This is not the version of record. The full published version can be found at https://doi.org/10.1109/TEM.2021.3064609

Title: Drawing new cards or standing pat: Antecedents, dynamics, and consequences of project manager replacement

Abstract: The majority of projects – even ultimately successful ones – run into significant problems during their development. While organizations have a variety of mechanisms at their disposal to correct projects that are experiencing difficulties, one of the most radical is replacing the project manager. Replacing a project manager 'mid-stream' involves a major change to an on-going project with the potential benefits of onboarding an individual with a different perspective or set of managerial and/or technical skills. Using agency theory as our critical evaluative lens and a qualitative data collection methodology, we interviewed 19 key informants who had experience as part of project manager replacement efforts. This paper reports of the dynamics of replacing project managers, identifying the critical decision criteria and mechanisms involved in such decisions. We found that three themes emerged with regard to project manager replacement decision making: 1) replacement is a common correction practice for troubled projects, 2) replacement is viewed by decision makers and team members alike as a message for change, and 3) in reestablishing processes and trust in governance, project size is an important moderator when deciding on a course of action. We finally propose a process model, based on our analysis, which identifies the critical antecedents, effects, and consequences of project manager replacement.

Keywords: project management, project manager, replacement, agency theory

M**anagerial Relevance Statement:** One of the thorniest issues that faces project organizations is how to respond to projects that are currently in trouble; i.e., typically, over-budget, behind schedule, and/or dealing with non-performing technologies. Among the common "fixes" for such problems that top management considers is to replace the project manager, either because of scapegoating, the need to make a clear public commitment to fixing the troubled project, assuming that the project manager is at fault for critical problems, or that through bringing in new leadership, the project team, relevant stakeholders, and the rest of the organization will perceive that a transformation is underway.

Regardless of the reasoning, research suggests that project manager replacement is a not uncommon response to troubled projects. Despite the frequency of project manager replacement, surprisingly little research has examined this issue. Using an inductive research method and qualitative data collection, this paper reports on a study aimed at trying to understand the dynamics of project manager replacement decisions, how they typically operate, the immediate and longer-term implications of such replacements, and key questions (both ex ante and ex post) that project organizations needs to consider when addressing the potential decision to replace a project manager.

INTRODUCTION

In August 2018, London's £17.6 billion Crossrail Project announced the replacement of its former head, Simon Wright, after it was determined that the central section of the project (the Elizabeth line), scheduled to complete in December, would take up to another year before being ready for use (current estimates now put the opening at 2022). As part of the agreement by which the British government agreed to furnish an additional £650m of funding, Wright was replaced by Mark Wild, the Managing Director of London Underground, who will remain in charge until the opening of the central section of Crossrail. As the most visible representative (and symbol) of the Crossrail project's difficulties, Wright served as a symbol of the government's commitment to both complete the project and demand accountability for its delays, now expected to stretch out at least two years past the original deadline.

The decision to replace a project manager during the execution phase of a project is one not taken lightly, nor is it likely to have insignificant consequences on the future viability of the project. Nevertheless, in spite of the frequency of such changes [1] and their potential impact on projects, some budgeted for multi-billions, surprisingly little is known about the reasons for project manager replacement or its consequences. Previous studies that have examined project manager turnover have typically either treated turnover as a voluntary decision on the part of the manager [2], employed simulation models in laboratory settings [3], or investigated a narrow research question with a small data set (e.g., [4), leading to concerns about generalizability. While such research is useful, it has not

addressed, in a systematic manner, the mechanisms of involuntary replacement. The purpose of this paper is to report on the results of a study that sought to investigate the decisions to replace project managers, identify the motives and actions for such replacement, and subsequent consequences (outcomes) to the project as a result of such replacements.

Previous research has also failed to address the impact of project manager replacement from the perspective of multiple project stakeholders. It is known from previous research that tapping into the views of various project stakeholders demonstrates different and complementary information and can offer important insights into broadening knowledge of these system mechanisms (cf., [5). As a result, while some earlier work has addressed project managers themselves, soliciting their reasons for separating or being replaced on a project, no research has attempted to address this issue through the perceptual lens of other, key project stakeholders and consequently, has failed to triangulate the data. It is critical to recognize that top management, key project clients or customers, project team members, and other important stakeholders will all have their own perspectives on the causes and effects of project manager replacement. Comparing and contrasting these key stakeholders to build a richer understanding of these mechanisms is a critical addition from our study.

The purpose of our paper is to report on an inductive study of the mechanisms that frame project manager replacement decisions and their aftermath. The emergence of the criticality of project-based work in modern organizations has been well-documented in recent years, with some research estimating that fully one-third of the value-added in organizations derives from their use of projects to improve processes, introduce new products, and offer innovative services [6] [7]. Yet projects, so critical to an organization's bottom line, while permeating operations in numerous ways, are only partially understood as a dynamic process. This lack of full knowledge of the mechanisms by which projects are best managed is exacerbated when organizations are faced with critical decisions, such as whether or not to replace the current project manager due to unanticipated problems with a project's development. Framing this inductive study within the critical lens of agency theory, we propose that it is possible to understand replacement mechanisms as a multi-level decision process, identifying a set

of antecedent ‘triggers’ for replacement, effects of the actions that new project managers often undertake to promote their legitimacy and begin to ‘right the ship’, and final consequences, in the form of the impact their actions have on revitalizing the project and tracing a process for recovery.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

We noted previously that there has been a dearth of information and systematic research in the general project management literature on the mechanics and consequences of project manager replacement. A notable exception to this literature gap is in the information systems (IS) project field, where the work of Pirhonen and Vartiainen [8] has offered insights into the mechanics and consequences of IS project manager replacement. For example, these authors and their colleagues have examined the theoretical underpinnings of project manager replacement through the joint lens of activity theory and work systems theory, arguing that a complex interplay of internal and external elements interact with an activity system’s instruments and objects to affect transformation of the system. They conclude that there is a need to design a process model for project manager replacement, taking into account both leadership and management of project outcomes (e.g., concern for production) perspectives.

Vartiainen et al. [9, 10] have examined the dynamics of IS project manager replacement and argued that a research agenda is needed to address four critical questions, including: a) How is project manager replacement in IT projects experienced? b) When replacement occurs in IT projects, what happens and why, and how does it affect stakeholders? c) How can project manager replacement in IT projects be predicted? and 4) How to manage replacement in IT projects? To partially address these questions, Vartiainen [11] employed a qualitative data collection method through interviewing 40 project managers over an eight-year time frame and proposed a process model of project manager replacement. He observed the development of “deterioration” and “healing” mechanisms across a three-stage project life cycle.

Like Vartiainen et al. [9], as our starting point, we take the application of activity theory as a theoretical lens through which to view the dynamics and interpretation of project manager replacement decisions. We further explore aspects of agency theory in our study. Activity theory offers insights into the key role of the project manager, both as agent of the project's key stakeholders and as critical linking pin for organizing and administering project activities. The underlying principle of activity theory consists of linking events to the settings, or contexts, within which they occur [12, 13]. Thus, the act of creating and utilizing knowledge in organizations is not, in itself, spontaneous but rather, arises from triggering mechanisms, such as the recognition that current standard practices "no longer work" or institutional challenges have been recognized that require adaptation or questioning of current work forms. Triggering mechanisms are based on contradictions inside the activity system and other parallel systems, or disturbances in the free running of organizational activities (e.g., information that the project is in trouble) [14]. In this context, "expansive learning" emerges as a means to address the triggered reaction to a perceived challenge, or, as Vartiainen et al. [15: p. 115] put it, "Expansive learning produces culturally new patterns of activity, and the object of the learning activity is the entire system (here the project) in which the learners (here the project members and manager) are working." Through their work, Vartiainen et al. [15] specifically connected the process of project manager replacement to activity theory.

To minimize the practical potential for disruption in project manager replacement decisions, it is necessary to initiate transformations for which mechanisms may not exist, requiring the organization to learn and act simultaneously [9]. Producing a new social system, complete with new project leader, reorganized activity networks, etc., places the project team in a challenging situation in which efforts toward project completion are expected to continue apace, while (as activity theory notes) expansive learning is constantly ongoing. The result is a system in flux, yet seeking a new homeostasis as quickly as possible, in order to minimize disruptions to its primary operations, defined as the ongoing project.

Agency theory has long posited an economic view of the stakeholder/shareholder and manager relationship in firms by assuming inherently rational actors. Agency relationships are defined as those in which one or more stakeholders (the principal(s)) engage another person (the agent) to perform some service on their behalf, requiring the principal to delegate decision-making authority to the agent [16] [17]. A critical feature of agency theory is the assumption that the interests, or goals, of principals and agents will ultimately diverge, leading to the necessity for establishing mechanisms to control agent behavior, either through incentives or, more punitively, through limiting contracts. For the principal, the risk in hiring an agent lies in ensuring that his/her actions are taken to further the interests of critical stakeholders; on the other hand, agents assume they possess a degree of decision autonomy sufficient to pursue goals of mutual interest. Thus, the dynamics of principal/agent relationships are often shifting, conflict-laden, and requiring a delicate balance of interests.

Agency theory has been used in a variety of settings, both within functional units in organizations (e.g., [18] [19]) as well as broader sociological settings (e.g., [20] [21]). Agency theory proposes that corporate actors (agents) are expected to act in the best interests of their principals (stakeholders) without regard to self-interest. However, in reality, it is often the case that corporate managers may use their control over the allocation of corporate resources opportunistically in order to pursue objectives not in line with the interests of the stakeholders [18]. This state is exemplified in the principal-agent problem that occurs when both principal and agent act in a self-interested, utility maximizing manner [22]. Thus, the pursuit of self-interest with “guile” [23] that agents may use when interacting with principles in order to hide unflattering project status updates is a form of this utility-maximizing behavior. Popular remedies to the problem include contracts and incentives that motivate agents to act in accordance with their principals, regulated through related control structures. Corporate and project governance, when designed correctly within the context of the organization, can also minimize the risks and issues associated with agency theory [24].

Agency theory assumptions are critical in understanding the motivational dynamics that often characterize relationships between project managers and their firm’s top management. Agency

assumes the separation of ownership and control, which is a fundamental problem in organizations [8]. This separation is the result of absent or distant owners/shareholders (i.e., principals), employing professional executives (i.e., agents) to act on their behalf [25]. As principals need to provide agents with some level of decision-making authority, issues related to conflict of interest and moral hazard, due to asymmetric information, may arise [26]. Project managers, as agent, act as an independent decision-maker on behalf of their project organizations, balancing critical financial, technical, and behavioral variables, all while seeking to maintain positive relationships with a variety of project stakeholders, both internal (e.g., top management) and external (e.g., contractors, regulatory bodies, etc.). Thus, the agency challenge is complicated by the diverse nature of myriad project principals [17], all with reasonable and compelling needs, which must be effectively balanced by the project manager. When we note that agency theory implies that the principal has difficulties in motivating the agent to act in the principal's best interests, it is critical to reflect that 'best interests' is a shifting and multivariate concept, as research demonstrates the divergent and often competing nature of project stakeholder expectations [27].

