

An Assessment of Project Management Practices in the Meralco Process & Standards Team: Activities and Challenges Throughout the Project Lifecycle

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed project management practices of the Meralco Process & Standards Team, focusing on awareness, application, challenges across the project lifecycle, and factors relevant to project success. A descriptive mixed-methods design involved 30 purposively selected Business Analysts. Data were collected through a Likert-scale questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and reviews of internal project documents. Quantitative responses were summarized descriptively, while qualitative accounts were thematically examined and triangulated with documents. The instrument demonstrated excellent overall internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .97$). Respondents were highly aware of lifecycle practices (overall mean = 4.50), particularly execution (4.78) and initiation (4.63), whereas practices were often

applied (overall mean = 3.86), with execution highest (4.09) and monitoring and control lowest (3.63). Perceived challenges across ten knowledge areas were neutral overall (2.59), with schedule management receiving the highest challenge mean (3.35). The qualitative findings identified clear objectives, defined scope, communication, leadership, and teamwork as important perceived conditions for project success; document review highlighted effort-intensive documentation, stakeholder alignment, and testing. Findings indicate an awareness-application gap and support standardized work-planning tools, progress reporting, stakeholder coordination, and practical capacity-building. These recommendations respond to the team's identified process needs rather than establishing causal effects on project outcomes.

Keywords: *project management practices; project lifecycle; Meralco; project monitoring and control; stakeholder coordination; mixed-methods assessment*

INTRODUCTION

Effective project management provides a coordinated process for defining objectives, planning resources, carrying out work, monitoring deviations, and formally closing initiatives. The Project Management Institute (2021) describes project management as an integrated set of principles, activities, and decisions that must be tailored to a project's environment. Although familiar process groups remain useful for assessing practice across the project lifecycle, their effectiveness depends on how consistently teams translate knowledge into everyday routines. Evidence from information systems projects likewise associates project management processes with stronger project success evaluations (Varajão et al., 2022).

Electric distribution utilities operate in environments where process changes involve internal departments, frontline operations, information systems, and customers. At Meralco, the Process & Standards Team implements changes and updates to customer-facing and internal processes. The thesis reported that the team did not yet have a formal assessment framework or standardized performance measurement system; its Employee Effort Estimate

template chiefly recorded activities and time requirements rather than systematically evaluating timeliness, efficiency, or overall project success. These limitations motivate a detailed appraisal of practices already understood and activities actually applied.

Project management research emphasizes the value of structured approaches while also recognizing the importance of adaptability. The PMBOK framework can be tailored to different industrial circumstances (Faraji et al., 2022), while hybrid management combines sequential discipline with iterative feedback where conditions change (Reiff & Schlegel, 2022). Studies have examined process consistency in information systems and the value of lifecycle practices in collaborative research and innovation projects (Santos et al., 2024; Varajão et al., 2022). However, these findings do not directly describe day-to-day practice in a Philippine electric utility process-and-standards unit.

The local research gap concerns the extent to which an operations-focused team knows and implements the five lifecycle process groups and perceives challenges across ten project management knowledge areas. Understanding this distinction is important because high awareness of schedules, performance reporting, risk reviews, or closing procedures cannot independently demonstrate consistent use. In addition, examination of work records can reveal where activities require coordination beyond that suggested by survey responses. These questions have practical relevance for team members, managers, and corporate governance functions seeking more coherent project work.

Accordingly, this study assessed the Meralco Process & Standards Team's awareness and application of project management practices during initiation, planning, execution, monitoring and control, and closing; identified challenges across integration, scope, schedule, cost, quality, human resources, stakeholder, communication, risk, and procurement management; explored perceived project-success factors; and developed improvement recommendations. Its contribution is a team-level descriptive assessment that integrates questionnaire responses, participants' accounts, and project documentation without implying experimental or causal testing.

