UTM UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA
RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

International Journal
of
Innovative Computing

Journal Homepage: http://se.cs.utm.my/ijic

The Need for Software Project Monitoring Methodology: An Exploratory Survey at Malaysian Public Sector

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***Abstract*— Information Communication Technology (ICT) is one of the enabler for the Malaysian transformation programs. Malaysian Public Sector has formed many ICT strategies that in line with Malaysian transformation programs. Under the enrichment of ICT, many software projects are planned and developed for the Malaysian Public Sector. Successful implementations of software projects are addressed as one of the important foundations that support Malaysian transformation programs especially at the Public Sector of Malaysia. Thus, it is important to make sure that these ICT projects are successfully executed. Therefore, monitoring and controlling software projects are the basic disciplines to ensure the success of any software projects. The aim of this paper is to investigate the need of software project monitoring methodology for Malaysian Public Sector. In this paper, we deliver insights from the practitioner's perspectives on software projects monitoring at the Malaysian Public Sector through an exploratory survey. The survey findings indicated that there is a need for software projects monitoring methodology at Malaysian Public Sector. This paper also identifies 10 important factors that contributing to successful software projects at Malaysian Public Sector.**

Keywords - Component; software project monitoring; software projects successful and failure, critical success factors, public sector.

I. INTRODUCTION

Software projects monitoring is a process of monitoring projects budgets, projects schedule, amount of work, quality of work and operates efficiently according to what users request [1]. Successful software projects are usually defined as a project that delivers a product which meets the original requirements. A software projects development can be categorized into failures from a various perspective such as inability to meet the user requirements, exceeding time, overrun the budget and delivered software projects development are not in use or abandoned [2]. For example, in Netherlands, the National Accountability Office has analysed large software projects development and concluded that most of the software projects development are failed in one or more aspects [2].

In the context of Malaysia, various ministries and department at public sector are moving towards to electronic government by delivering public services via electronic channels. Malaysia public sector is targeting to make all the civil services to be electronically available by the year 2015. For example, almost 50% of online transaction was taken place for government services in the year of 2012 [3]. Malaysian government is expecting almost 90% of online transactions by the year of 2015 [3]. Therefore, many of software projects are planned, developed and implemented at the Malaysian Public Sector. These software projects are being developed by in-housing, outsourcing and co-sourcing. The developed software projects cater those services that are provided by the Malaysian Public Sector into a web based application. In the other hand, many of these software projects facing failures and government losses billions because of these failure projects.

To date, few studies are being carried out to addressing the causes of software projects failure at Malaysian Public Sector. One of the studies is [13], who had addressed list of failure factors that donated to ICT project failures at Malaysian Public Sector agencies. This paper used all the identified failure factors from above mentioned study in order to capture

the needs for having software project monitoring methodology at Malaysian Public Sector. To achieve this objective, this paper collects the perceptions of government ICT officers who are developing, managing and monitoring software projects from various government departments and ministries on software project monitoring. This paper recommends a monitoring methodology, which could reduce the rate of software projects failures at Malaysian Public Sector. Besides, this proposed methodology also adds significant of knowledge to the software projects development and management domain such as Project Monitoring and Control (PMC), Process Areas in Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI).

This paper is organized as follows. Theoretical background is explored in section II followed by the methodology in the section III. Section IV is discussing about the background of respondents. The survey findings are discussed in the section V. Section VI is discussing about the research contribution. Section VII on implication and Section VIII on research limitation. Lastly, conclusion is discussed in the section IX.

II. Theoretical Backgound

Tremendous demands for the software projects in many industries such as manufacturing, construction and services increase many efforts of having monitoring and controlling processes in the software projects development. This is to ensure that a particular software projects completed according to scope, time, cost and quality [4, 5]. Consequently, not only the project manager, but the others such as the top management, software developer and stakeholders are in distress when a software project is failed. Recently, many software projects are delayed in delivery, overrun cost, insufficient quality, do not meet user requirements and less customer satisfaction [5].