Agency theory provides a view of the potential triggers (antecedent motivation) as well as the resulting effects from the decision to replace project managers. For example, the position held by the agent within the organization can affect principal decisions regarding retention. Project managers, as agents, are responsible for delivering value while occupying a unique position that affords them decision authority and a degree of autonomy within the parent organization, at the same time making them the key connection to external project stakeholders. In this position, they are often inextricably linked to the project they are running, much as a CEO assumes a similar, high-visibility position as a symbol of the organization they are running [28]. Thus, whether investigating decisions to replace key executives or project managers, the nature of the relationship between the agent and the organization is often a critical determinant [29]. To mitigate these challenges, the principal will incur 'agency costs' [18], arising from the need to create outcome-based incentive systems that enable the alignment of agents' and principals' interests (e.g., project performance bonuses). Furthermore, costs arise from

implementing monitoring and control mechanisms to govern agent behavior and to prevent agents' abuse of principals' interests. Thus, in the context of project management, agency theory is particularly used to describe the relationship between the owner of a project and its manager [30].

Replacing the project manager in an ongoing project suggests that organizations tacitly accept the disruption such a decision engenders. Retrenchment, re-imagining, re-scoping (and even re-thinking) of the project are decisions that are often motivated by extreme circumstances. Moreover, the financial and project stakeholder impacts can be significant and destabilizing when these decisions are taken. Past research suggests that project manager replacement often occurs in the post-planning phases of the project life cycle, during its development, precisely when the project is most vulnerable, given that activities are ramping up dramatically, budget money expenditures are increasing, and the project and its parent organization are experiencing higher risk [31]. As a result, any decision to replace the project manager has huge financial and stakeholder management implications.

We used a combination of methods to provide the most illuminating and in-depth data, which unfolded the scope and focus of the paper in relation to the research questions (see Table I):

1 - Why (under what circumstances or following what actions or pressures) are project managers replaced in an ongoing project?

2 - How the results of these decisions are perceived; that is, does the project perform better post-replacement than it did prior to the termination decision?

3 - How effective are the actions taken most often by the new project manager shown?

Table I maps the literature focus to the resulting research questions.

INSERT TABLE I ABOUT HERE

In the remainder of this paper, we present the data from our qualitative study: we interviewed a set of key project stakeholders and decision-makers familiar with project manager replacement. Next, we present the empirical framework we have chosen for this inductive study—a dynamic process model of the replacement decision and its outcomes—and discuss our findings in relation to activity and agency theories. Finally, we discuss our study findings and identify contributions to theory.

METHODS

Informed by Gioia et al. [32], we followed a systematic inductive approach to concept development. In doing so, we aimed to capture concepts relevant to project manager organizational experience, in terms that are adequate at the level of meaning of people living the experience, and adequate at the level of scientifically theorizing about that experience. The motives behind this approach were to employ an inductive study with qualitative rigor, while retaining the creative, revelatory potential for generating new concepts and ideas.

We employed a structured presentation of both a '1st-order' analysis (i.e. an analysis using informant-centric terms and codes) and a '2nd-order' analysis (i.e., one using researcher-centric concepts, themes, and dimensions; for the inspiration for the 1st- and 2nd-order labelling) which allowed us to report both informant and researcher voices, establishing a rigorous demonstration of the links between the data and the induction of this new concept and sense giving [32]. Therefore, in order to write a compelling and focused account, we draw particular attention to: (1) honoring the worldview of informants, (2) providing sufficient evidence for claims, and (3) contributing to extant theory [33]. The resulting interview questions derived from the identified gaps in the literature as can be found in Appendix I.

The Guiding Research Question and the Interview

Although we employed multiple data sources such as archives and media documentation, at the heart of this study are the semi-structured interviews [34]. Semi-structured interviews were employed to obtain both retrospective and real-time accounts by project manager's experiencing the phenomenon

of theoretical interest. The qualitative study involved interviews with 19 professionals directly responsible for project manager replacement decisions and the motives behind them. Determining the requisite number of qualitative interviews needed to reach 'theoretical saturation' is a challenge, principally because minimum sample sizes for such studies are difficult to determine. That is, there are no clear guidelines for determining, a priori, non-probabilistic sample size for interview subjects. The size of the sample often relies on the complexity of the topic, the number of key variables/constructs of interest, the potential diversity of the population pool, and so forth. Research investigating this phenomenon (cf. [35] [36]) has systematically documented the degree of saturation and data variability of thematic analysis and concluded that for studies involving relatively homogenous populations, saturation typically occurs within the first 12 interviews and 'metathemes' can be discerned as early as six interviews [36]. For our study, the research questions, and the sample population, the findings suggested that interviews with 19 subjects was sufficient to develop theoretical saturation as the investigation reached a point at which no new properties, concepts, dimensions, or relationships emerged for the collected and analyzed data.

In addition to the basic assumption that the world is socially constructed, we also agree with Gioia et al., in assuming that "the people constructing their organizational realities are 'knowledgeable agents', namely, that people in organizations know what they are trying to do and can explain their thoughts, intentions, and actions" [32, p. 17]. All the interviewees have a key senior managerial role and are involved in project-based work or serving as principals in project consulting firms. The interviews occurred between February and May of 2019 and ranged from 23 to 72 minutes in length (average of 36 minutes). Interviews were conducted and recorded either face to face, via Skype, or over the telephone and conducted twice; once for all questions and second for script verification and clarification. We also paid extraordinary attention to the initial interview protocol, to make sure that it was focused on our research question(s) [32]. We investigated the decisions to replace project managers, identified the motives and actions for replacing project managers, and subsequent consequences (outcomes) to the project as a result of such replacements. The aim is to create a model

of the project manager replacement process to better understand its impact on project outcome. We therefore explored the overall perspective of key individuals who have experienced project manager replacement by conducting one-to-one interviews with the people concerned. This included; project managers who have experience with themselves or others being replaced mid project and decision makers who have experience with project managers being replaced mid project.

The contacts included 17 men and 2 women. Background experience was very broad, with respondents representing 17 different industries, including oil and gas, aviation, government service, insurance, mining, new product development, transportation, financial services, and so forth. Seven project types were identified with nine interviewees noting change projects/project transformation and six noting IT projects (including software development projects, system projects, hardware delivery), two noted construction projects, two outsourcing and one each for acquisition and banking. Ten interviewees had a project team between 1 and 50, three between 51 – 99, with 100+ and one over 1000. Nine interviewees manage up to four projects simultaneously, one manages either 20, 25 or 35 projects and seven manage 5 – 10 projects. The typical budget for interviewees that they worked on is five between 1 – 10 million, four between 11 – 50 million, between 100-599 million, one between 600-700 million, one at 1.5 billion and one at 40 billion. Typical duration of projects for interviewees ranged from 15 interviewees noting 1 – 5 years, two stating 5 – 7 years, one noting 10 years and one noting 30 years. Interviewees had been in their current roles 0 – 6 years (12 interviewees) and 10+ years for seven interviewees. Seven interviewees had been with their current company 0 – 10 years, six had been 11 – 20 years and five had been 21 – 30 years.

Our study subjects had, collectively, an average of 28 years managerial experience. The sample included individuals whose job titles indicated they were members of key stakeholder groups during their project experiences, including project managers, programme managers, consultants, and top management (project director level or functional head).

The interviewees profile is shown in Table II.

INSERT TABLE II ABOUT HERE

Data Analysis

The interview scripts were transcribed and sent to the interviewees for approval and comments. This process of 'confirmation' and 'checking' acted as a verification stage to reinforce the reliability of the collected data [37]. All the interview transcripts were imported into a qualitative data analysis software package (NVivo 11) and inductively coded. The data was analyzed by following the six-phases of thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke [38] which include: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing potential themes, (5) defining and naming themes and, (6) producing the report.

To enhance the rigor of our approach to data analysis, we organized data into 1st- and 2nd –order categories to facilitate their later assembly into a more structured form (aggregate dimensions) [32]. Similar to the open, axial, and selective coding logic, this mechanism generated the themes (aggregate dimensions) and sub-themes (2nd order themes) by collapsing or clustering codes (1st order concepts) that seemed to share some unifying features, so that they reflected and described a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data [38] [41] [42]. The themes from the interviews were then matched to the relevant literature for comparison, contrast and similarity [39] and provided the grounds for the subsequent cluster analysis. Therefore, it was noticeable that codes clustered around the 'causes of project manager replacement', the 'effects of project manager replacement', and the final 'consequences of project manager replacement'. Upon examination of these in more detail, we identified that either the codes focused on experiences in being involuntarily replaced as the project manager, or responses to the way decisions were made in order to replace the project manager mid-project. The data structure is shown in Figure 1.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Qualitative Interviews Analysis

The NVivo thematic cluster analysis of the 19 interviews produced 998 initial codes. The desired outcome of the coding was to capture both diversity and patterns within the data. However, after shaping the thematic analysis into a mechanism focusing on comparison, contrast and similarity against patterns in the data set [43], the cluster analysis unearthed the underlying context behind the interviewees, returning three themes (aggregate dimensions) and 12 2nd order themes against those themes less coded (frequency %) in the 19 interviews.

When analyzing the interviews, we found that interviewees' feelings, perceptions and understanding of the topic resulted in three sets of themes (aggregate dimensions) that captured the most important elements of the data: (1) Project manager replacement: a common correction practice, (2) Replacement as a message for change, and (3) Reestablishing mechanisms and trust in governance through handover: how the project size matters. In line with Braun and Clarke [38], each theme presents a single focus and builds from a previous theme. The results will be considered in turn.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Project managers, in their role as organizational agent, are responsible for myriad decisions made through a delicate balancing act amongst multiple, often divergent and equally powerful stakeholders. Thus, the agent/principal relationship that defines classical agency theory is subject to significant adaptation in many major project settings, as the project manager's agent role conflicts with and diverges from the goals of various stakeholders. Some of these relationships are more traditionally hierarchical in nature, as the project manager may report directly to senior management of the project organization, while having a more informal structural relationship (but no less significant) with key external stakeholders. Thus, the use of incentive systems and employment contracts can serve as a mechanism for controlling agent behavior within the project organization while external principals

(stakeholders) must employ politically-based means and methods for making their positions and expectations clear.

Theme 1: Project Manager Replacement – A Common Correction Practice

Involuntary project manager replacement is a common corrective action during ongoing troubled projects. Based on the perceptions of the interviewees, the findings indicate that the decision of replacing the project manager is to prevent ultimate project failure due to the chronic inability of meeting basic project targets of cost, time, or benefits realization. In fact, general beliefs from the interviews consider poor project performance, and therefore the consequent dissatisfaction of key stakeholders, as the main cause of project manager replacement. This is mainly associated with the difficulty of the project manager delivering the expected results, especially in large, complex (risky) project environments.

> "Quite often I am the one that has been the replacement and have been brought in to basically fix a project or a programme and bring it back on track […]. Sometimes it's just enforced (the replacement) and it happens because things have got so bad and the sponsor or some other senior person says 'look this just isn't working, we need to get somebody else in." (INT.14).

