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DOCTORAL THESIS ABSTRACT

**The impact of managerial consultancy upon
the effectiveness of non-reimbursable
European funds acquisition process**

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Chapter 1. State-of-the-art regarding the role of management consultancy in the implementation of projects with European funds

Consulting services have as their main objective the improvement of standards, results and performances both within public institutions and commercial companies. In order to achieve this objective, the analyzed entity is approached from a contextual and holistic perspective, which includes all relevant decision-makers throughout the consulting process. This integrated approach is essential to ensure the development of the organization in an external environment characterized by dynamism and continuous change. Thus, consulting services are not limited to a simple evaluation of current performances, but include a comprehensive analysis that considers all relevant aspects of the entity. This ensures that the recommendations and proposed solutions are well-founded and able to support the sustainable development and continuous improvement of the organization in the context of a constantly changing external environment.

Consulting services are professional services provided by experts (consultants) for clients, with the aim of achieving predetermined objectives. Essentially, these services are based on the transfer of information and know-how, which are intangible resources. This means that beneficiaries face a certain degree of uncertainty and risk when choosing advisory service providers. The difficulty in evaluating the quality of these services is amplified by their intangible nature, which complicates both the selection process of providers and the actual assessment of the quality of the services offered.

The analysis of the specialized literature reveals the fact that there is no universally accepted model that integrates all aspects of quality in the evaluation of consulting services.

Detailed and rigorous evaluation of the three dimensions – structure, process and outcome – is essential for the continuous improvement of consulting services. By identifying strengths and weaknesses in each of these dimensions, consulting organizations can implement improvement strategies that enable them to more effectively meet the needs and expectations of beneficiaries.

Although the assessment of structure and outcomes is relatively straightforward due to their quantifiable nature, the process component presents a

significant challenge due to its variability and complexity. However, by implementing appropriate regulatory frameworks and institutional mechanisms, it is possible to obtain sufficient and relevant data to assess the quality of consulting processes in a more objective and less subjective manner. This comprehensive approach ensures a detailed assessment and allows continuous improvement of the services provided by the consultants.

Understanding and evaluating consulting services for projects with European funds requires a detailed appreciation of all the stages involved. The importance of each dimension—structure, process, and outcome—in assessing service quality is critical to ensuring that services provided conform to specified standards and requirements. The detailed assessment of these dimensions allows the identification of strengths and weaknesses, facilitating the implementation of improvement strategies and effective responsiveness to the needs of the beneficiaries.

The complex process of providing consulting services in the context of EU-funded projects involves multiple stages, each with its own challenges and requirements. Assessing the quality of these services requires a detailed analysis of the structures, processes and outcomes involved. The consultant's role, especially in the implementation and post-implementation phases, is crucial to ensure the success and compliance of projects. An in-depth understanding of these aspects contributes to a correct and complete assessment of consulting services.

This thesis aims to develop a new concept of project management applicable to programs and projects financed by structural and cohesion funds. Interdisciplinary research combines project management and knowledge management practices to ensure efficient management of European funds. The practical analysis focuses on assessing the impact of structural and cohesion programs on organizations and institutions in Romania, including during the post-implementation monitoring period.

The general objective is to carry out a complex study on the management practices applicable to projects with European funding and to identify the elements that can improve the management and efficiency of the use of non-reimbursable funds in the public and private sector in Romania.

The specific objectives are: defining the concept of project management, defining the concept of knowledge management and identifying ways of integrating them into projects with European funding.

Chapter 2. Bibliometric analysis of research trends in the field of project management consulting

Bibliometric analysis enables the development of knowledge in project management consulting by identifying how theories, models and practices have evolved, providing a historical perspective that can inform both current and future research.

The objectives of this bibliometric study carried out in the Web of Science database reflect the mapping of the knowledge structure in the field of project management consulting, including the understanding of major themes, trends and the evolution of research topics over time, respectively the identification of keyword clusters associated with the combination of concepts: consulting services and project management.

By associating the combination of concepts: consulting services and project management, VOSviewer returned 1050 results extracted from Web of Science. Relevant keywords were grouped into 5 clusters (Figure 2.1).

