Check for updates

Knowledge and Process Management

WILEY

RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Driving Success: Factors in Public Sector BPM Projects

Nilton Takagi[1] | Antonio Trigo[2] | João Varajão[3]

[1]Institute of Computing, Federal University of Mato Grosso, Brazil | [2]Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), ISTAR, Lisboa, Portugal | [3]ALGORITMI/LASI Center, University of Minho, Guimarães, Portugal

Correspondence: Antonio Trigo (antonio.trigo@iscte-iul.pt)

Received: 26 March 2024 | **Revised:** 5 January 2026 | **Accepted:** 6 February 2026

Keywords: business process management | information systems | project management | project success | public administration | success factors

ABSTRACT

Despite the growing adoption of Business Process Management (BPM) in public administration, little is known about which factors drive BPM project success in countries like Brazil, where bureaucratic processes, heterogeneous legacy systems, and political instability create unique implementation challenges. Existing studies identify generic BPM and Information Technology (IT) success factors, yet no research has systematically examined success factors within public-sector BPM projects, leaving a critical contextual gap. This study addresses it through an action research project conducted at a large Brazilian national public institution. Across a ten-month Government-to-Government initiative, 22 semi-structured interviews were conducted and analyzed at each project cycle, allowing success factors to be identified, followed, updated, and validated by both the project team and the client. Results confirm several factors known in the literature while revealing new factors, including analysis of information systems and legacy mappings, project manager authority and influence, client systemic understanding, and an open-minded environment for change. A comparative analysis shows divergence in how stakeholders value these factors: the implementation team identifies more technical and managerial elements, while the client emphasizes prioritization and internal constraints. The study advances theory by contextualizing BPM success factors for the public sector. It offers practical guidance to strengthen governance, stakeholder engagement, and continuity of BPM initiatives in politically dynamic public organizations.

1 | Introduction

Public institutions are increasingly becoming project-oriented organizations, whether in terms of funding (as more and more public policies are implemented using programs and projects) (Moutinho and Rabechini Junior 2020; Munari and Toschi 2021), or in terms of internal strategy implementation (as is the case of the implementation of process reengineering projects involving people and technology) (Alves et al. 2018; Weerakkody et al. 2021).

Projects in public institutions are generally more complex than those in the private sector because they involve more people, are subject to strict rules and regulations, and, more importantly, depend on the political will to implement them (Beredugo 2021; Khodadad-Saryazdi 2022; Senyo et al. 2021). While in the private sector, top management support is one of the most important success factors (Trigo and Varajão 2020), in the public sector, top management is the Government itself, making the context even more complex.

Business Process Management (BPM) projects in the public sector have unique characteristics, such as emphasis on public service, regulatory compliance, stakeholder engagement, public accountability and transparency, complex organizational structure, long decision-making processes, legacy systems and interoperability, social impact, budgetary constraints, political and policy considerations, among others. This particular context

This is an open access article under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

© 2026 The Author(s). *Knowledge and Process Management* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

requires a study of the associated success factors given the specificities. However, the literature on the success factors of BPM projects is scarce (one exception is Syed et al. 2018).

Countries like Brazil face several challenges in implementing BPM projects within the public sector (Santos et al. 2015). A major obstacle lies in the traditionally slow and bureaucratic nature of public administration. To address this issue, business processes must be systematically reviewed and redesigned to simplify procedures and enhance organizational flexibility. Such reforms often require modifications to existing legislation and internal regulations, thereby significantly increasing the complexity and duration of BPM initiatives. Another critical challenge concerns the political dynamics associated with electoral cycles (Gonçalves et al. 2025). Government transitions frequently disrupt ongoing projects, as changes in leadership and administrative priorities can lead to reduced support for BPM initiatives or even their discontinuation. Understanding the success factors in this scenario is essential to BPM project success.

To fill the research gap, an action research study was conducted in a large Brazilian public-sector organization to identify and characterize the success factors for implementing BPM projects in the public sector. The contributions of this study include the identification of new success factors such as "Administrative, human and technical competence of the project manager," "Develop and maintain (constantly) a clear understanding of the importance of budget, schedule, and achievement of technical objectives," "Develop backup strategies and systems anticipating possible problems (risk management)," "Engagement of client with the project," "Establish an appropriate support structure to ensure problem resolution," "Open-minded client organizational environment for change," "Project team time availability," "Realistic and clear objectives" and "Top management support from the project team."

The paper is organized as follows. The following section summarizes the relevant literature on BPM projects in the public sector. The research design and methodology are described next. Then, the key findings and results are presented and discussed. Finally, we conclude with implications for practice and research, limitations, and highlights for further study.

2 | Theoretical Background

2.1 | BPM Projects

BPM is defined in the BPM CBOK (Benedict et al. 2019) as a set of management practices and principles applied to an organization's processes. Therefore, before examining the technological aspect, it is necessary to consider the organizational dimension. BPM is also seen as a management discipline that seeks to understand the organization's processes and standardize, improve, and optimize them.