Subjects suggested that the best way to prevent project failure was by taking corrective action focusing on the way the project is managed. Some of the common reasons for involuntary replacement that emerged from the interviewees were associated with both the 'hard' (technical) and 'soft' (interpersonal) skills of the project manager. Recurrent technical issues identified were; the inability to manage workload, project work not being up to standard (deficient quality standards), lack of technical skills, or the need for different skills for work packages. Moreover, issues with interpersonal skills included the lack of relational (interpersonal) capabilities and leadership, relationship barriers and breakdowns, lack of personal and project team motivation, and poor performance as perceived by the client.

Although research suggests that the act of replacing the project manager is commonly dictated by poor project performance and key stakeholders dissatisfaction [1], it was also perceived that this decision is associated with the strategic direction of the project-based organization. Both social and technical dynamics in projects can change quickly, and the need for balance among those dynamics in order to deliver the promised benefits is a recurring task for project managers. Projects are social systems, and organization requirements and specifications might differ and change at each phase of the project-life cycle or at various key decision gates. The emergence of new stakeholders, shifting political interests, and key actors in the supply chain can come into play at different points during project development. Therefore, at later, specific points in time, in order to reflect the needs of new social interactions, a new project manager will be judged to be better than his/her predecessor in managing, monitoring and controlling the context in which these interactions are embedded.

> "I think different people work much better at different phases of a project. Right through from those who are rather better at seeing big picture and opportunity and scope in the front-end, through to those at the back-end of a project who are much better at finalizing delivery and transfer to operations. […] It's largely down to them (the PM project manager not being the right person in the right role at the right time. They weren't the right fit for the role as was needed." (INT.13)

Participants believe that it is common for mid-development project manager replacement to be a planned action, not simply regarded as a reflexive or sudden event for which the project team and stakeholders were not prepared. The time within the project when replacement is being considered is viewed as a necessary, reflective process in order to avoid, or at least reduce, the event of failure. Client disappointment is seen as the main trigger of the replacement process, where a perceived lack of competence from the current project manager is often flagged. Further, project indicators (e.g. time, cost, quality) will offer clear evidential markers heralding an inevitable replacement point. As stated, the action of replacement has to be planned accordingly, and normally does not represent a great shock among the internal stakeholders, as replacement is often perceived as performance-related, evidence of which might have been in the pipeline for some time. In the rare case of a sudden event, the

replacement can create shockwaves as relationships are broken. Table III presents an example of sub-themes with illustrative data extracts (direct quotes) in support of the presented findings.

INSERT TABLE III ABOUT HERE

Theme 2: Replacement as a Message for Change

The decision to opt for either an internal or external candidate to replace the project manager represents a serious issue for project decision makers. The interviews show that it is commonly believed that something 'has to be done' when performance does not comply with the required standards and expectations, and the project manager is seen as the first imputable person to pay for this lack of performance. The interviews reinforced a significant body of research evidence highlighting the crucial role played by the project manager in achieving project success (c.f. [28]). The project manager is considered the figure that fosters an open culture through influencing skills, inspirational leadership, and exceptional communication abilities. Indeed, it was noted earlier that a perceived lack of these skills can be the impetus to trigger the project manager replacement mechanism. Although the decision to source the new project manager internally or externally is very much context dependent – based on participants' experience, feelings and reflections – a common understanding behind project manager replacement is that it provides a strong message for change to project stakeholders and the external world.

> "Well, also given that the project has performed poorly, even if it's not the project manager's fault, if that person is no longer the right person to recover it from the situation, then they would have to go, because you need the right person to recover it, even if it was not their fault. […] At times some people would use it in the way to show that there's a sort of fresh start." (INT.2)

However, only by understanding the nature of the changes that the organization aims to embrace would it be possible to understand the decision for how candidates for replacement are sourced.

Specifically, the underlying assumptions behind the interviews show that the replacement project manager is likely to be internal to the organization for *transitional* changes or, external to the organization for *transformational* changes.

If the goal of top management is to minimize disruption through a smooth transitional change aimed at taking corrective action to bring the project back on track, it is common to find the new project manager within the organization. This decision, according to the majority of the participants, represents the most time and cost effective solution, and is therefore the less risky, as most organizations often have a pool of skilled project managers already familiar with the environment within which the project operates. Consequently, it is believed that sourcing internally will speed up the recovery process, by replacing the project manager with someone already involved familiar with the project management systems and processes and embedded in the organization culture. This decision is commonly viewed as 'less traumatic' and safer for all other project team members; that is, new external project managers are often seen as representing a threat to the project team through the potential for more wide-spread and disruptive shake-ups. On the other hand, the new, internal project manager is often judged to be the best option to overcome and mitigate relationship barriers and breakdowns. Both the project team and top management are more likely to collaborate with a familiar face from the internal existing organization.

There are also cases where the interviewees experienced external project manager replacement mid-project. Sometimes project requirements and/or its social dynamics did not match with the existing skills available within the organization; therefore, the replacement project manager had to be contracted externally. However, the majority of our subjects recognized that sourcing externally is often associated with the desire to bring major transformational change; that is, to have an unbiased perspective aimed at disconnecting with the way the project was managed by their predecessors.

> "I have replaced 3 of the 5 project managers. […] I would have looked externally for at least one of them because I wanted different culture and different characteristics and different learning from an

organization that has bred most of its own project managers who are long term employees." (INT.13)

A final goal is to send a strong message to the client and stakeholders in order to change the way people work, re-build credibility and motivation around a project deemed to be failing. In both cases, either the transitional or the transformational process has to be accompanied by a planned and well-organized handover.

Table IV presents an example of sub-themes with illustrative data extracts (direct quotes) in support of the presented findings.

INSERT TABLE IV ABOUT HERE

Theme 3: Reestablishing Processes and Trust in Governance through Handover – How the Project Size Matters

Handovers are recognized as being complicated, requiring careful planning and management in order to be as minimally disruptive as possible. The aim is to ensure business continuity while forming a constructive environment for the new project manager to be effective and rebuilding trust in governance. However, evidence suggests that there is no common agreement on how the handover process has been (or is actually) undertaken and managed in projects [1] [4]. In fact, participants in our study have experienced a mix of negative and positive handover events depending on a variety of factors, including the type and stage of the project, organization culture and the firm's appetite for change, sponsor pressure, and the urgency of the replacement itself. There were, however, some common beliefs on how the handover should be handled: 1) It should be well planned, following a structured process to assure a smooth project management transition; 2) The organization should publicly support the new project manager, without underestimating the value that the old project manager brought in this transition. That is, depending on how the handover is presented, it can appear

either chaotic and ‘ham-fisted’ or carefully considered – even orchestrated; 3) Senior and executive management has to support the project taking a step back, having a collaborative overlap between the old and new project manager, and entering a brief ‘reset’ period; 4) There is a need to onboard the new project manager carefully in order to acknowledge a clear picture of the current situation of the project, understand the team’s perspective, and repair both morale and stakeholder relationships. This process requires time, open and honest communication, and the willing collaboration of the old project manager over a short (but fundamental) period of time.

The willing cooperation of the replaced project manager plays a crucial role in the ‘acceptance process’ in which the new project manager is called to participate. This offers a new and interesting dynamic in project governance. While the new project manager is attempting to build a rapport, the project team is forced to recognize and adapt to a different way of working under new leadership and management styles. In this setting, replaced project managers can get defensive about their legacy, leading to a tacit or even overt resistance to the transition, often accompanied by enlisting support from other team members. The lack of collaboration from these key players might, as a consequence, result in the loss of documentation and relevant (transparent) information vital for the new project manager in affecting positive change for the project. Handover involves a sometimes-steep learning curve for the new project manager. Successfully navigating this learning curve is on one hand very dependent on the support given by top management to the new project manager and, on the other hand, the trust and collaboration determined by the professionalism of the replaced project manager. Subjects agreed that if these conditions are in place, a smooth transition will support a corrective course of actions from the new project manager.

Regardless of the project manager being sourced internally or externally to the organization, interviewees elucidate commonalities in the type of actions that the replacement project manager usually takes when replacing the previous one. These actions can be summarized into:

1) A Process of Inquiry – The replacement project manager has been taken on board in order to stimulate some sort of change in the project. This inevitably requires a period of information gathering, whose length depends on the complexity of the project and communication barriers the new project manager may face with different and interrelated stakeholders. Therefore, this stage is highly dependent on the time (usually less for internally sourced project managers) and resources (usually higher for externally sourced project managers) that top management allocate to this transitional stage. There are many actions associated with the inquiry process, and all are aimed at assimilating and assessing the current situation of the project. Before entering into the technical details of the project (e.g. audits, safety reports, and a check of basic parameters such as budget, schedule and quality), the project manager usually finds opportunities to familiarize themselves with the culture of the organization, observing the way of working and how the correct vision for the project has been transferred (or not) into key players. Critical, recurrent actions include: finding out what the client knows about the project's status, what the objectives are and what the project aims to achieve, all with the intention of determining the underlying cause of the real problems and risks. The aim is to make well-informed decisions focused at reassessing the project plan and milestones, based on the identified areas of improvement. These findings are consistent with previous work of Pirhonen and Vartiainen [8] who identified several types of critical knowledge that needed to be transferred to the incoming project manager, including management issues, knowledge of the client organization, decisions previously made and the rationale behind them, knowledge about team members and the general stakeholder atmosphere.

2) Reassurance – After building up a project situation picture, the new project manager is likely to undertake a reassurance stage. The intention is to rebuild confidence among key project stakeholders through a systematic series of interactions. Honesty and transparency are recognized as key elements in building effective high performing teams and regaining confidence from a non-performing project [44]. The new project manager will therefore aim to win stakeholder trust, by reassuring people and the project team through understanding their perceptions and needs. Subsequent actions are motivated

by the desire to transmit the right vision for the project and serving as the glue that holds the project together. By understanding all project implications and related risks, listening to different actors, and being fully aware of their responsibility, the replacement project manager can be the single source pulling all the project stakeholders in one direction with the aim of achieving a successful project recovery process.

3) Revalidation – Revalidation activities are the most challenging stage of the transition process, as bridges with old management are now broken, and it is expected that the new project manager will begin to take corrective action. To this point, replacement dynamics were aimed at smoothing the transition; however, it is during revalidation that new goals or project team expectations are being clarified and implemented. Thus, clashes are likely to happen (stronger in transformational changes) as new directions are given to the projects. The 'people side' of the temporary organization might be affected as resources will be reallocated in order to rework the project. The project scope might need to be redefined based on the current needs of the organization, and a strong project governance system also has to be re-established. Nevertheless, key performance indicators will be put forward in order to activate a revalidation process of current milestones and deliverables. Actions have to be taken quickly, as the project aims to get up to speed by getting more work done in a shorter period of time. Resource requirements have to be revalidated, such as changes to the project schedule or budget. The project has taken a forced backward step, which usually requires extra budget and time permissions from stakeholders.