Literature Review

Project Lifecycle Practices and Management Standards

Project management process group's structure work from authorization to delivery and completion. Initiation clarifies purpose and sponsorship; planning establishes scope, resources, schedules, and risk responses; execution coordinates tasks and participants; monitoring and control compare implementation against agreed baselines; and closing documents acceptance and lessons learned. In project settings, these activities overlap rather than functioning as isolated steps, and their organization should suit project characteristics (Project Management Institute, 2021). Varajão et al. (2022) linked stronger performance of defined management processes to success in information systems projects, supporting the importance of evaluating applied activities rather than framework familiarity alone.

Different projects require different combinations of formal controls and adaptability. Reiff and Schlegel (2022) synthesized research on hybrid management and explained how structured and agile practices can be combined, while Faraji et al. (2022) assessed the applicability of newer PMBOK guidance to industry-specific conditions. Such findings suggest that uniform tools need not result in uniform methods: the appropriate balance depends on technical needs, stakeholder requirements, and capacity. For an internal process-improvement team, detailed work plans, change registers, and agreed reporting cadences may offer value without requiring an unnecessarily burdensome methodology.

Lifecycle studies also emphasize that project performance depends on multiple stages being carried out in a coordinated way. Santos et al. (2024), in their cross-sector study of collaborative research, development, and innovation, highlighted differentiated patterns of key project-management practices and the implications for targeted capacity development. This evidence informs the present inquiry into whether the Meralco team's

relatively strong initiation and execution activity coexists with lower consistency in planning, performance monitoring, and project closure.

Knowledge Areas, Monitoring, and Operational Challenges

Project integration, scope, schedule, cost, quality, human resources, stakeholder, communication, risk, and procurement management cut across the lifecycle and jointly influence the work environment. Project integration emphasizes alignment of decisions and activities; scope management clarifies deliverable boundaries; and schedule management translates work into realistic sequences and deadlines (Project Management Institute, 2021). Research on scope definition demonstrates why clearly specified requirements are important for project control (Aljadhari et al., 2025), while project integration research highlights coordination problems when project elements and reporting mechanisms are fragmented (Chepkwony et al., 2023).

Monitoring contributes to understanding whether actual work is consistent with plans and supports timely managerial response. Issifu and Agyapong (2023) examined monitoring-and-evaluation practices in relation to project outcomes, while Titarenko and da Camara (2025) identified recurring schedule challenges involving activity definition, estimation, and schedule control. Project risks require continuing assessment rather than one-time identification; Cerezo-Narváez et al. (2022) associated risk-management knowledge with project success in complex projects. These perspectives help interpret the Meralco team's comparatively high schedule-related challenge scores and lower application scores for monitoring and control.

Perceived challenges may differ considerably among knowledge areas and need not all indicate poor practice. Cost and quality concerns, for instance, require their own evidence and should not automatically be inferred from schedule delays. Khadim et al. (2023) showed how quality-related costs can remain difficult to measure, illustrating why documentation and performance information matter even when formal quality controls are reported as satisfactory. This study therefore assessed each knowledge area separately and interpreted agreement scores according to the thesis's original response scale.

Communication, People, and Stakeholder Alignment

Project execution depends on the clarity and timeliness of information shared among team members, managers, and users of deliverables. Afridi et al. (2023) examined digital communication and project efficiency in relation to ease of use and managerial support. Project integration research also recognizes coordination and communication as central to coherent performance (Chepkwony et al., 2023). For process-and-standards work, stakeholder alignment is especially relevant because a change may require successive reviews, approvals, and operational acceptance from several internal groups.

Stakeholder identification, participation, and continuing engagement help align project work with the needs of those responsible for authorizing and using outputs. Adhi (2023) emphasized stakeholder engagement strategies within sustainable project delivery, and Santos et al. (2024) illustrated the need for project practices adapted to participating organizations. Internal team performance likewise requires clear roles, appropriate skills, and coordination across functional boundaries. Ammirato et al. (2023) reviewed evolving human-resource considerations in technology-intensive work, emphasizing the continued importance of people within digital transformation.