The life cycle of BPM proposed by Dumas et al. (2013) is a continuous cycle of steps that is composed of: process identification (the phase in which the relevant processes and organizational responsibilities are identified); process discovery (the phase in which the processes are designed in detail); process analysis (the phase in which the processes are analyzed in search of places of intervention with a view to improving the work); process redesign (the phase in which the processes are redesigned taking into account the improvements identified in the previous phase); process implementation (the phase of transforming the process model into documented, tested and operational procedures and workflows to be applied in practice); process monitoring and controlling (the phase in which it is verified that processes are being executed as they are supposed to be and, if not, produce the necessary changes). All these stages of the BPM life cycle fall into the project execution phase, which includes some additional phases: initiation, planning, monitoring and controlling, and closing, according to the PMBOK (PMI 2017, 2022).

The success of BPM projects depends on the execution of all these stages and on the project's success as perceived by the customer. In all these steps, success factors need to be identified and managed (Varajão et al. 2022) for the BPM project to succeed.

In a study on BPM initiatives in the Brazilian public sector, Santos et al. (2015) found that, despite the increasing number of BPM projects, management practices in public organizations remain at an early stage of maturity. Many public servants are still unfamiliar with the concept of a business process, often confusing it with a legal or administrative procedure. As a result, they tend to lack understanding of the potential benefits and challenges associated with BPM implementation. The study also revealed that public sector employees are often unprepared to use IT tools. Moreover, internal stakeholders frequently underestimate the relevance of new technologies to their daily activities, which can hinder the adoption of innovative solutions and compromise the effectiveness of BPM initiatives. Research by Takagi et al. (2024) examined the management of success factors in BPM projects through a case study in the Brazilian public sector. Identifying these success factors represents a first step toward effectively managing them and ensuring the sustainability of BPM efforts.

2.2 | Success Factors in BPM Projects

Success Factors (SF) are all the elements that contribute to the success of an organization or a project and must be given constant attention by the management team (Rockart 1979).

Project success and its management began to be studied in a more systematized way by the end of the eighties (Ika 2009). Over time, the studies presented new perspectives on project management including: (1) the definition of the Iron Triangle (Atkinson 1999); (2) the difference between the project's success and the success of the project management (Baccarini 1999; de Wit 1988); and (3) the identification of success factors for projects (Pinto and Covin 1989; Sumner 1999).

The study of success in project management, and in particular in IT project management, soon focused on associated success factors, such as those studied by Rockart (1980) and Sumner (1999). Regarding the IT success factors, a recent literature review study by Trigo and Varajão (2020) divides the success factors into four categories (organizational, stakeholders, process, and team) and identifies the following: Top

10991441, 2026, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/kpm.70036 by ISCTE-IUL - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Wiley Online Library on [14/05/2026]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

management support; Organization culture (change management); Clear and realistic project goals; Customer involvement; Customer training; Paying attention to customer needs; Procurement management; Communication and feedback (external stakeholders); Adequate use of resources (resource management); Appropriate use of methodologies and tools; Clear and complete requirements specification; Project complexity (duration, complexity, number of people involved, size); Project monitoring and controlling; Project planning; Quality management; Realistic budgets (cost management); Risk management; Realistic schedules (schedule management); Project changes (scope management); Project manager leadership; Project manager capability (skills, expertise); Team commitment and motivation; Team communication and collaboration; Team composition (right people, multi-disciplinary); and Team experience (skills, expertise, lessons learned).

Table 1 presents the success factors in BPM projects identified in the literature review, along with some IT project management factors considered important for BPM projects. BPM projects in the public sector are, first and foremost, BPM projects. However, since the public sector has many specificities, studying the particularities of the success factors for BPM projects is necessary.

2.3 | Success Factors for BPM Projects in the Public Sector

Syed et al. (2018) present the main differences between the private sector and the public sector that have an impact on the implementation of BPM projects, and of which the following differences stand out: in the private sector the aim is to maximize the return on investment, while in the public sector the aim is to respond to objectives, which are not always clear and difficult to measure; the clients of the BPM project in the private sector are the employees of the companies, while in the public sector they involve various types of people, including groups of citizens served by the project; private sector companies have to answer to regulators, while public sector organizations have to answer to voters, so in the first case risk taking is influenced by shareholders, while in the second case it is influenced by public scrutiny; as far as the economic structure is concerned, the former is strongly dependent on the market while the latter depends on political legitimacy; as far as political sensitivity is concerned, the private sector, although not immune, has less impact while public sector organizations are completely dependent on political cycles; regarding budgets, in the public sector they are dependent on political cycles, which may jeopardize the continuation of the project between cycles, while in the private sector it is simpler as it only depends on top management commitment; regarding culture, in the case of the public sector it is governed by laws and regulations, and the process of decision making is hierarchical and inflexible. This makes institutions resistant to change, with little focus on innovation and risk-taking. In the private sector, which is market-driven, this does not happen, forcing these institutions to quickly change their strategies, making them much more agile and flexible than those in the public sector, and more prone to change.

Considering the particularities of the public sector, Table 2 presents success factors specific to public BPM projects as reported in the current literature. These success factors, together with those identified in Table 1 (generic to BPM projects), constitute the BPM projects' success factors found in the literature review.