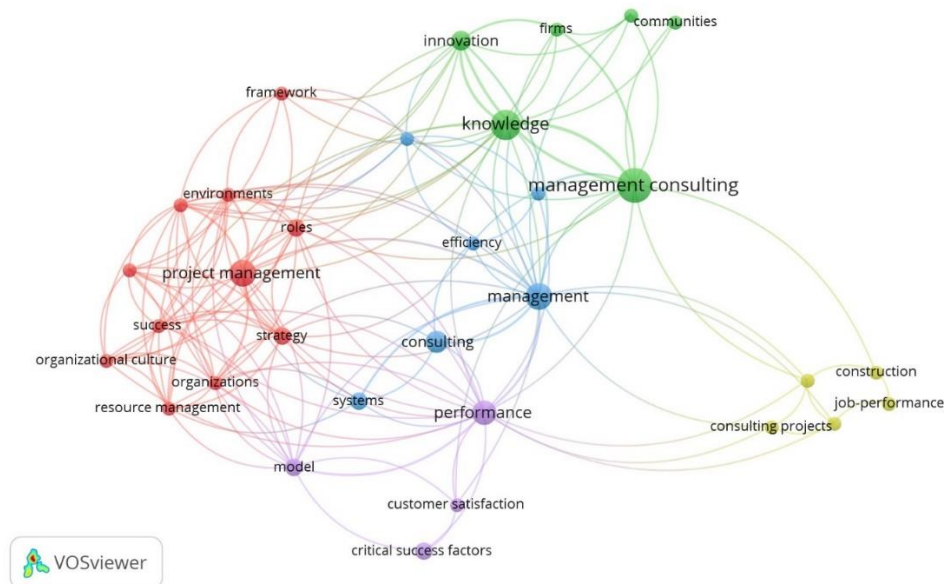


Figure 2.1. Mapping key concept clusters specific to project management consulting

Source: VOSviewer report

A first bibliometric cluster focuses on integrated project management models that recognize the complexities of balancing project execution, strategic alignment, resource management, team dynamics, and cultural factors. Such a cluster

highlights interdisciplinary approaches to project management where these factors intersect.

The second cluster reflects the interconnectedness of five keywords: project management consulting, knowledge, innovation, firms and communities. Project management consulting serves as a vital conduit between knowledge and innovation within firms and communities, fostering an environment in which strategic perspectives and new ideas thrive.

The third cluster interconnects the keywords: project management, personalized consulting, efficiency, services and competitive advantage. Personalized project management consulting significantly increases the efficiency of services, giving companies a competitive advantage by adapting solutions to meet specific organizational needs.

The fourth cluster reflects connections between the following keywords: governance, organizational control, performance of contractual duties, construction. Project management consultancy has an essential role in integrating governance and organizational control to ensure the successful completion of contractual tasks, in all areas of activity, but especially in the sector

The fifth cluster provides a view of the links between the key words: performance, management model, customer satisfaction and critical success factors. Project management consulting significantly improves performance by implementing effective management models that are tailored to align with the critical success factors of specific projects, directly impacting customer satisfaction.

Project management consultants play a critical role in facilitating the implementation of strategic initiatives, providing direction and support to ensure project success and maximize organizational performance. It emphasizes the importance of tailoring consulting practices to the specifics of each project and organization in order to optimize the use of resources and meet the unique needs of clients. The study also mentions the role of technologies such as artificial intelligence and agile management methodologies in improving project management processes and outcomes. It also discusses how project management consulting fosters knowledge sharing and innovation, facilitating change adaptation and continuous improvement in organizations and communities.

Chapter 3. Qualitative study regarding the perception of beneficiaries of consulting services on their experiences with consultants

The qualitative study conducted was based on a sample of 10 respondents with various positions within their organizations, representing both the public and private sectors. For data collection, an interview guide structured around 15 open-ended questions was used, designed to explore different aspects of the use of consultancy services, including arguments for choosing consultancy services, perceptions of the support provided to identify funding opportunities and validation of information provided by consultants. Interviews were analyzed to identify common themes and patterns in participants' responses, using tools such as Wordclouds to visualize keywords extracted from open-ended responses.

The objectives of the qualitative study were multiple and complex, aiming both to deeply understand the perceptions and experiences of respondents and to identify best practices and challenges in using project management consulting services.