Together, these studies suggest that project management is both a technical and relational practice. Tools such as milestone schedules, approval logs, and performance dashboards should clarify—not replace—communication and responsibility. This perspective is directly relevant to the thesis's qualitative accounts identifying clear objectives, capable leadership, effective communication, and teamwork as perceived success factors. It also helps explain why documentation, stakeholder alignment, and testing may be effort-intensive activities even within a team that rates its formal knowledge highly.

Systems, Contingency, and the Study Framework

The source thesis situated its project-management assessment within General Systems Theory and Contingency Theory. The systems perspective considers initiation, planning, execution, monitoring, closing, and

their associated knowledge areas as interconnected components. In this view, an issue such as a late stakeholder approval may affect scheduling, documentation, testing, and the sequence of subsequent activities. The systems argument provides a rationale for jointly considering project work and associated challenges rather than treating each process as unrelated (Project Management Institute, 2021).

The contingency perspective recognizes that practices must respond to the particular demands of a project and its working environment. This is consistent with research on hybrid and context-sensitive project management, which does not advocate a single method for all projects (Faraji et al., 2022; Reiff & Schlegel, 2022). In the thesis, awareness and application were portrayed as independent variables, challenges across knowledge areas as a moderating variable, and project success as the dependent variable. This is a conceptual proposition and was not established as a statistically tested moderation model by the reported descriptive results.

The conceptual paradigm therefore provides a useful organizing account of the study: what the team knows, what it reports doing, what conditions complicate implementation, and what outcomes its members seek. The present article retains this original model while treating the empirical results as descriptive and qualitative evidence. Figure 1 reproduces the thesis's conceptual paradigm without redrawing the variable relationships.

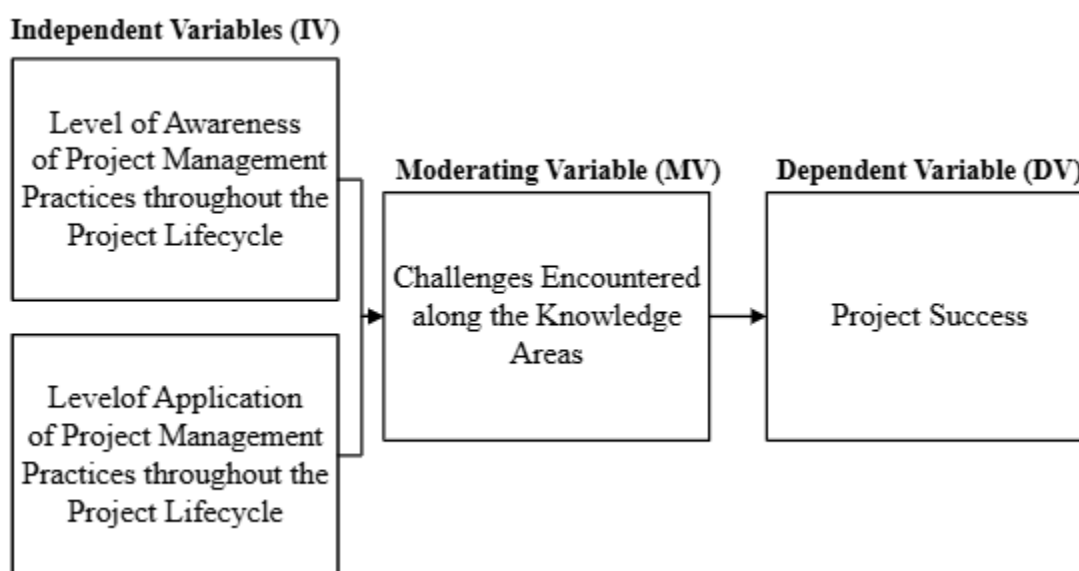


Figure 1. *Conceptual paradigm of the study (retained from the original thesis).*

METHODS

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive mixed-methods design, combining quantitative survey results with qualitative evidence from interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and project documentation. Purposive sampling was used to gather responses from personnel directly engaged in the team's project activities. The design was intended to describe practices and perceived challenges in context; it did not experimentally manipulate project conditions or test a causal path to project success.