Although, as mentioned earlier, some studies identify the success factors of BPM projects in the public sector, more studies are needed to systematize the success factors associated with this type of project. Furthermore, since stakeholders' perspectives significantly influence success (Varajão et al. 2022), it is necessary to understand which success factors different interested parties consider relevant.

3 | Research Method

This work adopts a qualitative action research approach, which is appropriate given the researchers' direct involvement in a real BPM project and the objective of jointly generating practical insights and scientific knowledge. The target population consisted of key stakeholders from the project team and the client organization, selected through purposive sampling due to their direct involvement and expertise. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted iteratively throughout the project cycles. Data analysis involved consolidating the identified success factors, comparing them with the literature, and using them to support project monitoring and learning.

The research environment was a large BPM project in the Brazilian public sector. On both sides of the project (the project team and the client) were different public organizations, defining it as a Government-to-Government (G2G) project (Marvel and Marvel 2008). The research method was based on the action research concepts proposed by Baskerville (1999), as depicted in Figure 1.

The research comprised five stages: diagnosing, action planning, action taking, evaluating, and specifying learning. The project lasted 10 months and involved 10 collaborators, including analysts, researchers, trainees, and the project manager.

The contracting public organization was nationwide, and the BPM project's results impacted thousands of public servants and hundreds of thousands of citizens. The contracted organization was a public institution with expertise in BPM projects. The project was the first undertaken by the two public organizations. As there was no history of working together, one of the top management's concerns (from both sides) was what could impact the project's success. In this context, two research questions emerged.

RQ1. What are the success factors of a BPM project in the public sector?

RQ2. How do the different stakeholders value the success factors identified?

The researchers and the project manager jointly assessed how success factors could be identified. It was then decided that success factors would be evaluated in meetings with project team members and clients, in line with the literature guidelines (Varajão et al. 2022). The project was structured in

10991441, 2026, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/kpm.70036 by ISCTE-IUL - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Wiley Online Library on [14/05/2026]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

TABLE 1 | BPM success factors from the literature.

BPM success factor	References
Adequate use of resources (resource management)	(Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Alleviation of downsizing fears	(Syed et al. 2018)
Appointment of process owners	(Trkman 2010)
Appropriate use of methodologies and tools	(Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Clear and complete requirements specification	(Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Clear and realistic project goals	(Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Communication and feedback (external stakeholders)	(Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Syed et al. 2018; Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Customer empowerment	(Syed et al. 2018; Trkman 2010)
Customer Information and Communication Technology (ICT) awareness	(Syed et al. 2018; Trkman 2010)
Customer involvement	(Syed et al. 2018; Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Customer training	(Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Trigo and Varajão 2020; Trkman 2010)
External environment	(Syed et al. 2018)
ICT infrastructure	(Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Bai and Sarkis, 2013a; Syed et al. 2018; Trkman 2010)
IT-BPM governance	(Syed et al. 2018)
Organizational culture (change management)	(Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Syed et al. 2018; Trigo and Varajão 2020; Trkman 2010)
Paying attention to customer needs	(Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Performance measurement	(Bai and Sarkis, 2013a; Trkman 2010)
Procurement management	(Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Project changes (scope management)	(Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Project complexity (duration, complexity, number of people involved, size)	(Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Project manager capability (skills, expertise)	(Bai and Sarkis, 2013a; Syed et al. 2018; Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Project manager leadership	(Bai and Sarkis, 2013a; Syed et al. 2018; Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Project monitoring and controlling	(Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Project planning	(Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Quality management (continuous improvement)	(Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Trigo and Varajão 2020; Trkman 2010)
Realistic budgets (cost management)	(Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Realistic schedules (schedule management)	(Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Risk management	(Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Stakeholder involvement	(Syed et al. 2018)
Standardization of processes	(Trkman 2010)
Strategic alignment	(Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Bai and Sarkis, 2013a; Syed et al. 2018; Trkman 2010)
Team commitment and motivation	(Bai and Sarkis, 2013a; Syed et al. 2018; Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Team communication and collaboration	(Bai and Sarkis, 2013a; Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Team composition (right people, multi-disciplinary)	(Syed et al. 2018; Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Team experience (skills, expertise, lessons learned)	(Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Syed et al. 2018; Trigo and Varajão 2020)
Top management support	(Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Bai and Sarkis, 2013a; Syed et al. 2018; Trigo and Varajão 2020)

product delivery cycles. It was planned to evaluate success factors at each project cycle (because at each cycle, factors might emerge, others might no longer impact the project, and others might change in importance) (Varajão et al. 2022) (action planning step).

10991441, 2026, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/kpm.70036 by ISCTE-IUL - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Wiley Online Library on [14/05/2026]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

TABLE 2 | Success factors of public sector-specific BPM projects.