The first open-ended question seeks to justify the choice of a consulting service by the beneficiaries and their perception of the support to identify a funding opportunity. Consulting services for identifying financing opportunities are essential for various entities, from public institutions to private businesses, due to their ability to provide specialized support and detailed expertise.

The second open question is aimed at validating the fact that the information provided by the consultant, in order to identify funding sources, was useful and suitable for the organization's needs.

The selection process of management consultants is essential for the successful implementation of investment projects. Analysis of the responses to the third open question highlights several procedures and criteria used in this process, illustrating the importance of various aspects in choosing the right consultants.

The fourth open question focuses on how the respondents appreciate the flexibility shown by the members of the consulting team to some changes in the implementation plan.

Consulting services play a significant role in the process of submitting and validating funding applications and progress reports, ensuring compliance with funder requirements and facilitating project success. The fifth open-ended question gives respondents the opportunity to appreciate and argue the value of consulting services by validating progress reports/reimbursement requests.

The assistance provided by the consulting teams in public procurement procedures is essential to ensure compliance with legislation, minimize risks and optimize costs. The answers to the sixth open question highlight various aspects and benefits of collaborating with specialized consulting firms to facilitate budgeted purchases in projects.

Collaboration with consulting teams has demonstrated a significant impact on investment infrastructure development in various areas, from education and health to IT and waste management. The analysis of the answers to the seventh open question highlights the ways in which the consultants contributed to the success and improvement of the investment projects.

The eighth open question analyzes the activities that led to deficiencies in the implementation of projects with the help of consultants, as well as methods of improvement in future projects.

Effective collaboration with the consulting team and their active listening skills are precursors to project success. Analysis of the responses to the ninth open-ended question highlights the multiple aspects of this collaboration and how active listening skills contribute to the achievement of objectives.

The involvement of the consulting team facilitates the success of the implementation of investment projects, especially in terms of meeting deadlines and ensuring good coordination in all project stages. The analysis of the answers to the tenth open question highlights various aspects of the consultants' involvement and their importance for achieving the projects' objectives.

The eleventh open question aims to identify how the respondents value the assistance provided by the consulting team during the sustainability period of the project.

The efficiency of the collaboration between the teams of consultants and beneficiaries depends to a large extent on the relevance and timeliness of the feedback provided. Analysis of responses to the twelfth open-ended question

highlights various aspects of this collaboration and how consultant feedback impacts project success.

The complementarity of the skills of project team members is a critical factor for successful collaboration and effective project implementation. The analysis of the answers to the thirteenth open question reveals various aspects and arguments that support the importance of this principle in project management.

The level of skills of the consulting team is a determining factor for the success of investment projects. The analysis of the responses to the fourteenth open question highlights various aspects of the consultants' skills and how they contributed to the achievement of the projects' objectives.

A consultant's membership in a professional association, such as AMCOR - the Association of Management Consultants from Romania, or holding an ISO certificate are aspects that can influence the choice of a management consultant. Analysis of the responses to the fifteenth open-ended question provides a diverse perspective on the relevance of these criteria.

The chapter devoted to the analysis of the qualitative study provides valuable insights into the role of consultants in project management, highlighting a series of essential preliminary conclusions. The respondents, coming from a variety of positions and sectors, provided a complex picture of how consulting services are perceived and leveraged in project implementation.

First, the study highlights the importance of consulting services for identifying funding opportunities. Respondents repeatedly highlighted the added value that consultants bring through their expertise and ability to navigate the complexity of funding sources. Professional consulting services not only identify relevant opportunities, but also provide strategic guidance to maximize the chances of project success. This contribution is essential for public and private institutions that often lack the internal resources to manage these complex processes.

Another major conclusion derives from the analysis of the consultant selection process. Respondents emphasized criteria such as portfolio of previous projects, references and specific skills as crucial for choosing consultants. This selective approach reflects the organizations' desire to ensure that their collaborations are based on proven professionalism and expertise.

Consultants' flexibility in the face of changes in projects was also highlighted as a key factor. The ability to quickly adapt to unforeseen changes and deliver workable solutions is critical to maintaining the pace and success of projects. Respondents particularly appreciated consultants who demonstrated proactivity and openness to adjustments, which contributed to the development of a trusting relationship and the achievement of project objectives.