Research Locale

The research was conducted in the context of the Meralco Process & Standards Team, which managed updates to internal and customer-facing processes. The researcher worked as a third-party consultant on the

Meralco account through Vertere Global Solutions, Inc. The source thesis did not provide a separate geographic-site specification for the study beyond this organizational setting; none has been introduced in the journal article.

Participants and Sampling Technique

Thirty (30) team members, all holding Business Analyst positions, participated in the study. Respondents were purposively selected because of their direct involvement in team projects and experience with lifecycle activities. This nonprobability sample was suited to the objective of obtaining practice-informed descriptions, but results cannot be assumed to represent personnel outside the assessed team.

Research Instrument

A partially adopted Likert-scale questionnaire measured awareness and application of project-management activities and perceived challenges in ten knowledge areas. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions provided additional accounts of implementation practices, difficulties, and perceived success factors. The survey instrument included 37 reported items in the reliability analysis across five project phases. The source thesis documented permission from the original questionnaire author. Descriptive aggregation followed the rating categories specified in the thesis; the constructs were interpreted as self-reported perceptions rather than objective measures of project success.

Table 1. *Reliability of the project-lifecycle instrument*

Lifecycle phase	Items	Cronbach's α	Thesis interpretation
Initiation	8	0.94	Excellent
Planning	10	0.93	Excellent
Execution	7	0.96	Excellent
Monitoring and Control	7	0.90	Good
Closing	5	0.87	Good
Overall	37	0.97	Excellent

Note. Values reproduced from the thesis's instrument-reliability table; all coefficients were computed using SPSS version 31.

Data Gathering Procedure

Following authorization and informed consent, quantitative information was gathered using the questionnaire. Qualitative information was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and real-time observations. Internal reports, project meeting minutes, activity estimates, and related records were reviewed as secondary documentary evidence. The researcher integrated these data sources to examine agreement and differences between reported practice and project-work documentation.

Data Analysis

Quantitative responses were summarized using descriptive measures, primarily item and aggregate means, organized by the five lifecycle phases and ten knowledge areas. The thesis applied its original interpretation intervals for awareness (e.g., 3.50–4.49, Aware; 4.50–5.00, Highly Aware), application (3.50–4.49, Often Applied; 4.50–5.00, Always Applied), and challenge agreement (2.50–3.49, Neutral; 3.50–4.49, Agree). Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed in SPSS version 31, with alpha treated as an internal-consistency index (Schrepp, 2020). Qualitative accounts were examined thematically and considered alongside documentary evidence to develop an integrated description; the thesis did not report inferential tests linking its conceptual variables to project success.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher sought formal authorization through a request to the Human Resources Business Partner of Vertere Global Solutions, Inc., in connection with the Meralco account. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, consented through an online platform, and were advised that participation was voluntary and withdrawal could occur without penalty. Information was handled confidentially under the Data Privacy Act of

2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) and applicable organizational policies. The original thesis also stated that permission was obtained from the author of the adapted questionnaire. No additional ethics clearance or approval number was claimed in the source manuscript.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Profile

The 30 respondents included 13 men (43.33%) and 17 women (56.67%). Seventeen respondents (56.67%) were Millennials and 13 (43.33%) belonged to Generation Z. Work experience was distributed across 1–3 years (4, 13.33%), 4–6 years (10, 33.33%), 7–10 years (11, 36.67%), and more than 10 years (5, 16.67%). The majority were in supervisory (15, 50.00%) or rank-and-file positions (11, 36.67%), with four (13.33%) in managerial roles. Eleven (36.67%) indicated that the current position was their first employment, while 19 (63.33%) reported prior employment. These characteristics describe the respondents rather than establishing demographic effects on practice.

Awareness and Application Throughout the Project Lifecycle

Awareness of project management practices was rated Highly Aware overall (4.50). Execution recorded the highest aggregate mean (4.78), followed by initiation (4.63). Planning (4.32), monitoring and control (4.34), and closing (4.45) were categorized as Aware. This pattern indicates that respondents recognized execution-related activities such as team communication, status reporting, quality checks, and risk reviews, while awareness of technical planning artifacts and closing formalities was slightly less pronounced.