4) Control – The process concludes with a stage where the project manager's activities are focused on improving and refining project performance through controlling actions. The new project manager has to demonstrate value to the client and team by implementing and consolidating changes. The modified course of actions from the new project manager are likely to affect the entire project environment, from the strategic to tactical level; therefore, this stage has to be carefully aligned with the organization's objectives to be effective. Subjects noted that a lack of control from the previous project manager was a common reason to explain deviations from the original plan, and the new

project manager is thus naturally inclined to establish a better control process. Actions are mainly focusing on controlling project documentation and communication flow among key stakeholders. Extra meetings are often requested at this stage, in order to give direction, check where people are and reinforce where the focus needs to be. Likewise, communication flows are often rapid and multi-channeled, not only for parallel tracking to keep forward momentum of project activities, but also to alleviate any concerns about the project.

Moreover, a deeper analysis of participants' feelings, perceptions, and beliefs led to a clear distinction regarding the negative and positive consequences of project manager replacement mid-project. This distinction was evident when participants spoke about their experiences in large and complex projects or, on the other hand, in less complex but lengthy projects.

Negative connotations about project manager replacement mid-project were more evident in shorter project developments of two years or less with budgets of $10 million or less. The project manager replacement in such undertakings is often perceived as not being fully effective for improving project performance of a troubled project. Recurrent themes associated with the main drawbacks and consequences of project manager replacement are the disruption that such replacement creates on time and budget constraints. By nature, the interviewees suggested that, in their experience, smaller size projects encountered proportionally larger increases in time and budget compared to larger scale developments and any small deviations from the original plan might threaten project viability. In such projects the decision to replace the project manager has led to cases where cost and schedule overruns increased due to the initial step backwards. The resources drained by this required phase of project manager replacement are often associated with contractor variations and unnecessary reworking of activities.

> "I think in short projects (2 years or less) that are normally fast acting or quick in terms of delivery, it is lost in the noise - the need to change a project manager. That is because the rump up time for getting a project manager up to speed and actually re-establishing a suitable relationship with the

client or with all parties, is quite hard to do and it's a trust-building process that requires time. […] and in a short-term project, there is not enough time to do that." (INT.17)

Regardless of the project type, negative consequences from project manager replacement mid-project were also highlighted in the way that stakeholders and team relationships were destabilized. The act of replacement was viewed as unavoidably creating negative impressions of the project team, while increasing the risk of adopting a blame culture, all making it harder to pick up and rebuild the team within the expected recovery time. Subjects noted that the relatively limited duration of the project would inevitably force the new project manager to focus on 'what really counts', often compromising the balance of managing both the technical and social issues around project recovery.

"I think it will take a while for people to adjust to a new style of working. I think that many of the behaviors that were good for the project will also change as well as those which weren't good for the project. And so I think when you change everything you change some beneficial aspects as well as the non-beneficial ones." (INT.19)

Post-replacement, the client often sets high expectations for the new project manager, who is expected to react quickly to client requests or risk beginning the relationship on a negative footing. It was noted by several interviewees that the clients enjoy a temporary power advantage that allows them to influence the immediate agenda for the project. It is not uncommon for the new project manager to assume a 'reactive' default position, showing immediate support for their promotion, rather than adopting a more aggressive 'way forward' for leading and managing day-to-day project activities. Thus, the initial focus is often given to reestablishing the target parameters of time, budget and quality as dictated by the client, which might cause the project manager to overlook the social/behavioral aspects of the project, such as reestablishing trust in the governance structure and understanding stakeholders' needs and expectations through an appropriate engagement level.

Our findings offer some interesting similarities and contrast to the previous work of Vartiainen [11], who developed a process model of IS project manager replacement that shows the triggering of

deterioration mechanisms at various stages of the project life cycle, including scapegoating, deterioration of performance, relationships, and so forth, resulting in a potential cycle of reactionary "healing" mechanisms. In his research, he also identified a set of post-handoff mechanisms, including the deterioration of the outgoing project manager's image, a new cycle of relationship-building with the replacement, as well as a variety of consequences for the project (cost, schedule, scope, and organizational relations). Vartiainen's [11] work did not identify the aggregate "themes" we found in the present study, but his process model offers some interesting similarities to our findings; that is, the recognition that – post-replacement – a series of remediation steps are necessary for rebuilding trust and commitment to the project's goals.

Our study demonstrated that replacing a project manager results in initial impact on both time and budget constraints. However, it is also recognized that an effective replacement will pay off in the long run, by speeding up the delivery of project activities through better resource utilization.

> "A qualified project manager was brought on board, carefully integrated with a proper handover and the immediate phase after that has not really been impacted in terms of deliverables but the project has then sped up as a result and actually the feedback from the business and the project has been really positive." (INT.9)

The replacement results in more effective project performance when changes are made at project gates or stage boundaries, so the impact on contractors is minimized. Here, the replacing project manager can start to rebuild processes and stakeholder confidence with the attempt of rescuing the project from forecasted failure. Table V presents an example of sub-themes with illustrative data extracts (direct quotes) in support of the presented findings.

INSERT TABLE V ABOUT HERE

Discussion

Research and practice in project management has long established the critical nature of the project manager role for achieving successful project outcomes [cf, 45, 46]. Myriad lists of project critical success factors and a voluminous literature on project leadership confirm the central and key role played by forceful, knowledgeable leaders in successful project implementation. As a result, the decision to consider replacing a project manager mid-stream (during project execution) is a weighty one and not to be taken lightly. So many variables go into this decision: Is the project truly failing, and how can we be sure? What are the immediate consequences of such a disruption? Are there better options or is it safer to stay the course? What steps should a newly appointed project manager undertake to right the ship? It is with this idea in mind – the implications, decision, and resulting dynamics of replacing the project manager – that our inductive study was undertaken.

The findings offered some fascinating insights into the dynamic of mid-development project manager replacement. The qualitative analysis and interviews allowed us to propose a process model of project manager replacement. Figure 2 shows the process diagram of cause-and-effect relationships among the key variables. Based on the interviews, a series of dynamics is posited that form the decision chain for project manager replacement, suggesting that preconditions or causal factors (antecedents) combine to create significant stakeholder disaffection and the subsequent decision – subject to moderator influence – to replace the original project manager. Of particular note, our study also elucidated the critical steps that the new project manager frequently undertakes in order to take control, assuage key stakeholders, and begin a series of remedial steps designed to bring the project back on track. Although some past research has examined parts of this causal chain (e.g., [1]), no work to date has explored the broader sequence, including antecedents, replacement dynamics, and consequences.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Activity theory provides some important ways to interpret our findings. Recall that according to Engeström [15], there has to be a triggering action, such as the conflicting questioning of the existing standard practice in the system, in order to generate learning [14]. This triggering action often occurs due to a contradiction in organizational systems, such as the case when a project is deemed to be in trouble, due to poor initial planning, poor execution, or some combination of both. These contradictions are themselves seen as disturbances in the free running of the activity [15]. Thus, according to Vartiainen et al. [9: p. 1830], "disturbances are the symptoms of the underlying contradictions." In project settings, where workflows and activities are usually carefully planned and scheduled, planning and monitoring methods (such as Gantt charts or earned value management) are the basis for identifying the existence of disturbances in the project domain, which, in turn, point to underlying contradictions. Depending on the severity of the triggering action, the options of the key project stakeholders are many, up to and including the decision to replace the project manager.

Agency theory posits a dynamic whereby agents, due to their access to information that may not be readily shared with principals, have a tendency to act in a self-interested manner (moral hazard); i.e., substituting their own interests in place of other key stakeholders [47]. Our interviews found some limited support for the idea that project manager agents may be hesitant to share accurate and timely updates on project status, particularly during difficult periods, either due to fear of scapegoating or expectation that the project will turn around. Thus, there is the potential for an 'information gap' to occur during which the project manager, who possesses real-time knowledge of project technical or cost/schedule performance information, may be motivated to suppress or delay the transmittal of such information to project principals in the hopes that temporary setbacks can be remedied, thus rendering moot the need to pass along notification of poor performance. That is, the fear of over-reaction to bad news might impel project managers to limit information or restrict its transmittal to structured or pre-determined project status events.

The moral hazard arising from information asymmetry can lead to some interesting dynamics, including; 1) Cases in which the project manager deliberately kept key stakeholders (such as contractor organizations) in the dark about true project status, leading to a failure to anticipate and plan for the inevitable reckoning when the public was informed of serious under-performance. The result was an embarrassment for all parties, particularly key principals (political, financial, and administrative) supporting the project; 2) Cases where project agents and their internal principals (key contracting organizations) withheld or positively spun project status to external stakeholders (the public), thereby creating a principal vs. principal dynamic that devolved into finger-pointing and hunt of the guilty. In these cases, the agency principle of seeking to maximize shareholder wealth was subverted.

It is precisely in order to mitigate the threat of information asymmetry that many client organizations (those for whom the project is being undertaken) establish comprehensive reporting systems, including mutually-agreed metrics (project quality) and schedule (how it is proceeding) updates. For example, the popularity and widespread use of earned value management (EVM) systems is due to the original development of a set of Cost/Schedule Control Systems Criteria (C/SCSC) to be used as performance measurement for selected acquisitions by the U.S. Department of Defense in the mid-1960s [48]. Earned Value methods arose from the historically-opaque nature of program status assessment for various government contracts once the contracts had been let. The a priori establishment of meaningful project status measurement is one example of efforts made by principals to minimize the threats of information asymmetry in relation to ongoing project status.

The process model of project manager replacement also offers several interesting points of departure as a means for examining extant leadership theory, most notably in identifying the remediation activities in which newly appointed project managers must engage. One tenant of agency theory presumes the primacy of maintaining positive and mutually supportive relationships between key organizational actors and influential stakeholders [49]. Thus, steps taken to repair and commodify these relationships (including those between the project manager and their team) as part of the remediation process are critical. The cycling of stages in our model, involving inquiry – reassurance –

revalidation – control, reinforces the "leader-intensive" nature of project management, as this replacement decision is seen as more than a symbolic "public execution" *pour encourager les autres*. Indeed, these steps point to the proactive measures that effective replacement project managers are expected to immediately pursue, with the goal of correcting project under-performance, as demonstrated capably by a large literature on the critical nature of project leadership, e.g., [50, 51]. Thus, it would be interesting to develop additional evidence of causal links between project leadership styles and its effect on subsequent positive project remediation. For example, Nixon, et al [45] determined that different leadership styles are appropriate for different stages of the project while Müller and Turner [52] demonstrated that leadership style should also be taken into consideration depending on the types of projects being undertaken. Just as leadership behavior must be aligned to correspond with project development, so too it may be the case that different leadership styles (transformational, transactional, directive, etc.) are necessary at different points in the project corrective cycle.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

It is important to note that our process model (Figure 2) does not specify relative importance weights among the identified antecedent criteria. That is, the model does not argue that certain constructs weigh more heavily on the replacement decision than do others (nor, indeed, as causes of stakeholder disaffection: the first stage of the process model). Past research (e.g., [53] [54]) has suggested that the decision to replace key executives is moderated by several factors, including industry type, firm size, project budget and planned schedule, and source of replacement (internal vs external successor). Future research could employ the process model in a field study to weigh the replacement decision against the backdrop of these external circumstances and mediating/contingency factors. Do the new project manager actions of inquiry, reassurance, revalidation, and control (that is, their importance, the relative time spent at each step, etc.) vary based on contingent project characteristics? Does the importance of the antecedent conditions that lead to stakeholder disaffection vary, depending on project type (size, public vs. privately-funded, etc.)? That is, is one (or more) of

the antecedent conditions a more significant warning trigger of resulting disaffection with the project and its manager? Moreover, does the relative importance of the antecedents of project manager replacement vary depending upon type of project (e.g., construction, pharmaceutical, IT, new product development), the types of external stakeholders (e.g., government versus private sector clients), the degree of commercial or political pressure on the project organization, and so forth. The subjects noted that size of the project (budget and duration) had an effect on the decision process for replacement, with larger projects more likely to absorb project manager replacement than would smaller projects, for which replacement and the subsequent actions of the new project manager could have more significant short-term negative effects on the project in terms of rework and project stabilization. Moreover, participants in our study experienced a mixture of negative and positive handover events, depending on different features, such as the type and stage of the project, organization culture and its appetite for change, sponsor pressure, and the urgency of the replacement itself.