In terms of project sustainability, the study highlighted that the assistance provided by consultants during this period is invaluable. Detailed monitoring and evaluation plans, as well as the organization of trainings for internal teams, were cited as crucial elements for the long-term success of the investments. Respondents noted that these activities not only ensure the continuity of projects, but also develop the internal competences of the organizations, thus contributing to an increased capacity to manage future projects.

Chapter 4. Quantitative study on the analysis of beneficiaries' perceptions on the professionalism and utility of consultancy services

This study highlights the complexity of factors that influence beneficiary perceptions and the success of collaboration with consultants. Professionalism, transparency and specific knowledge are essential to attract and retain beneficiaries, while the success of projects depends on a wide range of skills and abilities.

The objectives of the study are multiple:

- evaluation of the beneficiaries' perception of the consultants' professionalism, through which it is aimed to understand how the beneficiaries perceive the level of professionalism of the consultants they hired;
- determining the usefulness of the consulting services, which analyzes how useful the consulting services were for the beneficiaries, taking into account different levels of satisfaction;
- analysis of consultant selection criteria, which identifies the main factors that beneficiaries take into account when choosing a consultant.
- investigating the influence of professional status on perceptions, which examines whether and how respondents' professional status influences their perception of consultants' membership of professional associations.
- analysis of how the level of knowledge of consultants about funding opportunities affects the success of project implementation and the interest of beneficiaries to collaborate on several projects.

The research was based on the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The perceived level of professionalism of consultants has a positive effect on the usefulness of consulting services delivered to beneficiaries (validated).

Implications for consultants: They will need to invest in their continuing professional development to maintain and improve their level of professionalism, which includes obtaining relevant certifications, attending training courses and gaining practical experience.

Implications for beneficiaries: When selecting consultants, project beneficiaries will pay particular attention to their professionalism, as this is a relevant indicator of the usefulness of consultancy services.

Hypothesis 2: The perceived level of professionalism of the consultants has a positive effect on the elements substantiating their selection decision by the beneficiaries (validated).

Implications for consultants: Consultants have an obligation to demonstrate transparency in working procedures and highlight their specific experience and expertise to attract project beneficiaries.

Implications for beneficiaries: Beneficiaries use the professionalism of consultants as an essential criterion in the selection process, ensuring that they choose consultants who can deliver the expected results within the agreed time frames.

Hypothesis 3: The degree of knowledge of the consultant regarding the funding opportunity has a positive effect on the success of the implementation of projects based on the consultancy, following specific criteria (invalidated).

Implications for consultants: While knowledge of funding opportunities is important, consultants are aware that they also need to focus on other critical aspects, such as project management and problem-solving skills during implementation.

Implications for beneficiaries: Beneficiaries should assess consultants on a wide range of competencies, not just on funding-related knowledge, to ensure the success of the projects they implement.

Hypothesis 4: The professional status of the respondents, as beneficiaries, influences their perception of the consultants' membership of a professional association in the field (validated).

Implications for consultants: Membership in professional associations is less important for beneficiaries with advanced experience and expertise. Consultants should focus on demonstrating their skills and direct experience rather than a value proposition based on membership of various professional associations.

Implications for beneficiaries: Beneficiaries should be aware that membership in professional associations provides certain advantages, but should not be the sole criterion for evaluating consultants.

Hypothesis 5: Consultants' degree of knowledge about funding opportunities is a predictor of beneficiaries' interest in requesting their services in as many projects as possible (validated).

Implications for consultants: Consultants should specialize in knowledge of funding opportunities and effectively communicate this knowledge to beneficiaries to attract more projects.

Implications for beneficiaries: Beneficiaries may value consultants' knowledge of finance as a relevant criterion for future collaborations, leveraging their expertise to maximize access to financial resources.

Hypothesis 6: Consultant selection criteria is a predictor of beneficiaries' interest in requesting their services in as many projects as possible (invalidated).

Implications for consultants: Consultants should be aware that although initial selection criteria are important, long-term relationships with beneficiaries depend on continued performance and satisfaction. This suggests the need to maintain a high standard of service throughout the collaboration.

Implications for beneficiaries: They should continually reassess consultant performance and not rely solely on initial selection criteria when deciding to extend collaboration.