In addition to this, many software projects are getting in crucial conditions towards to failures [6] and losses in the billions [7]. For example, based on CHAOS report, software projects failure rates on the year of 2012 is almost 24% compared to the year of 2010, which is 21%. Whereas software projects in challenged rates are 44% in the year of 2012 compare to 42% in the year of 2010 [8]. And the global expenditure for software projects raised almost $3.6 trillion [7]. Thus, monitoring and controlling throughout the development of software projects is more important to avoid the failure of software projects [9] [10]. Furthermore the purpose of monitoring is to ensure the software project is progressing according to schedule, budget and quality expectation [18].

Thus, the development of software projects should be monitored continuously in order to achieve its objectives. Therefore, monitoring and controlling the development of software projects can be considered a very important process because it helps to identify those deviations that might affect the software projects in advance [13]. Project monitoring and controlling is a continuous progress assessment which must be done for an effective project management [14]. Additionally, constant monitoring and controlling of software projects development will lead to the successful development [15].

In the context of public sector, Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU) had mentioned in one of the publication that lack of monitoring and controlling on software project causes some of unsuccessful projects in the Malaysian Public Sector departments [11]. MAMPU was conducted a survey in 2010 on software projects development at Malaysian public sector. The finding of this survey is that some of outsource and in-house software projects are in the challenged and failure stage in the year of 2010 [11]. In fact, some of the software projects developments are failed in the beginning stage of the development itself. For example, the Health Ministry of Malaysia has ended its contract with the company conducting the Pharmacy Enforcement Management System (PEMS) and Pharmacy Management System (PMS) projects for failing to develop both systems. Almost RM2.59 million in expenses was not considered value for money to the government [12].

Another study that related to Malaysian Public Sector was conducted by [13]. This study analyses the gaps on ICT failure factors between the findings from the field and compared with the findings from the literature. This study had identified many ICT failure factors through interview sessions among the senior officers from Malaysian Public Sector agencies. However, this finding is not extensively researched in order to have software project monitoring methodology at Malaysian Public Sector. Moreover, only six respondents are involved in this study, the senior officers who managing and monitoring the software projects at Malaysian Public Sector agencies. Therefore, the findings from this study could explore further with in line our research.

Table I illustrates the details of software projects status that developed by in-house at Malaysian Public Sector in the year of 2010. Whereas Table II illustrates the detail of software projects status that developed by outsourcing at Malaysian Public Sector in the year of 2010. Based on these two tables, it is learned that there are some software projects are in the challenged and failure stage in the year 2010 at Malaysian Public Sector. For example, for the in-house software project development, only 18 software projects are in successful category whereas a total of 13 software projects are in the challenged and failure status in the year of 2010 in various ministries levels at Malaysian Public Sector. Whereas for outsourced software projects development, only 17 software projects are in successful and a total of 15 software projects are in the challenged and failure status in the year of 2010 in various ministries levels at Malaysian Public Sector. The software projects failure is occurs not only in the ministries level but also some of agencies under ministries, states and local municipals.

This result shows that both in-house and outsources software projects developments are in the failure status. As summary, monitoring and controlling is an important element that needed in a software projects development. Without monitoring and controlling the software projects development could be a failure projects. Software projects are needed to be monitor frequently in order to have a successful software project. Keeping a schedule on track, ensuring that designs goals and specifications are being met are the important

factors that need to monitor frequently in order to have a successful software projects [13].

TABLE I. IN-HOUSE SOFTWARE PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT AT MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

Benchmark\ Departments	Ministry	Agency Under Ministry	States	Local Municipal
Succeeded (%)	18	30	7	17
Challenged (%)	**8**	**10**	**5**	**4**
Failed (%)	**5**	**3**	**3**	**4**

TABLE II. OUTSOURCE SOFTWARE PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT AT MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

Benchmark \ Departments	Ministry	Agency Under Ministry	States	Local Municipal
Succeeded (%)	17	36	6	28
Challenged (%)	**13**	**22**	**6**	**19**
Failed (%)	**2**	**6**	**2**	**4**

III. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology being used in this research was a quantitative method. The objective of this research is to investigate the current practices on monitoring the software projects development at Malaysian Public Sector.