For our study, the research questions, and the sample population, the findings suggested that interviews with 19 subjects was sufficient to develop theoretical saturation (cf. [35] [36]). However, it is suggested that future studies expand the number of interviews to reach a wider audience facilitating statistical analysis on comparative cases. Alternatively, future research can adopt an approach to empirically validating this inductive study with a large sample, multi-organizational approach to offer confirmation of our process model and hypothetical implications.

Our research also points to additional avenues for further investigation. For example, although the majority of the respondents have shown poor performance as the main cause of project manager replacement, future work should look at ‘replacement due to specialization’; e.g., in organizations such as Royal Dutch Shell or the Department of Defense. In large scale projects, these organizations tend to have project managers who specialize in a particular part of the project life cycle, and the strategy is deliberately built into the replacement of a project manager. Or, similarly, replacement happens because the organization needed that person in another part of their organization. Here, the replaced project manager is assumed to have the required skills to lead a specific part of the business. This

decision may not be triggered by past poor performance, offering a positive reason for change rather than a negative one. Finally, it would be also interesting to investigate the difference in replacement decisions resulting from voluntary versus involuntary separation from the organization, because involuntary leaving is often linked to task execution-based replacement while voluntary leaving may focus on like-for-like replacement. Overall, future research should continue to investigate these predictor criteria, potential moderators, and their relative impact on replacement decisions.

The decision to replace the project manager during the execution phase of a project is one that should never be taken lightly. The combination of administrative, interpersonal, technical, and organizational factors subject to upheaval during such a replacement explain why many organizations are hesitant to make this decision, opting instead for costly rework cycles after the fact. Further, the theories of escalation of commitment [55] and sunk costs [56] argue that choosing whether or not to take the major step of replacing a project manager remains one clearly resting in two decision arenas: technical project considerations as well as behavioral theory. Developing a clearer understanding of the process dynamics and well as the benefits and drawbacks of project manager replacement can aid organizations in making more clear-eyed decisions as they weigh present pain against future advantages.

References

[1]	R. J. Dubber, *Investigating the effects of replacing the project manager during project execution*, University of Johannesburg: Unpublished Masters Thesis, 2015.
[2]	S. K. Parker and M. Skitmore, "Project management turnover: causes and effects on project performance," *International Journal of Project Management,* vol. 23, pp. 205-214, 2005.
[3]	T.K. Abdel-Hamid, “Investigating the Impacts of Managerial Turnover/Succession on Software Project Performance,” *J. Manage. Info. Sys.*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 127–144, 1992.

[4]	T. Vartiainen and M. Pirhonen, “How is Project Success Affected by Replacing the Project manager?” In: W. Wojtkowski, W.G. Wojtkowski, J. Zupancic, G. Magyar and G. Knapp (eds), *Advances in Information Systems Development*, Boston, MA: Springer, pp. 397-407, 2007.
[5]	K. Davis, "Different stakeholder groups and their perceptions of project success," *Int. J. Project Manage.,* vol. 32, pp. 189-201, 2014.
[6]	P.W.G. Morris, *Reconstructing Project Management*, Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2013.
[7]	Y. G. Schoper, A. Wald, H. T. Ingason, and T. V. Fridgeirsson, "Projectification in Western Economies: a comparative study of Germany, Norway and Iceland," *Int. J. Project Manage.,* vol. 36, pp. 71–82, 2018.
[8]	M. Pirhonen and T. Vartiainen, “Replacing the Project Manager in Information System Projects: What Knowledge Should be Transferred?” In: *Proc. of the 13th the Americas Conference on Information Systems (AMCIS), Reaching New Heights*, August 9–12, Keystone, Colorado, [CD-ROM], 2007.
[9]	T. Vartiainen, H. Aramo-Immonen, and K. Liikamaa, K. “Replacing Project Manager: Reasons of Replacement Interpreted through the Activity Theory.” In: *Proc. of the 14th Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems: PACIS 2010*. Paper 182, 2010.
[10]	T. Vartiainen, M. Pirhonen, H. Aramo-Immonen, and K. Liikamaa, “Replacement of Project Manager during IT Projects – A Research Agenda,” *AMCIS 2012 Proc.,* p. 4, 2012.
[11]	T. Vartiainen, “How the Replacement of the Project Manager Unfolds in IS Projects.” In: H. Oinas-Kukkonen, N. Iivari, K. Kuutti, A. Öörni, and M. Rajanen, (eds), *Nordic Contributions in IS Research. SCIS 2015*. Lecture Notes in Business Information

	Processing, vol 223. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-21783-3_13, 2015.
[12]	F. Blackler, N. Crump and S. McDonald, S., "Managing Experts and Competing through Innovation: An Activity Theoretical Analysis," *Organization*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 5–32, 1999.
[13]	Y. Engeström, "Activity Theory as a Framework for Analyzing and Redesigning Work," *Ergonomics*, vol. 43, no. 7, pp. 960–974, 2000.
[14]	Y. Engeström, "Expansive Learning at Work: Toward an Activity Theoretical Reconceptualization," *J.Educ. & Work*, vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 133–156, 2001.
[15]	T. Vartiainen, H. Aramo-Immonen, J. Jussila, M. Pirhonen, K. Liikamaa, "Replacement of the Project Manager Reflected Through Activity Theory and Work–System Theory," In: W. Song, et al. (eds), *Information Systems Development*. Springer, New York, NY: pp. 111-121, 2011.
[16]	C. W. L. Hill and T. M. Jones, "Stakeholder-agency theory," *J. Manage. Studies,* vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 131-154, 1992.
[17]	M. C. Jensen and W. H. Meckling, "Theory of the firm: Managerial behavior, agency costs, and ownership structure," *J. Fin. Econ.,* vol. 3, pp. 305-360, 1976.
[18]	K. M. Eisenhardt, "Control: Organizational and economic approaches," *Manage. Sci.,* vol. 31, pp. 134-149, 1985.
[19]	K. John and L. W. Senbet, "Corporate governance and board effectiveness," *J. Bank. and Fin.,* vol. 22, pp. 371-403, 1998.
[20]	L. Kaiser, "Agency relationship and transfer pricing inefficiency," *Acta Oeconomica Pragensia,* vol. 3, p. 73–81, 2006.

[21]	B. M. Mitnick, "The Theory of Agency: The policing 'paradox' and regulatory behavior," *Pub. Choice,* vol. 24, no. 1, p. 27–42, 1995.
[22]	B. M. Mitnick, "Fiduciary rationality and public policy: The theory of agency and some consequences," in *Paper presented at the 1973 annual meeting of the American Political Science Association*, New Orleans, 1973.
[23]	O.E. Williamson, *Markets and Hierarchies*. New York: The Free Press, 1975.
[24]	R. Turner and R. Müller, "On the nature of the project as a temporary organization," *Int. J. Project Manage.,* vol. 21, pp. 1-8, 2003.
[25]	K. Eisenhardt, "Building theories from case research," *Acad. Manage. Rev.,* vol. 14, pp. 532–550, 1989.
[26]	O. E. Williamson, "Corporate finance and corporate governance," *J.Finance,* vol. 43, pp. 567-592, 1988.
[27]	S. Olander, "Stakeholder impact analysis in construction project management," *Const. Manage. and Econ.,* vol. 25, pp. 277–287, 2007.
[28]	V. S. Anantatmula, "Project manager leadership role in improving project performance," *Eng. Manage. J.,* vol. 22, pp. 13-22, 2010.
[29]	A. Toivonen and P. U. Toivonen, "The transformative effect of top management governance choices on project team identity and relationship with the organization — An agency and stewardship approach," *Int. J.Project Manage.,* vol. 32, pp. 1358–1370, 2014.
[30]	J. R. Turner, M. Huemann, F. Anbari and C. Bredillet, *Perspectives on Projects*, New York: Routledge, 2010.

[31]	M. Wideman, *A Management Framework for Project, Programme and Portfolio Integration*, Victoria, BC: Trafford, 2004.
[32]	D. A. Gioia, K. G. Corley and A. L. Hamilton, "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research: Notes on the Gioia Methodology," *Org. Res. Meth.,* vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 15-31, 2012.
[33]	M. G. Pratt, "For the lack of a boilerplate: Tips on writing up (and reviewing) qualitative research," *Acad. Manage. J.,* vol. 52, pp. 856-862, 2009.
[34]	G. Morgan, *Beyond Method: Strategies for Social Research*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1983.
[35]	M. Crouch and H. McKenzie, "The logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research," *Soc. Sci. Info.,* vol. 45, pp. 483-499, 2006.
[36]	G. Guest, A. Bunce, and L. Johnson, "How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability," *Field Meth.,* vol. 18, pp. 59-82, 2006.
[37]	N. Chileshe, R. Rameezdeen, and M. R. Hosseini, "Drivers for adopting reverse logistics in the construction industry: a qualitative study," *Eng. Constr. Arch. Manage.,* vol. 23, p. 134–157, 2016.
[38]	V. Braun and V. Clarke, "Thematic Analysis," *APA Handbook of Research Methods in Psychology,* vol. 2, pp. 57-71, 2012.
[39]	P. Bazeley and L. Richards, “Part 7: ordering concepts,” In: Bazeley, P. and Richards, L. (Eds.), *The NVivo Qualitative Project Book*, London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2000.
[40]	P. Bazeley and K. Jackson, *Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo*, London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2013.