It has been empirically demonstrated that the perceived level of professionalism of consultants has a significant positive effect on the usefulness of consulting services delivered to beneficiaries. This highlights the importance of consultants investing in continuous professional development and maintaining high standards of competence and ethics. Beneficiaries tend to pay particular attention to professionalism when selecting consultants, thus ensuring the quality and efficiency of the services received.

It was also confirmed that the consultants' professionalism positively influences the beneficiaries' selection decision. Transparency in work procedures, extensive experience and specific expertise are essential elements that attract the attention of beneficiaries. Consultants must communicate these issues clearly to increase their chances of being selected for projects.

In contrast, the consultant's degree of knowledge about funding opportunities does not show a significant correlation with the success of project implementation. This result suggests that the success of projects depends on a wider range of skills,

including management skills and the ability to solve problems during implementation. Consultants should focus on developing a diverse set of key competencies to ensure project success.

Consultants' degree of knowledge about funding opportunities is a predictor of beneficiaries' interest in requesting their services for multiple projects. This highlights the importance of consultants specializing in funding and effectively communicating this knowledge to beneficiaries to attract repeat engagements.

Initial selection criteria were not identified as a significant predictor of beneficiaries' interest in requesting the services of consultants for multiple projects. Although initial criteria are important, long-term relationships depend more on continued performance and satisfaction. Consultants must maintain a high standard of service throughout the collaboration to ensure the sustainability of the projects in which they have been involved.

Chapter 5. Study on the exploration of the effects of the involvement of consultant teams on the performance of advised projects: a PLS-SEM approach

This study aims to investigate different aspects of the influence of management consulting on the performance of European funded projects. In this context, the specific objectives are:

- Analysis of the impact of the level of knowledge of the consultant team on the performance of the projects, which aims to determine the extent to which the skills and expertise of the consultants influence the results of the advised projects. The role that technical knowledge and practical experience have in the effective implementation of projects is also investigated.
- Evaluation of the effect of the level of involvement of the consultant team on effective communication with project beneficiaries. Thus, the study examines how the level of engagement and active participation of consultants in projects contributes to better communication and collaboration with beneficiaries. This objective aims to identify ways in which increased involvement of consultants can facilitate the clear and effective transmission of essential information to all stakeholders.
- Investigating the relationship between trust in the quality of advisory services and project performance, exploring how the beneficiaries' perception of the quality of services provided by consultants influences project outcomes. The study examines whether trust in consultants' skills and the added value of their services translates into superior project performance.
- Determining the role of effective communication in the success of advised projects, by evaluating the impact of open and transparent communication between consultants and beneficiaries on the successful implementation and completion of projects. It investigates whether effective communication practices help clarify expectations, resolve problems promptly, and increase beneficiary satisfaction.

In order to analyze the performance within the projects with European funding, facilitated by the consulting services, we took into account relevant latent variables, such as:

- The level of knowledge of the team of consultants;
- The level of involvement of the consultant team;
- Effective communication with project beneficiaries;
- Confidence in the quality of counseling services;

Thus, the impact of the previously mentioned variables on the performance of the advised projects (dependent variable) was analyzed by structural equation modeling, using the partial least squares method (PLS-SEM), since for each previously mentioned variable, with the role of predictor of project performance with European funding, we have identified specific indicators that form, respectively reflect, it.

The developed structural model is highlighted in Figure 5.1, highlighting the relationships between variables through seven hypotheses.