BPM success factor	References
Securing political support for the projects	(Beredugo 2021; Khodadad-Saryazdi 2022; Senyo et al. 2021)
Long-term commitment to the project	(Syed et al. 2018)
Citizen empowerment	(Syed et al. 2018)
Compliance with laws & regulations	(Syed et al. 2018)

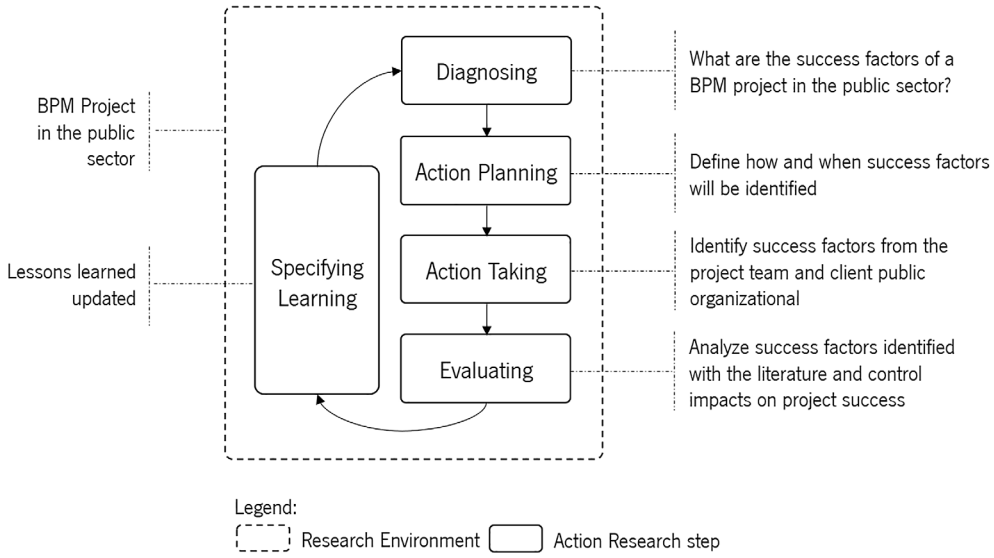


FIGURE 1 | Research method adapted from action research by Baskerville (1999).

TABLE 3 | Demographic data of participants.

Participant	Age	Academic level	Background	Gender
Project manager	45	Bachelor	Management	Female
Analyst 1	37	Bachelor	Computer Science	Female
Analyst 2	34	Master	Accounting	Female
PMO manager	31	Master	Management	Male
Consultant	48	Bachelor	Management	Male

In all delivery cycles, 22 interviews were conducted to identify (and update) the success factors (action-taking step). The interview script is in Appendix A. The interviews were conducted with some members of the execution team (the project manager and two analysts) and with the client (the PMO manager and the consultant assigned to the project). The demographic data of the participants are presented in Table 3. The identified success factors were included in a repository. The identified success factors were then compared with the literature and supported the monitoring and control of factors that could impact the project's success (evaluating step). All learning acquired through the defined research method was included in a repository of lessons learned from the project, which was later shared to support future projects (specifying the learning step).

4 | Results and Discussion

Table 4 shows the success factors identified by the project team and the client organization during the project. This list is based on the data collected during the interviews throughout the project.

The success factor "Ability to prioritize actions and decisions" identified by the client is referenced in the literature as a success factor associated with the project management team, whose absence conditions the conduct of the work and the perception of good project management by the client (Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Trigo and Varajão 2020). Another success factor associated with the project implementation team is the "Administrative, human, and technical competence of the project manager". This factor was cited by both

10991441, 2026, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/kpm.70036 by ISCTE-IUL - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Wiley Online Library on [14/05/2026]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

TABLE 4 | Success factors identified by the project team and client organization.

Success Factors	Identified by		
	Project team	Client	Literature (Tables 1 and 2)
A detailed and realistic schedule	●		●
Ability to prioritize actions and decisions		●	●
Administrative, human, and technical competence of the project manager	●	●	●
Analysis of information systems, value chain, and legacy/previous mappings		●	
Atmosphere that encourages healthy relationships	●		●
Authority, influence, and power appropriate to the project manager	●		
Choosing the right tools	●		●
Client with a systemic view	●		
Commitment/motivation of the project team to the goals	●		●
Definition of the roles of the project team	●		●
Develop and maintain (constantly) a clear understanding of the importance of budget, schedule, and achievement of technical objectives	●	●	●
Develop backup strategies and systems anticipating possible problems (risk management)	●	●	●
Development of a communication channel between the top management (of the client) and the project manager	●		●
Encourage transparency and honesty from the outset for all stakeholders	●		●
Engagement of the client with the project	●	●	●
Establish an appropriate support structure to ensure problem resolution	●	●	●
Good communication between the team project	●		●
Good receptivity of the people who need to collect the requisites	●		●
Good relationship between the team, the manager, and the client of the project	●		●
Good selection of trainees	●		●
High internal customer demands (restricting customer availability to the project)		●	●
Open-minded client organizational environment for change	●	●	
Project manager's commitment to project goals	●		●
Project team time availability	●	●	●
Realistic and clear objectives	●	●	●
Team with expertise in the areas needed for the project (problem-solving capacity)	●		●
Top management support to the project team	●	●	●

analysts at the beginning of the project and the PMO manager in all phases of the project. It is associated with the previously quoted success factor in that a competent project manager can prioritize and make the right decisions. This success factor is also referenced in the literature (Bai and Sarkis, 2013a; Syed et al. 2018; Trigo et al. 2022; Trigo and Varajão 2020), and its confirmation before the realization of the project is, in many cases, a *sine qua non* condition for the client to contract the realization of the project to a particular company. The next success factor, "Analysis of information systems, value chain and legacy/previous mappings," was only identified by the client, and it refers to examining an organization's information

10991441, 2026, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/kpm.70036 by ISCTE-IUL - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Wiley Online Library on [14/05/2026]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

systems, understanding how value is created across its value chain, and reviewing older process or system maps. Together, this reveal how work currently happens, where technology supports or limits operations, and what improvements or modernizations are needed.

