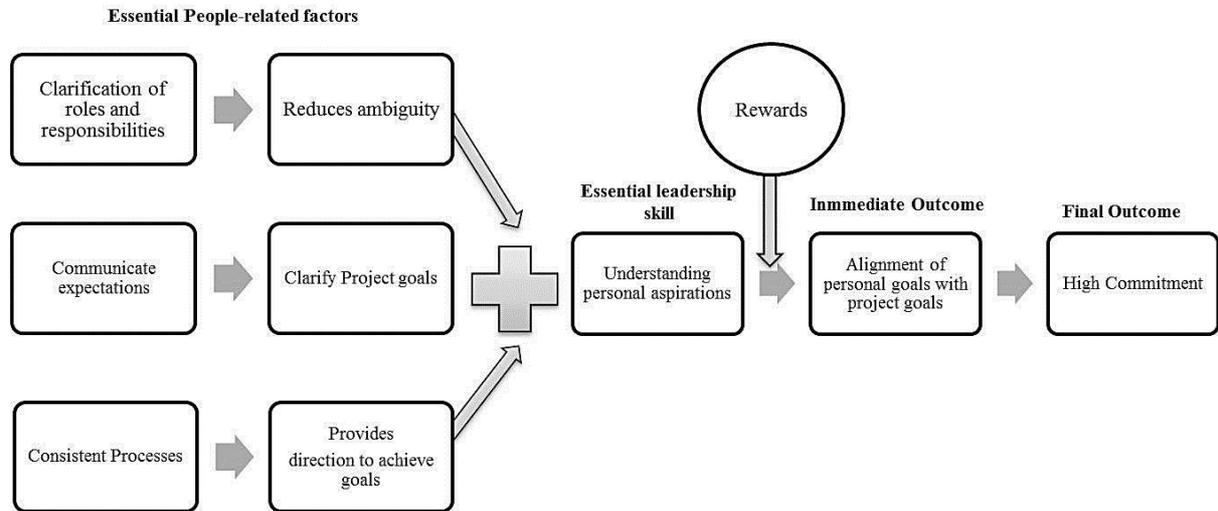

Figure 9. Suggestion to promote and practice high level of commitment. Own representation. People-related factors taken from Anantatmula (2010)

5.1.2. Promoting and practicing trust within the project

Anantatmula (2010) suggests that establishing trust requires predictability and openness through communicating expectations and having established process, and openness and transparency through clarity of communication. We showed that trust depends of competences and integrity, however proejct team members may not know each other well-enough to evaluate others' integrity; then, we add that the project manager should make visible the competences of each team member, along with team building activities, so that trust is built faster based on knowledge of competences. This suggestion is represented in Figure 10:
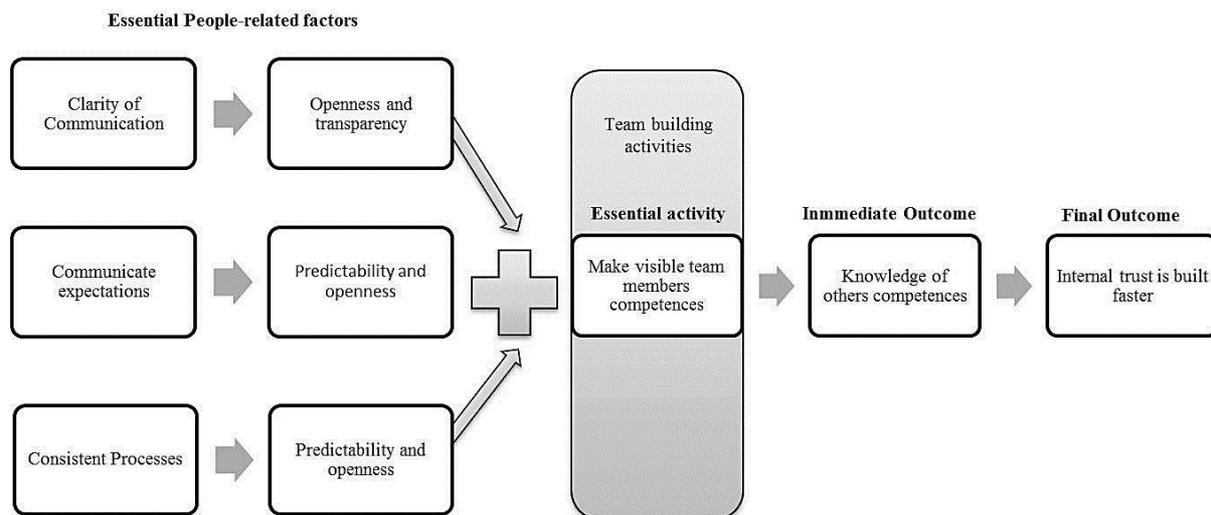
Figure 10. Suggestion to promote and practice trust. Own representation. People-related factors taken from Anantatmula (2010)

6. Conclusions

In this investigation, we explored the impact of conformity, commitment and trust on the organization and project performance. These three shared values proved to be complex concepts: there are innumerably definitions in the literature, classifications, the values involve a *level of*, and change with time (i.e. trust is lost). Additionally, diversity, national culture and leaders and top management shape the perception of values and the associated artifacts. These features make the shared values multilayered, multidimensional and dynamic. The exploration of the subject of study was a challenging task because one can incur in methodological issues and confusions due to the variety of definitions and classifications, the disagreement of researches about such concepts (i.e. loyalty and commitment); and because people have different perceptions of what conformity, commitment, and trust are. Nevertheless, we know that those values exist, regardless of the type or level; thus, our objective was to shed the light on the impacts of conformity, commitment and trust.