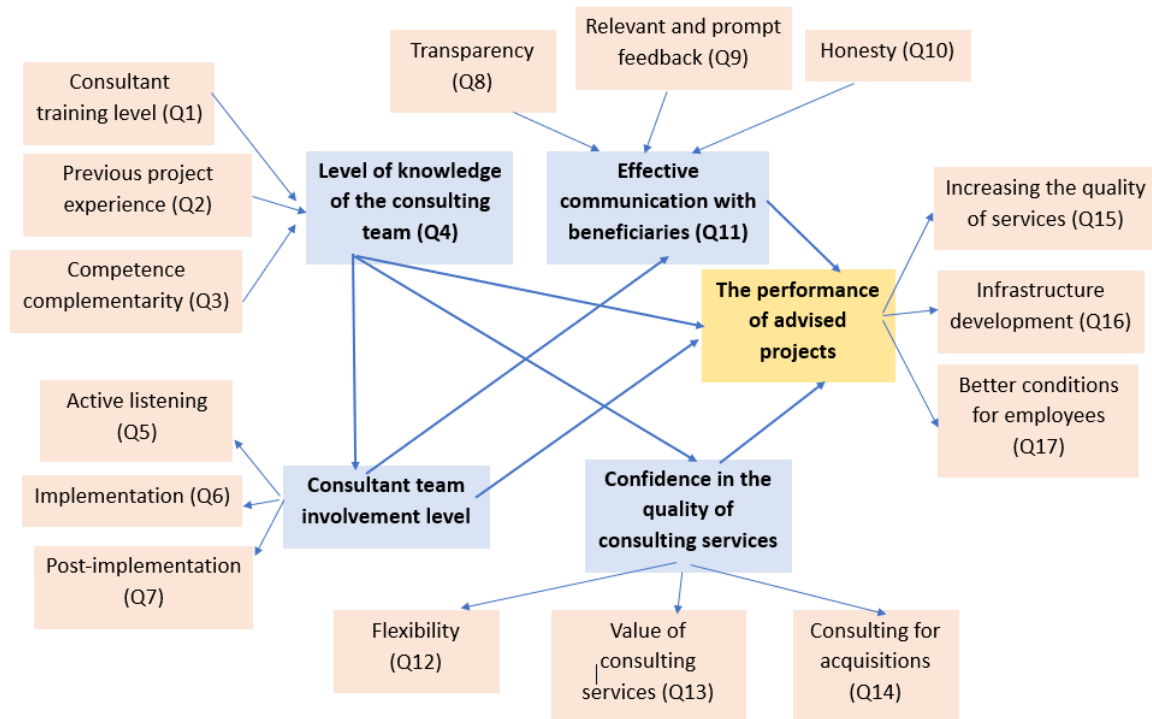


Figure 5.1. The conceptual model of structural equation modeling research

Source: personal contribution

Hypothesis 1. The level of knowledge of the consulting team significantly influences the level of involvement of the consulting team in projects.

Hypothesis 2. The level of knowledge of the consulting team significantly influences the trust in the quality of the consulting services provided.

Hypothesis 3. The level of knowledge of the consulting team significantly influences the performance of the advised projects.

Hypothesis 4. The level of involvement of the consultant team significantly influences effective communication with beneficiaries.

Hypothesis 5. The level of involvement of the consulting team significantly influences the performance of the advised projects.

Hypothesis 6. Effective communication with beneficiaries significantly influences the performance of advised projects.

Hypothesis 7. Confidence in the quality of consulting services significantly influences the performance of advised projects.

Figure 5.2 highlights the relationships between the latent variables included in the research model.