In contrast, the team rated its application of practices as Often Applied overall (3.86). Execution had the highest mean (4.09), followed by initiation (3.96), planning (3.84), closing (3.79), and monitoring and control (3.63). All five phases remained within the Often-Applied category, but each application mean was lower than the corresponding awareness mean. These differences are descriptive comparisons, not evidence that awareness causes usage or project outcomes. Table 2 consolidates the original values into one journal-style view.

Table 2. *Awareness and application across lifecycle phases*

Project phase	Awareness means	Awareness rating	Application means	Application rating
Initiation	4.63	Highly Aware	3.96	Often Applied
Planning	4.32	Aware	3.84	Often Applied
Execution	4.78	Highly Aware	4.09	Often Applied
Monitoring and Control	4.34	Aware	3.63	Often Applied
Closing	4.45	Aware	3.79	Often Applied
Overall	4.50	Highly Aware	3.86	Often Applied

At initiation, identifying milestones and producing high-level plans were commonly implemented, but development of stakeholder-management tools was less consistent. In planning, the team frequently defined project scope, estimated costs and timelines, assigned teams, identified risks, and sought approvals; work breakdown structures and network diagrams were only sometimes applied. The lower frequency of these technical planning tools suggests an opportunity to formalize task decomposition and dependencies. The issue is important because scope definition and coordinated planning are foundational to control (Aljadhari et al., 2025; Faraji et al., 2022).

Execution results indicated frequent structured team meetings, stakeholder status communication, schedule updating, issue escalation, and quality checks. Nevertheless, monitoring and control was the least consistently implemented phase, particularly for performance reporting. In closing, verification and acceptance testing were strongly practiced, whereas procurement audits and contract close-outs were reported as less

consistently completed. The uneven application of later-stage controls supports the practical relevance of systematic monitoring and documented closure (Issifu & Agyapong, 2023; Varajão et al., 2022).

Challenges Across Project Management Knowledge Areas

The overall challenge-agreement mean was 2.59 (Neutral), meaning respondents did not express consistent agreement that the listed problems characterized their project setting. Schedule management recorded the highest aggregate challenge mean (3.35), followed by scope management (2.84). Integration and risk management each recorded 2.69, while communication management recorded 2.66. By contrast, procurement (2.10), cost (2.12), quality (2.41), stakeholder (2.48), and human-resource management (2.53) were generally perceived as less problematic. Table 3 reproduces the original means and interpretations; labels are retained even where their exact boundary treatment is not explained in the source.

Table 3. *Reported challenges by project management knowledge area*

Knowledge area	Aggregate mean	Original interpretation
Integration	2.69	Neutral
Scope	2.84	Neutral
Schedule	3.35	Neutral
Cost	2.12	Strongly Disagree
Quality	2.41	Strongly Disagree
Human Resource	2.53	Strongly Disagree
Stakeholder	2.48	Strongly Disagree
Communication	2.66	Neutral
Risk	2.69	Neutral
Procurement	2.10	Strongly Disagree
Overall	2.59	Neutral

Item-level accounts add important context to these aggregate results. Respondents reported changes or additions to requirements during later project stages, some schedule delays, and differing perceptions concerning compressed deadlines and inaccurate time estimates. Internal coordination and stakeholder responses were at times delayed or inconsistent. Integration-related items pointed to gaps in evaluation, performance monitoring, and knowledge sharing, even though respondents generally recognized project structure and clear objectives. Schedule-related risks are consistent with the kinds of activity-sequencing and forecasting challenges documented by Titarenko and da Camara (2025).