[41]	K. Corley and D. Gioia, "Identity ambiguity and change in the wake of a corporate spin-off," *Admin. Sci. Quar.,* vol. 49, pp. 173-208, 2004.
[42]	G. Guest and E. McLellan, "Distinguishing the trees from the forest: Applying cluster analysis to thematic qualitative data," *Fields Meth.,* vol. 15, pp. 186-201, 2003.
[43]	P. Bazeley, *Qualitative Data Analysis: Practical Strategies*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013.
[44]	H. A. Akkermans, P. Bogerd, and P. Doremalen, "Travail, transparency and trust: A case study of computer-supported collaborative supply chain planning in high-tech electronics," *Eur. J. Op. Res.,* vol. 53, pp. 445-456, 2004.
[45]	P. Nixon, M. Harrington, and D. Parker, “Leadership performance is significant to project success or failure: a critical analysis,” *Int Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, vol. 61, pp. 204-216, 2012.
[46]	M. Lindgren and J. Packendorff, J., “Project leadership revisited: towards distributed leadership perspectives in project research,” *Int. J. Project Org.Manage.*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 285–308, 2009.
[47]	A. Jassim, C. Dexter, and A. Sidhu, "Agency Theory - Implications for Financial Management," *Manage. Fin.,* vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 1-5, 1988.
[48]	J. B. Morin, "How it all began: The creation of earned value and the evolution of C/SPCS and C/SCSC," *The Measureable News,* pp. 15-17, January 2016.
[49]	E. Osipova, “Establishing cooperative relationships and joint risk management in construction projects: agency theory perspective,” *J. Manag. Eng*., 31 (6) (2014), Article 05014026
[50]	J. Pinto and J.W. Trailer, *Leadership Skills for Project Managers*. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute, 1998.

[51]	O.C. Gadeken, “So you're the new project manager: tips for a good start,” Paper presented at PMI® Global Congress 2009—North America, Orlando, FL. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute, 2009.
[52]	R. Müller and R. Turner, “Matching the project manager’s leadership style to project type,” Int. J. Project Manage., vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 21-32, 2007.
[53]	A. A. J. Cannella and M. Lubatkin, "Succession as a sociopolitical process: Internal impediments to outsider selection," *Acad. Manage. J.,* vol. 36, pp. 763-793, 1993.
[54]	Y. Zhang and N. Rajagopalan, "When the known devil is better than an unknown god: An empirical study of the antecedents and consequences of relay CEOs," *Acad. Manage. J.,* vol. 47, pp. 483-500, 2004.
[55]	B. M. Staw, "The escalation of commitment to a course of action," *Acad. Manage. Rev.,* vol. 6, pp. 577-587, 1981.
[56]	H. Garland, "Throwing good money after bad: The effect of sunk costs on the decision to escalate commitment to an ongoing project," *J. App. Psych.,* vol. 75, pp. 728-731, 1990.

Appendix I: Resulting Interview Questions Derived from Identified Literature Gaps

Linked Research Question	Literature Review Area	Sub Theme(s) 1 from the Literature	Initial Resulting Interview Question	Final Interview Question
1	Replacement	• Facts of RPM	• What is your experience of project manager replacement on a project?	9. In your experience with this organization, have you witnessed a colleague (or yourself) in the project manager role be replaced during the execution phase of a project? 10. In your experience with this organization, how common is project manager replacement during the project execution phase?
1	Replacement	• Replacement from within team	• Where does the replacement project manager (RPM) come from? • Are the replacements internal or external? • Do you feel that them being either internal or external affects the project?	11. Where did the replacement project manager come from? (E.g., within or outside the organization)

1	Replacement	• Reasons for replacement (Organization reasons, Lack of skills, People reasons, Project reasons)	• What are the main reasons for a project manager being replaced?	12. Why was the Project Manager replaced?
2	Replacement	• Effects of replacement (Positive, Negative, How to Minimize effects)	• What positive or negative impacts do you believe that an RPM can bring? • How would you minimize these effects?	15. In your opinion, how did replacing the project manager affect stakeholder satisfaction? 16. Was the replacement decision seen as a sudden event, for which the project team and stakeholders were not prepared or was this action perceived as being in the works for some time? 17. How did the timing of the replacement affect key project stakeholders?
2	Replacement	• Issues in handover (Project details, People issues, Making mistakes, What is needed)	• What has been your experience of handover with an RPM? • What are the main issues when project handover takes place? • What would you say was needed when handover is taking place?	19. How was project handover handled? 20. What type of actions did the replacement project manager take when they replaced the previous one?

			• How do you find an RPMs attitude to spending?	
2/3	Replacement	• What is needed	• What would you want to see happen when a project manager is replaced? • How would you prevent a project manager being replaced?	18. In your experience, how important is the role of the project manager in project success? Why do you think this? 22. All in all, would you say that replacing the project manager was the correct decision? If yes, why? If no, why?
1	Reasons for Leaving Role	• Internal Transfer • Career • Customer Client Issues • Organization Senior Management Teamwork issues • Personal issues • Performance • Voluntary leaving role	• What are the main reasons you are aware of for a project manager leaving in their role?	21. What are the main reasons you are aware of a project manager voluntarily leaving their role?
1	Reasons for Staying in Role	• Staying in role • PM development opportunities	• What are the main reasons you are aware of for a	21. What are the main reasons you are aware of a project manager voluntarily leaving their role?

			project manager staying in their role?	
1	Phases	• Management of phases • Non completion of phases • Issues • What is needed	• Have you managed a project from start to completion? • Which phase is most common when RPM takes place? • Do you think a specialist project manager should be used for each project phase? If so/no, why?	9. In your experience with this organization, have you witnessed a colleague (or yourself) in the project manager role be replaced during the execution phase of a project? 10. In your experience with this organization, how common is project manager replacement during the project execution phase?
1/2	Activity Theory	• Settings and contexts to replace a project manager • Triggering mechanisms • Institutional challenges	• What are the settings/ triggering mechanisms that cause a project manager to be replaced? • What are the challenges when replacing a project manager?	12. Why was the Project Manager replaced? 16. Was the replacement decision seen as a sudden event, for which the project team and stakeholders were not prepared or was this action perceived as being in the works for some time? 19. How was project handover handled? 22. All in all, would you say that replacing the project manager was the correct decision? If yes, why? If no, why?

2	Project Performance	• Issues • On team members • What is needed	• How does replacing a project manager affect project performance?	13. What was the overall impact on the project performance when the project manager was replaced? 14. Who would you say were the project stakeholders?
2/3	Acting Interim Temporary Roles	• acting interim temporary positions roles • acting roles lead to more acting roles • acting roles lead to organization instability • PM resigned new PM internal to organization and given only part time • reliance on temporary staff called staff churn • temporary staff lead to negative outcomes	• Have you encountered a temporary replacement project manager on a project? • How did this affect the project and its outcomes?	9. In your experience with this organization, have you witnessed a colleague (or yourself) in the project manager role be replaced during the execution phase of a project? 13. What was the overall impact on the project performance? when the project manager was replaced?
2/3	Agency Theory	• Stakeholder interactions and relationships	• What are the stakeholder interactions when a project manager is replaced?	12. Why was the Project Manager replaced?

		• Interests, or goals, of principals and agents • Control • Incentives/ motivation or punitive methods • Balancing relationships • Actions of replacement • Risk of moral hazard • Information asymmetry	• What are the reasons for replacement? • Are there any consequences when replacing a project manager? • What actions does the replacing project manager take? • What skills does a project manager need?	13. What was the overall impact on the project performance when the project manager was replaced? 14. Who would you say were the project stakeholders? 15. In your opinion, how did replacing the project manager affect stakeholder satisfaction? 17. How did the timing of the replacement affect key project stakeholders? 18. In your experience, how important is the role of the project manager in project success? Why do you think this? 20. What type of actions did the replacement project manager take when they replaced the previous one? 21. What are the main reasons you are aware of a project manager voluntarily leaving their role?
N/A	Blame	• CEO motivated to blame top manager when CEO has more ownership • CEO uses top manager as a scapegoat	How does blame play a role when replacing a project manager?	CEO literature discounted.

		• powerful CEO poor performance scapegoat and blame top manager		
N/A	Information Collection Area	• Traits to Measure	• Job role • How many projects have you managed from start to completion? • How many projects have you managed which you did not complete or only completed a certain phase? • Age • Education • Years of experience • Type of industry experience	1. Can you tell me about yourself? What is your current role and experience? 2. What is the average number of project team members you supervise in a typical project? 3. What is the average number of projects you typically work on simultaneously? 4. What is the size of the budget for a typical project with which you are involved? 5. What is the duration for a typical project with which you are involved? 6. How long have you been in your current position? 7. How long have you been with your current company? 8. What are the types of projects typically undertaken in your business unit?

Table I: Mapping the Current Literature Focus to the Resulting Research Questions

Current Literature Focus	**Gaps in the Literature from the Thematic Analysis**	**Research Question**
Knowledge regarding 'managerial changes' has been from studies focusing on top managers and CEOs turnover/succession.	Little has been done in project-based organizations to try to understand the reasons, actions and consequences of project manager replacement mid-project. By investigating the literature on involuntary managerial replacement, it is surprising that academic efforts have not addressed the lack of empirical evidence (number of studies as well as small sample sizes) recorded to date.	1/2/3
Nevertheless, what is noticeable is the lack of consistency in the terminology used to explain the 'managerial changes' phenomenon. The most common terms being turnover, turnaround, succession, replacement, dismissal and displacement.	The majority of the studies have focused on turnover or succession and minimal effort has been spent examining involuntary replacement, especially in project-based organizations.	1/2/3
While voluntary separation and its consequences has been the main topic of discussion, the dynamics of involuntary replacement are unclear and deserve deeper investigation.	Although the topic is still generally 'vague' and deserves much more attention, the consequences of replacement have had a higher degree of academic interest, compared to the causes of why replacement has occurred. Causes of replacement have often been associated with voluntary reasons (e.g. career or personal development) or as a result of a failure to meet expectations in	1

	the organization (e.g. shareholders earnings per share).	
The process of involuntary managerial replacement mid-project has much to offer in terms of causes, consequences and actions. It is hoped that rich information will be generated by looking at the replacement process and this will help to provide a deeper understanding of project manager replacement.	Stakeholder views and perceptions (such as former and successor project manager, client/customer, top management/decision makers, team members and project personnel) are inevitably affected by the replacement and this is missing in current body of knowledge, which makes this research worthwhile.	1/2/3
Activity theory offers insights into the key role of the project manager, both as agent of the project's key stakeholders and as critical linking pin for organizing and administering project activities. This theory links events to the settings, or contexts, within which they occur.	Little has been done to understand the reasons, actions and consequences of project manager replacement mid-project. Further linking to activity theory, we examine the settings and contexts in which the need to replace a project manager occurs, the triggering mechanisms (leading from contradictions inside the activity system or disturbances in the free running of organizational activities) and the institutional challenges when projects require adaptation or questioning a project whilst being executed.	1/2
Agency theory assumes inherently rational actors (stakeholders). Agency relationships are defined as those in which one or more stakeholders (the principal(s)) engage another person (the agent) to perform some service on their behalf, requiring the principal to	We investigate stakeholder interactions and relationships between project managers and their firm's top management. This includes questioning features of agency theory such as the interests, or goals, of principals and agents, the need for mechanisms to control agent behavior, the actions when	2/3

delegate decision-making authority to the agent.	replacing a project manager, including incentives/ motivation or punitive methods. We further examine activity theory in how relationships are balanced, the actions the replacing project manager takes to balance the interests of critical stakeholders and any actions performed as mutual or self-interest (e.g., project performance bonuses).	