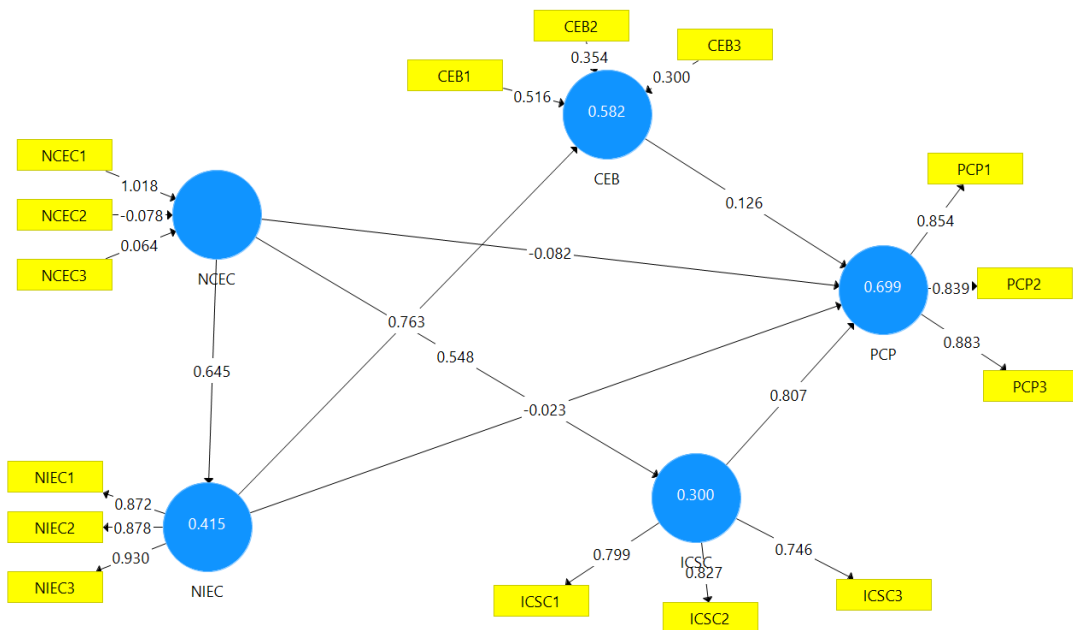


Figure 5.2. Determination of path coefficients, indicators' contributions to reflective latent variables and indicators' weights to formative latent variables

Source: Smart PLS 4 software output

The structural model shows us that ICSC - Confidence in the quality of consulting services has the strongest effect on PCP - Performance of the advised projects included in the research sample (effect coefficient of 0.807) while NCEC -

Knowledge level of the consulting team has the most weak effect on PCP - Performance of advised projects (effect coefficient of -0.082).

Table 5.1. Asymptotic significance p and T-test values for the hypotheses in the structural model

Coeficienți de relație						
Medie, STDEV, Valoarea-T, Val...	Intervale de încredere		Intervale de încredere bias-c...		Eșantioane	Copiați în memorie
	Eșantion original (O)	Media eșantionului (M)	Deviația Standard (...)	Statistica T (O/STDEV)	Valorile-P	
CEB -> PCP	0.126	0.141	0.113	1.121	0.263	
ICSC -> PCP	0.807	0.808	0.100	8.099	0.000	
NCEC -> ICSC	0.548	0.565	0.073	7.470	0.000	
NCEC -> NIEC	0.645	0.649	0.077	8.407	0.000	
NCEC -> PCP	-0.082	-0.084	0.102	0.804	0.422	
NIEC -> CEB	0.763	0.768	0.056	13.546	0.000	
NIEC -> PCP	-0.023	-0.030	0.110	0.205	0.838	

Source: Smart PLS 4 software output

The data reflected in Table 5.1 are useful for validating/rejecting the hypotheses from the analyzed structural model.

Only 4 hypotheses are validated, since the p values do not exceed the maximum significance level allowed of 0.05. In addition, the T-test shows us the magnitude of the correlation between the latent variables in this structural model.

Thus, NIEC - The level of involvement of the consultant team has the strongest impact on CEB - Effective communication with beneficiaries (test T - 13,546) and NIEC - The level of involvement of the consultant team has the lowest impact on PCP - The performance of advised projects (T-test – 0.205).

The results of statistical analyzes with Smart PLS 4 software indicate that the level of knowledge of the consulting team has a significant impact on the level of team involvement (positive effect coefficient). However, the impact on the performance of advised projects is insignificant, suggesting that other variables mediate this relationship.

The study reveals that the involvement of the consultant team positively influences effective communication with beneficiaries (effect coefficient of 0.763). This relationship indicates that an engaged and actively involved consultant team contributes to better communication with project beneficiaries.

Although it is hypothesized that effective communication should improve project performance, preliminary results do not confirm a significant direct relationship between CEB and PCP. This indicates that communication effectiveness is influenced by other factors contextualized in the structural model.

The results indicate a strong and significant correlation between trust in the quality of advisory services and project performance (correlation coefficient of 0.807). The importance of the beneficiaries' trust in the consultants for the success of the advised projects is thus highlighted.

At the same time, the results demonstrate empirically that the active involvement of consultants and the trust of beneficiaries in advisory services are critical factors for the success of projects. However, the direct impact of knowledge and effective communication on project performance requires further research to better understand the mechanisms and mediating relationships involved.

Chapter 6. Conclusions, proposals, implications of the studies, limitations and research direction

The results of the doctoral research integrated in this thesis highlight the importance of an integrated and well-coordinated approach in the use of management consulting for projects financed by European funds. Each chapter makes valuable contributions by identifying critical success factors and providing complementary insights into how consulting increases project performance and sustainability.