Several success factors are associated with the relationships between the stakeholders either at the level of communication or at the level of collaboration, such as "Atmosphere that encourages healthy relationships", "Good communication between the project team", "Good receptivity of the people that need to collect the requisites", "Good relationship between the team, the manager and the client of the project", "Development of a communication channel between the top management (of client) and the project manager", and "Encourage transparency and honesty from the outset for all stakeholders", identified in the literature as one of the most important groups of success factors for project success (Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Bai and Sarkis, 2013b; Syed et al. 2018; Trigo and Varajão 2020).

Another group of common success factors is associated with the project team implementation. It includes success factors such as project manager leadership, project manager capability (skills, expertise), team commitment and motivation, team communication and collaboration, team composition (right people, multidisciplinary), and team experience (skills, expertise, lessons learned) (Trigo and Varajão 2020). In this group, in addition to the success factor associated with communication identified above, the following success factors are considered: "Authority, influence and power appropriate to the project manager"; "Commitment/motivation of the project team to the goals"; "Definition of the roles of the project team"; "Project manager's commitment to project goals"; "Good selection of trainees"; "Project team time availability"; and "Team with expertise in the areas needed for the project (problem solving capacity)." The success factors related to commitment, engagement, and expertise from the project team were a concern highlighted by the project manager.

The success factor "Choosing the right tools" falls under the success factors related to the project management process itself. It is not so much a question of the team but more of how the project is managed. This success factor is not specific to BPM projects in the public sector but is a factor that cuts across all projects. Without the right tools, it will not easy to bring a project to a successful conclusion. Thus, it is important to ensure that project employees use the right tools and, if necessary, train them in new tools, provided the adoption of these tools offsets their cost (Sithambaram et al. 2021; Trigo and Varajão 2020).

In relation to the success factors associated with the project management process itself, we also have the following success factors of Table 3: "Develop and maintain (constantly) a clear understanding of the importance of budget, schedule, and achievement of technical objectives"; "Develop backup strategies and systems anticipating possible problems (risk management)"; "Establish an appropriate support structure to ensure problem resolution"; and "Realistic and clear objectives." These can be included in a group of success factors that are focused on the good management of the project itself, which helps to the success of the project but may not be a sufficient condition, because the client may not like the result achieved, even if from a project management point of view everything went well (Ika 2009; Pankratz and Basten 2018).

Thus, we arrive at the success factors identified in relation to the customer stakeholder, which are: "Client with systemic view"; "Engagement of client with the project"; "High internal customer demands (restricting customer availability to the project)." As mentioned in the previous paragraph, a project can be a success from the management perspective but a failure from the customer's perspective, rendering it a failure. Thus, these success factors are important because they help to always keep in mind who the project recipient is and ensure that, throughout the process, the project recipient remains aware and satisfied with what is being implemented. Otherwise, it will be necessary to rethink what is being developed to meet the customer's expectations.

The "Open-minded client organizational environment for change" is related to the organization where the project is being implemented (identified by the client's PMO manager) and is vital since BPM projects usually bring big changes to organizations and will fail if the collaborators from that organization are not open to change (Abbott et al. 2021; Schmiedel et al. 2020).

Finally, but no less important, or perhaps the most important of all success factors, is the support of the project by top management, which in the case of public sector projects translates into political support for the project. Failing to address this critical success factor condemns the project to failure right from the start. If top management is not committed the project will hardly succeed, whether in private or public organizations (Merhi 2021; Pakpahan et al. 2021).

5 | Theoretical and Practical Implications

5.1 | Success Factors for BPM Projects in the Public Sector

Concerning the first research question (RQ1: *What are the success factors of a BPM project in the public sector?*), our findings show that BPM project success depends on a combination of factors already recognized in the literature and new factors identified through our study.

5.1.1 | Success Factors Already Supported by Existing Literature

Several factors identified in this study reinforce findings widely discussed in BPM, project management, and public-sector management research. First, project management competence, including administrative, human, and technical skills, aligns with prior studies emphasizing the central role of the project manager's capabilities in shaping project outcomes (Ariyachandra and Frolick 2008; Syed et al. 2018). Likewise, team-related factors, such as motivation, expertise, role clarity, and effective communication, confirm the established view that well-coordinated and skilled teams are critical for BPM implementation. The results also validate process- and methodology-related elements noted in the literature, including realistic objectives, adequate tools, risk management, scheduling, and proper support structures

10991441, 2026, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/kpm.70036 by ISCTE-IUL - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Wiley Online Library on [14/05/2026]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

(Ika 2009; Pinto and Covin 1989). Moreover, stakeholder engagement, particularly client engagement and support from top management, reflects a consistent body of work highlighting stakeholder involvement as essential to BPM success (Bai and Sarkis 2013; Syed et al. 2018). Finally, public-sector-specific insights emerge: the importance of top management support mirrors literature stressing the need for political and administrative commitment in government projects (Beredugo 2021; Khodadad-Saryazdi 2022); the high internal customer demands restricting availability reflect public sector constraints noted by Santos et al. (2015); and the emphasis on organizational openness to change aligns with scholarly concerns about bureaucratic rigidity and resistance in public institutions (Schmiedel et al. 2020).