Table II: Interviewee Profiles

Key to Perspective of Replacement (POR)

Acronym	**Description**
WR	Witnessed replacement
SR	Selects the replacement
RPM	Was the replacement
RPL	Been replaced

ID	**Role**	**Managerial Experience**	**POR**	**ID**	**Role**	**Managerial Experience**	**POR**
INT. 1	Director and Advisor	25 years	WR	INT. 11	Project manager	20 years	SR
INT. 2	Director and Audit Chair	48 years	SR	INT. 12	Project manager	24 years	WR
INT. 3	Programme Manager	38 years	WR	INT. 13	Director and Consultant	31 years	SR

INT. 4	Project Consultant	28 years	RPM/ RPL	INT. 14	Director and Consultant	30 years	RPM
INT. 5	Programme Manager	32 years	RPM/ RPL	INT. 15	Chartered Assessor and Programme Manager	25 years	RPM
INT. 6	Senior Executive and Director	32 years	SR	INT. 16	Programme Manager	28 years	SR
INT. 7	Project manager	17 years	RPM/ RPL	INT. 17	Programme Manager	26 years	WR
INT. 8	Chief Executive	34 years	WR/ RPM	INT. 18	Project Consultant	13 years	RPM
INT. 9	Project Consultant	26 years	RPM	INT. 19	Programme Manager and Consultant	40 years	WR/ RPM
INT. 10	Programme Lead	15 years	WR				

Table III: Illustrative Data Extract

Theme One: Project Management Replacement – A Common Correction Action
Sub-Theme: Replacement as a Performance-related Action ***Frequency: 39.35%*** "When there is a decision it tends to be positive because you do not force a replacement on someone that is doing well, you force a replacement on someone not performing well." (INT.7)

"It is mainly around the project manager ability to get their stakeholders and their team members to actually deliver the results that they should do. So it's not about them being able to manage and monitor projects as such, the replacement it's about them not being able to achieve project performance targets because the way they manage and lead people." (INT.2)
Sub-Theme: Triggers for Involuntary Replacement ***Frequency: 18.68%*** "I think that our own leadership lost faith in or were concerned with the pace at which the project was being managed, and they were concerned with the feedback that they were getting from our client." (INT.12) "He thinks he is doing great (the project manager) so I have spent a bit of time explaining to him he's not doing great but he still thinks he's doing great so what I am about to do is just move him off and put him somewhere else because he is causing so much damage but his level of self-awareness is zero. […] His team are [sic] completely stressed because they are all running around chasing their tails and the way I realized that was going on was because the overtime bill had gone through the roof. […] He is not managing his stakeholders to ensure that there is at least some warning about what is required." (INT.6)
Sub-Theme: Replacement as a Strategic Planned Action ***Frequency: 23.83%*** "I think that could be a very positive thing, changing the project manager to suit that audience as the project goes on and obviously, I think the other thing is that there are people who albeit might be good project managers at launching and not so good at executing or completing. So, I think there is that. Organization strategy behind replacement." (INT.9) "In my experience their (project manager) replacement is planned. At the end of the day you know the capabilities of your people and you might have a project leader who is very competent in certain areas or phases of the project and you want to make the best use of those people and their skills. Things start to go wrong when you won't dare to put them strategically into another environment." (INT.15)
Sub-Theme: Context-Dependency of Replacement ***Frequency: 8.37%*** "I think it happens more often (the replacement) on the longer-term projects. Short term projects where I have been involved in 6 months to 12 months or 2 years projects are normally for the

duration. Individuals don't tend to change, sometimes unfortunately at the detriment of the project." (INT.17) "It really depends because if the client doesn't get on with the project manager and has requested it (the replacement), you are doing it to please the client. If it's an internal aspect because you think something is going wrong, you are protecting the company itself, not only in money but also in name." (INT.1)
Other Sub-themes not included in text (n.3) - Frequency: 9.76%

Table IV: Illustrative Data Extract

Theme Two: Replacement as a Message for Change
Sub-Theme: Importance of the Project Manager Role ***Frequency: 37.05%*** "The role of the project manager is critical. Absolutely critical. Project manager sets a tone for the whole project […] his management style sets the culture whether it's an open culture or whether it's a bombastic culture. I think it's very, very important." (INT. 19) "The project manager is the glue that gels all project aspects together. They have the ability to switch between the helicopter view and the depths of details if necessary. They can engage and motivate all stakeholders. Someone who is honest and open, steps in to resolve issues and covers everyone's back. A team player and inspirational leader." (INT.15)
Sub-Theme: Project Manager as the First Imputable Person ***Frequency: 9.67%*** "I think it's a big decision to make (the replacement). I think changing the project manager was a demonstration to their stakeholders that they were getting a grip of the project and had to do something different." (INT.19) "As a supplier you have got to maintain the cash flow and you have got stability, if that wasn't happening on a major project then senior management would get very cranky and ultimately the project manager normally would be the first one to get the bullet." (INT.8)
Sub-Theme: Sourcing the New Project Manager Internally for Transitional Changes ***Frequency: 23.45%***

"If you're taking a person from outside it's much more time consuming, let's be very open to the fact that once a new person comes in, he needs a little bit of a runway to understand the process, you need to do a little bit of hand-holding, you need to give a little bit of room for mistakes and, mostly important, the tolerance level on a project which is intense with stringent timelines is very less." (INT.10) "If you have enough resources internally then that can be the best solution because you can grab them (the project manager) quickly and they probably know something about the organization. […] So yeah, generally you need internal knowledge as well as somebody you can rely on for programme management." (INT.2)
Sub-Theme: Sourcing the New Project Manager Externally for Transformational Changes ***Frequency: 15.41%*** "And let's face it. If you are an employee and you know that in order to succeed in your project you have got to go and change some quite senior people; that could be damaging for your career. As an external consultant I don't care about challenging. I will do whatever I need to do to fix a project. And if that means treading on a few toes then I will do it." (INT.14) "I think where there is a change of culture needed such as if the project manager's been replaced through poor performance, new leadership style is needed to recover the project. So, I think it is entirely appropriate to reset the culture." (INT. 11).
Other Sub-themes not included in text (n.3) - Frequency: 13.70%

Table V: Illustrative Data Extract

Theme Three: Reestablishing Processes and Trust in Governance through Replacement: How the Project Size Matters
Sub-Theme: Organizing Changes through Handover ***Frequency: 38.73%*** "It was done [the handover] in a way where we did not kind get rid of the person at once; we did it in a phased manner so he [the replaced project manager] arrived to cover the project. I was working with him alongside him. Obviously, I needed to understand the background, right?" (INT.10) "Gathering information is critical. Where are you, the status of the project and that's about talking to people, whether it's within the team, the client, the sponsor, the suppliers, whoever they might be

around you; get the information in. […] Being honest, being transparent, this is the situation, this is where we are, this is what we need to reflect and change, move on." (INT.17)

Sub-Theme: Positive Consequences from Replacement

Frequency: 28.86%

"I have replaced or seen them (the project manager) replaced and it has been the right decision. It's not been like an immediate thing and the process requires time and it becomes obvious that the weak points of the programme had to be recovered and you need to do it. […] But it's not something you do lightly because it is disruptive in itself, so the recovery opportunity has to be much bigger than the disruption you're causing by making the change." (INT.2)

"The action of replacing was seen as being positive outcome for everybody. This is because the successor was able to come in and quickly get up to speed and he was able to leverage his ability to manage the client and project management experience to get the project on track and to deliver a successful outcome." (INT. 5)

Sub-Theme: Negative Consequences from Replacement

Frequency: 9.82%

"It delayed progress because we had to stop and explain stuff and rework stuff and talk to boards, talk to vendors, set up extras meetings so it was a bit of a hiatus, yes. […] You are used to communicating with somebody and all that changed." (INT.4)

"Removing as person doesn't happen Monday and then on Tuesday you have got somebody who is going to pick up the project […] So it will have for sure an impact on the timeline. It might have an impact on budget too because the handover process and rework tasks." (INT. 7)