Conformity is a practiced value that causes loss of motivation, engagement and confidence. For obvious reasons, conformity is not a promoted value; instead, through the use of diverse pressures, top management creates an environment of conformity so that the status quo, their beliefs and their power are maintained. By doing so, top management is shaping an organizational culture of homogeneity that hinders learning and the continuous improvement. When conformity is used as a selection and

111

promotion criterion, top management may be punishing and censuring individuals with leadership skills and innovative ideas and, with this, censuring the innovative and creative organizational capacity, and bringing up "leaders" that only can "follow the book". The consequences on the project are significant: poor project team performance, irrational allocation of resources and irrational assignation of project managers and project team members. Thus, conformity is extremely counterproductive considering its impacts on performance. Moreover, at the long term, the conformity that is the result of rational reflection will become *the unchangeless experience* (Song et al., 2012) of the organization and, consequently, the organization may become unable to change and adapt to keep up to speed to the rapid pace of the markets.

Commitment is both a promoted and practiced value, but its practice involves a *level of* the value that depends on the group or individual. Commitment acts as a driving force of individuals' and project team's performance, especially in troubleshooting, as it helps people to remain focused on the project goals and find creative solutions with the available resources. Additionally, high contractor commitment is materialized into open communication and honest reporting of project status. We believe that this situation increases the level of trust on the contractor, which in turn increases the client's support towards the project. Commitment requires rewards that can vary from monetary to experience and recognitions. This means that commitment is reciprocal between the individual and the organization, and as soon as that reciprocity is broken, so is the commitment. Thus, it would be naïve to think that a person would blindly commit without rewards, each person has personal interest and needs[9] that take priority and should be satisfy; thus, the project manager should understand the personal aspirations of project team members to identify how he/she can foster commitment.

Trust is not a promoted value; instead leaders and top management promote values such as collaboration, integration, openness, and transparency expecting that those values help to build trust. We believe that, by practicing those values, people have the opportunity to know others' competences and integrity, which are factors that influence trustworthiness. The practice of trust also involves a

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[9] The Kano Model could be used to understand project team member's needs. Needs change with time, thus rewards should be adjusted to satisfy changing needs, and, consequently, to foster commitment.

level of the value that depends on the parties involved in the relationship. We believe that the most important impact of trust is on stakeholders' relationships, which in turn leads to various impacts at the organizational and project level. Trust is a fundamental factor in decision making because it is one of various factors that is assessed for any type of transaction in a relationship. Trust is based on expectations; hence, it can be easily lost as the expectations are broken. Furthermore, it is complemented and supplemented with control mechanisms. The benefits of a high level of trust in the relationship are directly seen in open, transparent and honest communications; and improved confidence within the project. Trust can help dealing with uncertainty in the project because reduces the complicatedness of plans and schedules and cost, and increases team effectiveness. Considering the temporary nature of project settings, we believe that the project managers should provide visibility of competences of each project team members, so that trust is initially built in knowledge of others' competences.

Based on the underlying assumption that the project manager has enough authority in the project, we believe that he/she could moderate the impact of conformity, commitment and trust. This role requires knowledge on relationships and the ability to influence them. Therefore, the project manager should aim to minimize the impact of conformity by establishing an isolated environment of pressures, and maximize the impacts of trust and commitment. Simultaneously, the project manager should promote and foster the practice of commitment and trust in the project team by means of communication, clarity of roles, consistent processes, clear expectations, understanding of personal aspirations and visibility of team members' competences. We recognize that this is a strategy temporary in nature and that there are potential threats, such as decrease of motivation in the termination phase. Nevertheless, developing a strategy at the organizational level is clearly more complex and out of the scope of this study.

We did not aim to predict impacts with this research; instead, our contribution is in providing insights on how conformity, commitment and trust affect both the organization and project performance. The originality of this study is the simultaneous investigation at the organizational and project level, so that connections between situations and the mechanisms on how shared values reach the project

performance are visualized. Additionally, we introduced two concepts: promoted value and practiced

value. We believe that by identifying if a value is promoted or practiced and how it is done, leaders

and project managers could manage the impact of shared values, and also influence the organization

and project cultures to achieve positive outcomes. To conclude, this research adds valuable

knowledge for the understanding of the project as a complex social setting. We believe that the

knowledge of organizational influences and their impact could help the project manager to deal with

the complex social context, the interconnectedness of human relationships and how they affect the

project performance; and, consequently, to improve the managerial task.

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