5.1.2 | New Success Factors Revealed by This Study

Beyond confirming well-known factors, the study identifies several new, context-specific success factors that are not sufficiently emphasized in the existing BPM literature. First, the importance of *detailed analysis of information systems, value chains, and legacy mappings* emerges as a novel finding. Although BPM research discusses process understanding, it rarely highlights the technical mapping of fragmented and outdated systems as a determinant of success in public organizations. Second, this study identifies *the project manager's authority, influence, and decision-making power* as a distinct success factor. While previous work acknowledges the project manager's skills, it does not explicitly address the impact of formal authority on BPM outcomes. This factor is particularly significant in hierarchical public-sector environments. Another new factor is the need for a *client with a systemic, cross-organizational understanding*. The existing literature seldom articulates the client's holistic view of processes as a condition for BPM project success, yet this has emerged as critical in complex, siloed institutions. Finally, the study introduces an *open-minded client environment for change* as a specific success factor. Although change management is discussed in the literature, the client organization's mindset and cultural openness are not explicitly treated as measurable determinants of BPM project success. This study shows their substantial influence, especially in bureaucratic contexts with low organizational flexibility.

5.2 | Value of the Success Factors From the Stakeholders' Perspective

With regard to the second research question (RQ2: How do the different stakeholders value the success factors identified?), the study reveals relevant differences in how the implementing project team and the client organization perceive and prioritize success factors. Although both stakeholders emphasize factors related to project execution and good project management practices, as expected given their mutual focus on project delivery, the analysis shows distinct areas of concern and complementary contributions.

5.2.1 | Shared Success Factors

As shown in Table 4, both stakeholders consistently valued several factors central to effective project execution, including: the administrative, human, and technical competence of the project manager; maintenance of a clear understanding of budget, schedule, and technical objectives; risk management; client engagement; a functional support structure; organizational openness to change; project team time availability; realistic objectives; and top management support. These overlaps reflect a shared orientation toward disciplined execution, responsiveness, and alignment elements strongly emphasized in the BPM and project management literature.

5.2.2 | Stakeholder-Specific Success Factors

Despite these commonalities, notable differences emerged. The project team identified a broader set of success factors (25 vs. 12), a result likely influenced by their prior experience with multiple BPM implementations and deeper technical and methodological exposure. The project team emphasized interpersonal and operational aspects, such as maintaining a strong relationship with the client and ensuring clear communication. These concerns point to their responsibility for coordination, solution delivery, and maintaining project momentum. Conversely, the client brought forward new success factors not identified a priori by the project team, including the need for a systemic organizational perspective, prioritization of actions and decisions, and alignment with broader institutional goals. These reflect the client's concerns with internal dependencies, resource limitations, and the broader organizational impact of the project. The identification of such new factors expands the current BPM success factor framework and highlights the importance of incorporating client-side strategic and organizational insights during project planning.

5.2.3 | Gaps in Social and Organizational Factors

Both stakeholders primarily focused on execution-related factors. Less emphasis was placed on social and organizational dimensions that also condition project success, such as political support, internal IT capability, and employee concerns about downsizing factors recognized in Tables 1 and 2. Their relative absence in stakeholder discussions suggests a tendency to prioritize immediate project tasks over broader contextual risks, which may hinder long-term BPM sustainability.

5.3 | Implications and Recommendations

The implications of the findings suggest several recommendations for both the project teams and the client organizations to enhance BPM project success, particularly in the public sector.

For the project team, it is essential to incorporate client-derived factors, such as a systemic understanding of the organization and its capacity to prioritize initiatives, into the early stages of project diagnosis and planning. It requires moving beyond a narrow focus on technical execution to explicitly consider the political, institutional, and organizational conditions that shape project trajectories in public-sector contexts. Moreover, effective relationship management should be strengthened through proactive communication, continuous alignment of objectives, and careful management of mutual expectations, thereby

10991441, 2026, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/kpm.70036 by ISCTE-IUL - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Wiley Online Library on [14/05/2026]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

reducing the risk of misunderstandings and resistance during implementation.

From the client organization's perspective, the results emphasize the importance of internal readiness as a prerequisite for successful project outcomes. It includes ensuring adequate resource allocation, sufficient IT capabilities, and the sustained availability of key personnel throughout the project lifecycle. Adopting a systemic organizational perspective is equally important, as it enables anticipation of cross-departmental impacts and supports more informed and coherent decision-making. In addition, sustained engagement and openness to change are required, with organizational leadership playing a central role in providing consistent sponsorship and addressing fears associated with restructuring and process change. Strategic prioritization of decisions and actions is also necessary to prevent delays arising from bureaucratic constraints and to maintain project momentum.