Sub-Theme: Effectiveness of Replacement Based on Project Size

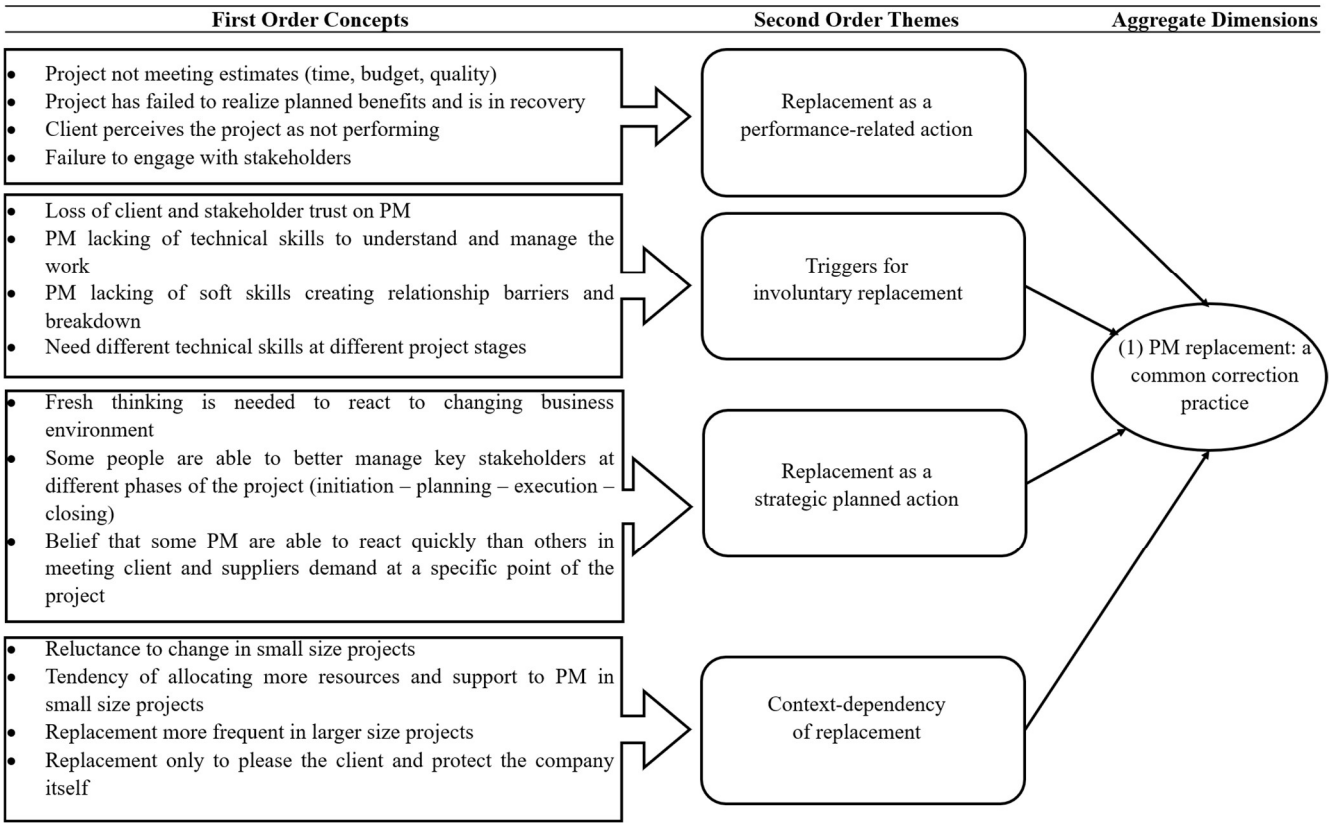
Frequency: 16.14%

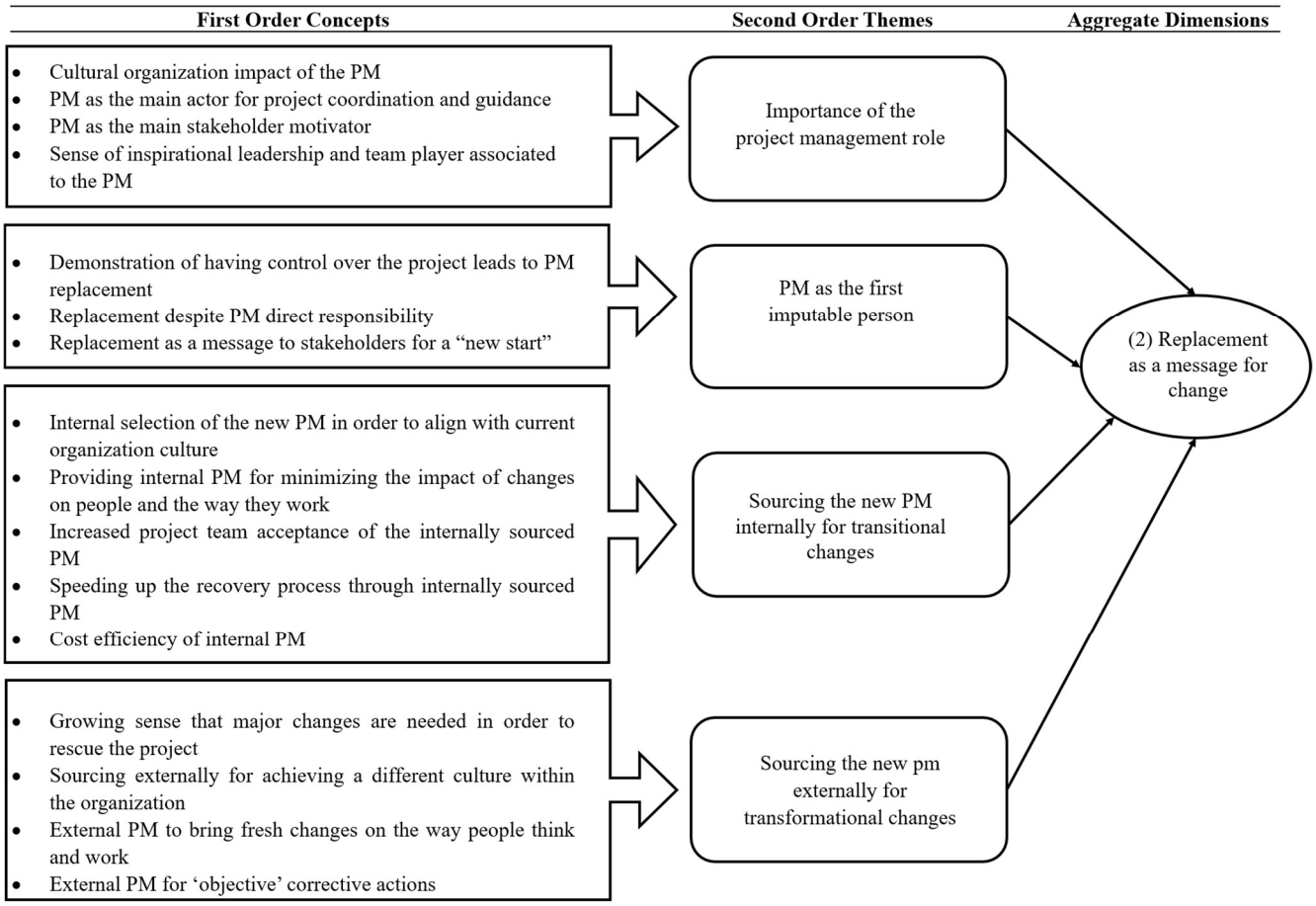
"There is a risk with any replacement, particularly a risk when I had limited choice of successors which is why it took 7 months to move three of them around because there was no one that I could find who was better than what I already had from it. Recruiting a NEW project manager might be a draining process. A risk which short projects are not able to take compared to large scale." programmes. (INT.13)

"It requires time to bring up to speed a new project manager. He needs to understand again about the project, he needs to familiarize with the key stakeholders, he needs to familiarize with the status of

the project. If you have got a 1 or 2 years project, and you come at the end of year one, you don't know what has happened, you don't know the problems, the challenge." (INT.11)
Other Sub-themes not included in text (n.2) - Frequency: 6.83%

Figure 1. Data Structure




First Order Concepts
Second Order Themes
Aggregate Dimensions
Cultural organization impact of the PM
PM as the main actor for project coordination and guidance
PM as the main stakeholder motivator
Sense of inspirational leadership and team player associated to the PM
Importance of the project management role
Demonstration of having control over the project leads to PM replacement
Replacement despite PM direct responsibility
Replacement as a message to stakeholders for a "new start"
PM as the first imputable person
Internal selection of the new PM in order to align with current organization culture
Providing internal PM for minimizing the impact of changes on people and the way they work
Increased project team acceptance of the internally sourced PM
Speeding up the recovery process through internally sourced PM
Cost efficiency of internal PM
Sourcing the new PM internally for transitional changes
Growing sense that major changes are needed in order to rescue the project
Sourcing externally for achieving a different culture within the organization
External PM to bring fresh changes on the way people think and work
External PM for 'objective' corrective actions
Sourcing the new pm externally for transformational changes
(2) Replacement as a message for change

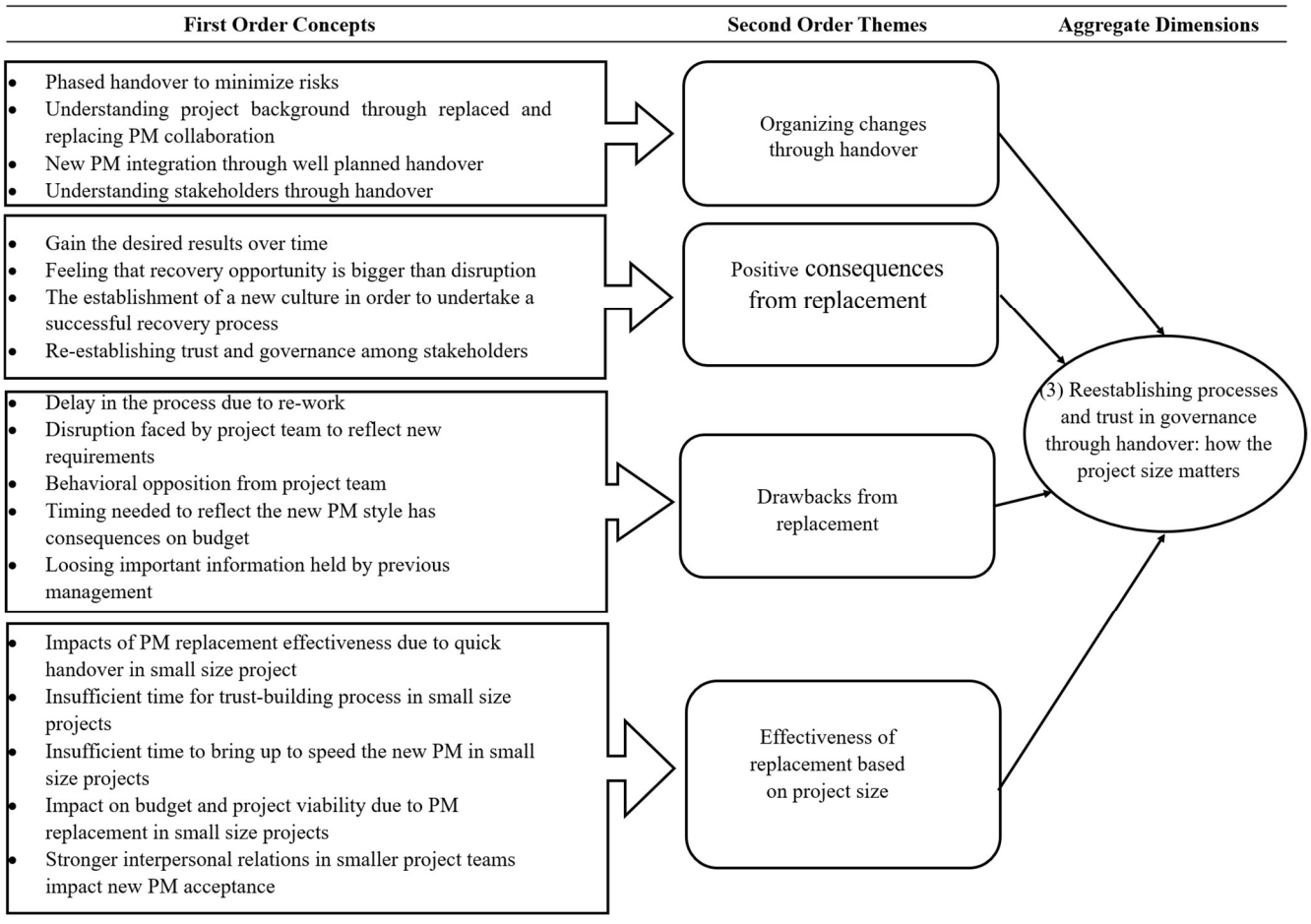

First Order Concepts
Second Order Themes
Aggregate Dimensions
Phased handover to minimize risks
Understanding project background through replaced and replacing PM collaboration
New PM integration through well planned handover
Understanding stakeholders through handover
Organizing changes through handover
Gain the desired results over time
Feeling that recovery opportunity is bigger than disruption
The establishment of a new culture in order to undertake a successful recovery process
Re-establishing trust and governance among stakeholders
Positive consequences from replacement
Delay in the process due to re-work
Disruption faced by project team to reflect new requirements
Behavioral opposition from project team
Timing needed to reflect the new PM style has consequences on budget
Loosing important information held by previous management
Drawbacks from replacement
Impacts of PM replacement effectiveness due to quick handover in small size project
Insufficient time for trust-building process in small size projects
Insufficient time to bring up to speed the new PM in small size projects
Impact on budget and project viability due to PM replacement in small size projects
Stronger interpersonal relations in smaller project teams impact new PM acceptance
Effectiveness of replacement based on project size
(3) Reestablishing processes and trust in governance through handover: how the project size matters

Figure 2 – Project Manager Replacement Process Model