The conceptual framework for facilitating project management through consultancy represents an original theoretical contribution in this field of knowledge, being elaborated on the basis of the existing specialized literature and the studies included in this doctoral thesis. The conceptual framework was designed based on nine key components: customer challenges, target customers, consulting value proposition, consulting solutions, consulting delivery channels, success indicators, competitive advantage, revenue generation, operating costs.

The conceptual map of project management through consultancy is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

Customer challenges	The value proposition associated with consulting services	Consulting solutions
Target customers		Consulting service delivery channels
Performance indicators		Competitive advantages
Operational costs		Revenue streams

Figure 6.1. Conceptual framework for facilitating project management through consultancy

Source: personal contribution

The conceptual framework proposed in this chapter of the thesis is adapted to the principles of Self-Determination Theory, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence and relationship in human motivation. The involvement of the consultant team and the trust of the beneficiaries in the advisory services,

highlighted as critical factors for the success of the projects, are analyzed through the lens of this theory in this doctoral thesis.

Transformational Leadership Theory enhances the role of leaders in inspiring and motivating their teams to achieve superior performance. In the conceptual framework of this research, consultants play a role similar to transformational leaders by promoting effective communication, providing constructive feedback, and supporting the implementation of necessary changes. Consultants' ability to adapt to project changes and deliver workable solutions reflects the behaviors of a transformational leader who motivates and guides teams to success.

Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes learning through observation and social interaction, is reflected in the way consultants interact with beneficiaries. By providing training and workshops, this doctoral research shows how consultants facilitate the transfer of knowledge and the development of skills of beneficiaries.

Competence-Based Trust Theory focuses on trust based on the perceived competence of partners. The studies included in this thesis showed that trust in the quality of consulting services is essential for the success of projects, being built by appreciating the skills of the consultants, their flexibility in adapting to the needs of the beneficiaries and the support provided throughout the advised projects. Thus, the ability of consultants to provide high-quality services and maintain trusting relationships with beneficiaries aligns with the principles of this theory.

The qualitative and quantitative studies presented in this thesis offer a series of practical implications for improving the efficiency and success of projects financed by European funds. The implications are relevant for both consultants and organizations receiving these services.

One of the main implications of the thesis is the importance of a rigorous selection of consultants. Organizations should establish clear selection criteria that include the specific competencies, experience and skills required for the project in question. Transparent and fair selection procedures, as well as clear definition of objectives and responsibilities in consultancy contracts, are essential to ensure effective collaboration and overall project success.

Another critical aspect is the development and implementation of a robust knowledge management system in consulting organizations. Such a system should

facilitate the documentation and sharing of relevant information within the organization, thus ensuring that critical knowledge is accessible and usable by all team members; the system that manages knowledge not only improves the performance of current projects, but also contributes to the development of long-term organizational capabilities.

As with any empirical research, we are aware of the limitations of the studies included in this doctoral thesis. The qualitative study presented in Chapter 3 was based on a small sample of only 10 respondents, which limits the generalizability of the results to a wider population. Although the respondents came from both the public and private sectors, their diversity in terms of roles and experience could influence perceptions and, by implication, the results of the study.

In the case of the quantitative study presented in chapter 4, where statistical analyzes were performed with SPSS software, the convenience sample may not be representative of all beneficiaries of consulting services, which may limit the generalizability of the results.

In the study presented in Chapter 5, the PLS-SEM method, although appropriate, could be sensitive to model specifications and small sample size, and the complexity of the model could create difficulties in interpreting the results. The study is limited to the specific context of projects financed by European funds, which may limit the applicability of the results in other contexts.

An important direction of research consists in the development and testing of predictive models that integrate the variables identified in the conceptual model of research based on PLS-SEM. This approach will include the use of advanced predictive analytics techniques such as machine learning to anticipate project outcomes based on various consulting service patterns. To test the generalizability of the results, further research will explore how different cultural and organizational contexts influence the dynamics and effectiveness of project management consulting. Thus, valuable results will be discovered about the adaptability and scalability of the conceptual model proposed in this thesis.

Conducting longitudinal studies that follow projects through multiple implementation phases could provide a deeper understanding of the long-term impact of different consulting strategies on project performance.

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