Overall, the observed differences in perspective between the project team and the client organization reflect their distinct roles, responsibilities, and underlying concerns. The project team's broader identification of success factors can be attributed to accumulated implementation experience, while the client's emphasis on newly introduced factors underscores the importance of contextual and organizational conditions. Taken together, these complementary perspectives offer a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of BPM project success in the public sector and highlight the need to integrate both operational and strategic considerations throughout the entire project lifecycle.

6 | Conclusion

This paper contributes to the body of knowledge of success factors in BPM project management in the public sector by presenting a new list of success factors (see Table 4), which is important for both academia and industry. The identified success factors underscore the need for a holistic BPM approach. By considering and balancing technical and human elements, projects can be guided toward proficient execution, client satisfaction, cohesive team dynamics, organizational flexibility, and unwavering top-level backing.

The main limitation of this work, and an opportunity for future research, is that it was conducted within a single, albeit large, Brazilian public organization. In this sense, it is recommended that replication studies be performed in other organizations.

Acknowledgments

This work was (partially) supported by ISTAR Projects UIDB/04466/2025 and UIDP/04466/2025 and by FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia within the R&D Unit Project Scope UID/00319/2025 - Centro ALGORITMI (ALGORITMI/UM) https://doi.org/10.54499/UID/00319/2025. Open access publication funding provided by FCT (b-on).

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

References

Abbott, C., W. Bandara, E. French, M. Tate, and P. Mathiesen. 2021. *A Stakeholder Engagement Model for Process Improvement Initiatives*, 455–472. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-85469-0_28.

Alves, C., G. Valença, and G. Fraga. 2018. "Integrating Requirements and Business Process Models in BPM Projects." In *2018 44th Euromicro Conference on Software Engineering and Advanced Applications (SEAA)*, 273–280. IGI Global.

Ariyachandra, T. R., and M. N. Frolick. 2008. "Critical Success Factors in Business Performance Management—Striving for Success." *Information Systems Management* 25, no. 2: 113–120. https://doi.org/10.1080/10580530801941504.

Atkinson, R. 1999. "Project Management: Cost, Time and Quality, Two Best Guesses and a Phenomenon, Its Time to Accept Other Success Criteria." *International Journal of Project Management* 17, no. 6: 337–342. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0263-7863(98)00069-6.

Baccarini, D. 1999. "The Logical Framework Method for Defining Project Success." *Project Management Journal* 30, no. 4: 25–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/875697289903000405.

Bai, C., and J. Sarkis. 2013. "A Grey-Based DEMATEL Model for Evaluating Business Process Management Critical Success Factors." *International Journal of Production Economics* 146, no. 1: 281–292. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2013.07.011.

Baskerville, R. L. 1999. "Investigating Information Systems With Action Research." *Communications of the Association for Information Systems* 2, no. 1: 19.

Benedict, T., M. Kirchmer, M. Scarsig, et al. 2019. *Guide to the Business Process Management Body of Knowledge (BPM CBOK)*. 4th ed. ABPMP.

Beredugo, S. B. 2021. "International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) Implementation and Financial Reporting: Issues and Challenges in South-East Nigeria." *Journal of Accounting and Taxation* 1, no. 1: 1–11.

de Wit, A. 1988. "Measurement of Project Success." *International Journal of Project Management* 6, no. 3: 164–170. https://doi.org/10.1016/0263-7863(88)90043-9.

Dumas, M., M. La Rosa, J. Mendling, and H. A. Reijers. 2013. *Fundamentals of Business Process Management*. Springer Berlin Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-33143-5.

Gonçalves, A., J. Varajão, P. Oliveira, and I. Moura. 2025. "Success Factors for Public Sector Information Systems Projects." *Digital Government: Research and Practice* 6, no. 4: 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1145/3761819.

Ika, L. A. 2009. "Project Success as a Topic in Project Management Journals." *Project Management Journal* 40, no. 4: 6–19. https://doi.org/10.1002/pmj.20137.

Khodadad-Saryazdi, A. 2022. "Process Innovation in Public Sector. Global."

Marvel, M. K., and H. P. Marvel. 2008. "Government-To-Government Contracting: Stewardship, Agency, and Substitution." *International Public Management Journal* 11, no. 2: 171–192. https://doi.org/10.1080/10967490802095870.

Merhi, M. I. 2021. "Evaluating the Critical Success Factors of Data Intelligence Implementation in the Public Sector Using Analytical Hierarchy Process." *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 173: 121180. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2021.121180.

Moutinho, J. d. A., and R. Rabechini Junior. 2020. "Project Management in the Public Context: Research Field Mapping." *Revista de Administração Pública* 54: 1260–1285.

Munari, F., and L. Toschi. 2021. "The Impact of Public Funding on Science Valorisation: An Analysis of the ERC Proof-Of-Concept Programme." *Research Policy* 50, no. 6: 104211.