In order to capture the software projects development and monitoring experiences of ICT officers from the various ministries and departments at Malaysian Public Sector, an exploratory research was carried out. ICT officers are the people who manage and deliver software projects at Malaysian Public Sector. Many of these officers are turned as a project manager, assistant project manager, project leader, assistant project leader, software developer, programmer and system analyst at most of the government ministries and departments. Thus, a survey questionnaire was designed in order to get a response from these officers. The aim of this survey is to investigate the current practices and problems on software project monitoring at the Malaysian Public Sector and the needs for having software project monitoring methodology.

Through software project monitoring and critical success factors for software projects research literature, a list of 17 critical success factors for software projects were identified and prepared in form of questionnaire. This questionnaire is divided into four sections. The first section is to collect demography of respondents from various departments and ministries of government sector. The second section is to identify the current practices on software projects monitoring at Malaysian Public Sector. This followed by the third section. In this section, 17 problems are identified based on the software projects critical success factors which involves in the software projects development. These 17 problems are constructed based on the study by [13], [16] and [17] respectively. [16] and [17] identified many related software projects critical success factors that could take into consider for successful software projects. Whereas [13] identified many software projects failure factors at Malaysian Public Sectors context. Based on these three studies 17 factors are chosen as problems. This is because these factors are not universal and it is differs by software projects to another software projects by its unique. Besides, these identified 17 problems are suits within a Malaysian Public Sector context. Whereas the fourth section is to identify the needs of having software project monitoring methodology for Malaysian Public Sector in order to monitor the software projects to its success.

Figure 1 shows the activities that performed in this research. The activity is starts from literature review and continued with survey conduction. The next activity is data analysis. Data are collected and analysed with basic statistic techniques. Based on this analysis, the needs for software projects monitoring methodology is identified and finally produce a report that discussed about the findings and its implication to ICT departments at Malaysian Public Sector.

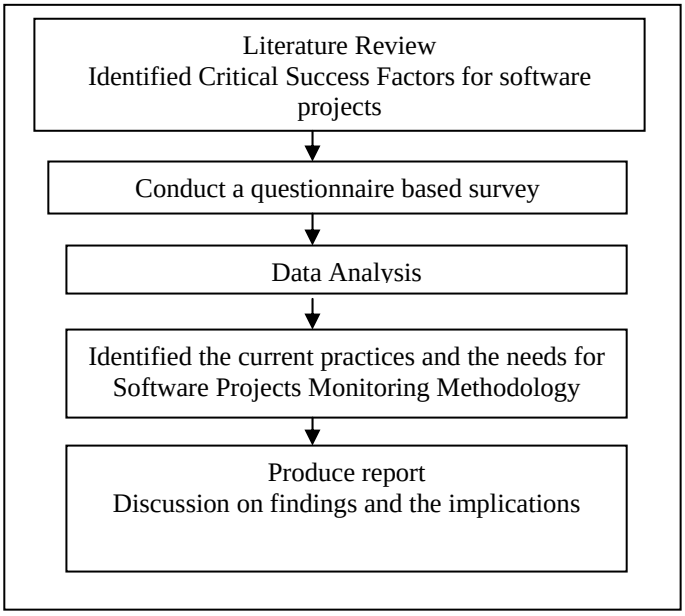

Fig. 1: Research Framework

IV. BACKGOUND OF RESPONDENTS

Government officers who have the titles of Information Technology Officer and Assistant Information Technology Officer participated as a respondent in this survey. The job functions of these groups of respondents are developing, implementing and maintaining software projects at the government sector besides monitoring the entire development processes. Thus, these groups of respondents are classified as most suitable respondents to participate in this survey.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from this survey are analysed into four sections. They are demography respondents, current practices on software projects development, software projects development problems and the importance of having software projects monitoring methodology.