In other areas, respondents generally disagreed with statements indicating inadequate cost estimation, weak quality controls, and inappropriate procurement methods. Human-resource and stakeholder findings were more nuanced: most basic arrangements appeared adequate, but role clarity, conflict handling, timely approvals, and continuing stakeholder commitment were not uniformly unproblematic. These distinctions caution against describing the team as experiencing equally severe challenges in all ten knowledge areas. Research on integration, risk, and stakeholder participation suggests that seemingly localized coordination issues can still affect multiple lifecycle processes (Adhi, 2023; Cerezo-Narváez et al., 2022; Chepkwony et al., 2023).

Qualitative Findings, Project-Success Factors, and Documentary Evidence

The thesis's integrated qualitative findings identified clear objectives, a defined scope, effective communication, capable leadership, and strong teamwork as important factors perceived to influence project success. Participants' reflections also stressed structured documentation, early stakeholder participation, realistic scheduling, and shared project tools. These findings do not constitute independent estimates of the effects of each factor; instead, they identify practical priorities within participants' experiences. Research on communication and stakeholder collaboration provides related interpretations (Adhi, 2023; Afridi et al., 2023).

Analysis of internal activity records drew attention to Documentation, Stakeholder Alignment, and Testing as activities requiring substantial effort. The original thesis noted that many tasks began on time or ahead

of plan, while dependencies and delays in some activities—particularly documentation—could disrupt subsequent work. Because the thesis did not report a standardized, independently validated overall project-success index for the assessed team, this document analysis is presented as triangulating workflow evidence, not as proof of a measured improvement or decline in project success.

The combination of awareness ratings, application ratings, perceived difficulties, and document review points to an actionable distinction. Team members often recognized appropriate controls and routinely applied a number of them, yet technical planning tools, consistent performance reporting, stakeholder alignment, and final documentation were not institutionalized to the same extent. A lightweight standardized framework can help make responsibilities and dependencies more visible, but successful implementation would also require practical training, communication arrangements, and regular use. Broader studies similarly emphasize tailored management processes and capability development rather than adoption of tools alone (Ammirato et al., 2023; Santos et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

The Meralco Process & Standards Team displayed high self-reported awareness of project management practices and generally frequent application across the five project-lifecycle phases. Execution and initiation were comparatively strong, whereas planning, monitoring and control, and closing showed less consistent use of selected tools and procedures. The descriptive gap between awareness and application was especially apparent in performance reporting, work breakdown structures, network diagrams, and closing formalities. These results characterize team-reported practices and cannot by themselves establish causal relationships with project outcomes.

Challenges across the ten knowledge areas were neutral on average, but schedule management, scope changes, communication, risk handling, stakeholder alignment, and role clarity warranted attention. Participants described clear objectives, defined scope, communication, leadership, and teamwork as important conditions for successful delivery. Documentary evidence further identified documentation, stakeholder alignment, and testing as effort-intensive work. The study contributes a contextualized mixed-methods account of how a Philippine electric-utility process team understands and applies lifecycle practices, providing a basis for more consistent planning, monitoring, documentation, and coordination.

Recommendation

The Meralco Process & Standards Team should introduce a practical, standardized project-management toolkit covering approved scope statements, work breakdown structures, milestone schedules, responsible-person matrices, risk and issue registers, stakeholder approval trackers, performance reports, and formal closeout checklists. Common templates and review schedules would address documented variability without adding unsupported administrative complexity. A shared project dashboard could be piloted to follow agreed measures of deadlines, scope changes, resource requirements, pending approvals, and document status. Any indicators should be defined and evaluated before claims of improved performance are made.

Team leaders should prioritize capacity-building on detailed planning, schedule estimation, progress reporting, stakeholder coordination, and project closure. Regular learning reviews can be used to capture lessons from documentation delays, testing dependencies, and approval bottlenecks. The organization may examine whether selected agile practices can complement its structured procedures where changing requirements warrant flexibility, while digital or AI-enabled tools should be assessed for suitability, governance, data protection, and staff readiness before adoption. Future research should involve additional project teams, objective time-and-cost data, and repeated observations to test whether specific interventions improve measurable outcomes. Such follow-up would extend, rather than presume, the descriptive evidence established by this study.

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