10991441, 2026, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/kpm.70036 by ISCTE-IUL - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Wiley Online Library on [14/05/2026]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License

Pakpahan, J., R. A. Eryadi, A. Budiman, N. Sunandar, L. M. Syahid, and M. R. Shihab. 2021. "Critical Success Factors of IT Outsourcing in Indonesian Public Sectors: A Case Study at Employment Social Security Agency." In *2021 4th International Conference on Information and Communications Technology (ICOIACT)*, 47–52. Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Inc. https://doi.org/10.1109/ICOIACT53268.2021.9563920.

Pankratz, O., and D. Basten. 2018. "Opening the Black Box: Managers' Perceptions of IS Project Success Mechanisms." *Information and Management* 55, no. 3: 381–395. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2017.09.005.

Pinto, J. K., and J. G. Covin. 1989. "Critical Factors in Project Implementation: A Comparison of Construction and R&D Projects." *Technovation* 9, no. 1: 49–62. https://doi.org/10.1016/0166-4972(89)90040-0.

PMI. 2017. *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBoK Guide)*. 6th ed. Project Management Institute.

PMI. 2022. *Process Groups: A Practical Guide*. Project Management Institute.

Rockart, J. F. 1979. "Chief Executives Define Their Own Data Needs." *Harvard Business Review* 57, no. 2: 81–93.

Rockart, J. F. 1980. "The Changing Role of the Information Systems Executive: A Critical Success Factors Perspective."

Santos, H., G. Valença, and C. Alves. 2015. "Strategies for Managing Critical Success Factors of BPM Initiatives in Brazilian Public Organizations: A Qualitative Empirical Study." *iSys - Brazilian Journal of Information Systems* 8, no. 1: 42–64. https://doi.org/10.5753/isys.2015.279.

Schmiedel, T., J. Recker, and J. vom Brocke. 2020. "The Relation Between BPM Culture, BPM Methods, and Process Performance: Evidence From Quantitative Field Studies." *Information & Management* 57, no. 2: 103175. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.im.2019.103175.

Senyo, P. K., J. Effah, and E. L. C. Osabutey. 2021. "Digital Platformisation as Public Sector Transformation Strategy: A Case of Ghana's Paperless Port." *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 162: 120387.

Sithambaram, J., M. H. N. B. M. Nasir, and R. Ahmad. 2021. "Issues and Challenges Impacting the Successful Management of Agile-Hybrid Projects: A Grounded Theory Approach." *International Journal of Project Management* 39, no. 5: 474–495. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2021.03.002.

Sumner, M. 1999. "Critical Success Factors in Enterprise Wide Information Management Systems Projects." *Proceedings of the 1999 ACM SIGCPR Conference on Computer Personnel Research*: 297–303. https://doi.org/10.1145/299513.299722.

Syed, R., W. Bandara, E. French, and G. Stewart. 2018. "Getting It Right! Critical Success Factors of BPM in the Public Sector: A Systematic Literature Review." *Australasian Journal of Information Systems* 22: 1–39. https://doi.org/10.3127/ajis.v22i0.1265.

Takagi, N., J. Varajão, T. Ventura, D. Ubialli, and T. Silva. 2024. "Managing Success Criteria and Success Factors in a BPM Project: An Approach Using PRINCE2 and Success Management on the Public Sector." *Cogent Business & Management* 11, no. 1: 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2336273.

Trigo, A., and J. Varajão. 2020. "IT Project Management Critical Success Factors." In *Computational Science and Its Applications – ICCSA 2020 20th International Conference*, 1–11. Proceedings, Part VI. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-58817-5_51.

Trigo, A., J. Varajão, and L. Sousa. 2022. "DevOps Adoption: Insights From a Large European Telco." *Cogent Engineering* 9, no. 1: 1–31. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311916.2022.2083474.

Trkman, P. 2010. "The Critical Success Factors of Business Process Management." *International Journal of Information Management* 30, no. 2: 125–134. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2009.07.003.

Varajão, J., L. Magalhães, L. Freitas, and P. Rocha. 2022. "Success Management – From Theory to Practice." *International Journal of Project Management* 40, no. 5: 481–498. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijproman.2022.04.002.

Weerakkody, V., M. Janssen, and R. El-Haddadeh. 2021. "The Resurgence of Business Process Reengineering in Public Sector Transformation Efforts: Exploring the Systemic Challenges and Unintended Consequences." *Information Systems and e-Business Management* 19, no. 3: 993–1014.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Step 1. Based on the provided list of success factors derived from the literature, please select those deemed relevant for management within the project context.

Step 2. Identify and incorporate any additional success factors not included in the list.

Step 3. Perform a pairwise comparison of the selected success factors. The evaluation should be conducted using the following comparison scale: 1—Much less important | 3—Less important | 5—Equally important | 7—More important | 9—Much more important.

Step 4. Examine the consistency and plausibility of the resulting prioritization, ensuring that the most critical success factors are appropriately emphasized.

10991441, 2026, 2, Downloaded from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/kpm.70036 by ISCTE-IUL - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Wiley Online Library on [14/05/2026]. See the Terms and Conditions (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/terms-and-conditions) on Wiley Online Library for rules of use; OA articles are governed by the applicable Creative Commons License