The survey questionnaire was distributed randomly to the targeted respondents that represent various ministries and departments at Malaysian Public Sector. A manually and web based survey was conducted to collect data. Initially, 120 survey questionnaires were distributed among the respondents. Only a total of 76 survey questionnaires were obtained over a period of 4 weeks from the respondents, which are 63.3% from the overall response rate. 4 out of 76 survey questionnaires are excluded because of incompleteness of survey questionnaires by respondents.

A. Demography of Respondents

Respondents who took parts in this survey are analysed in term of their current position, number of year's involvement in software projects development, the gender and the agency they are attached currently. These four variables are chosen in order to address the correct respondents for this undertaken survey. For example, by knowing the agency they attached currently, we could identify in which agency type needed monitoring processes.

Table III provides demography details of the respondents who participate in this study. There are 31% of male and 69% of female respondents took parts in this survey. Majority of these respondents (88%) are holding working title as software developer / programmer and followed by project manager and assistant project manager. This shows that this survey reach to the exact people who are dealing with software projects development at Malaysian Public Sector. Moreover, the respondents have experiences in software projects development from 1 to 20 years. Thus, this survey response is very meaningful and reflects the actual situations of software projects monitoring at the Malaysian Public Sector. Thus, actual experiences and practices are gathered from these respondents. These findings could lead to further enhancement on the current practices.

TABLE III. DEMOGRAPHY INFORMATION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Job Title	
Senior Project Manager	4%
Project Manager / Assistant Project Manager	25%
Project Leader / Assistant Project Leader	17%
Software Developer / Programmer	46%
Project Development Consultant	5%
Others: (Operational, Director)	3%
Number of years involvement in software project development	1- 20 years
Gender	
Male	31%
Female	69%
Agency Type	
Federal	90%
State	10%
Local Departments	0

Furthermore, almost 90% of respondents are from federal government compare to 10% from state government. Since most the software projects development are dealt by the federal government, thus this survey finding is very reliable and meaningful too in order to represent the actual situations at the Malaysian Public Sector in terms of neither software projects development nor software projects monitoring.

B. Current Practices on Developing Software Projects.

This main objective of this research is to identify the current practices of monitoring on software projects at Malaysian Public Sector. This research is a preliminary work in order to cater information on current monitoring approaches and what kind of problems that project managers are facing at Malaysian Public Sector.

The Table IV below shows the current practices on the software projects development and software projects monitoring at the Malaysian Public Sector. From this survey we could identify that in-house and outsource software projects developments are having almost the same response rate. It differs around 11.2% basically. Outsource software projects is 55.6% whereas in-house development is 44.4% only.

TABLE IV. CURRENT PRACTICES OF SOFTWARE PROJECTS AT MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

	Response Rate
Category:	
In-house	44.4%
Outsource	55.6%
Having processes for monitoring :	
Yes, We have standardized monitoring	29.2%
Yes, We have non-standardized monitoring	48.6%
No, we do not have any monitoring process	22.2%
Describe the department readiness for software projects monitoring:	
A well establish monitoring process	16.7%
Need to have improvement	83.3%

This survey also described how many ICT departments at Malaysian Public Sector are having software projects monitoring processes. Almost 48.6% of respondents agreed that there is a monitor processes on the software projects developments but then these processes are not standardized. The monitoring processes are directly determined by the software projects managers only. Whereas 22.2% of respondents mentioned that they do not have any monitoring process taken place during the software projects development. Almost 70.8% of respondents stated that there is a need for software project monitoring methodology at Malaysian Public Sector. Besides this, 83.3% of the response rate shows that Malaysian Public Sector departments and ministries need improvement on current monitoring processes. This shows that there is a need to have a further research on monitoring and controlling software projects process at Malaysian Public Sector.

Besides this, there are some agencies at Malaysian Public Sector are having a standardized monitoring process. Almost

29.2% of respondents agreed that they do have a standardized monitoring process for software projects in their departments.

C. Software projects development problems

As we discussed earlier in the theoretical background section, we had chosen 17 related problems that related to software projects monitoring for this survey. Those 17 problems listed in this survey are arranged by descending order based on the respondents' response rates. Table V shows the identified 17 problems through this survey. These problems are ranked based on the total response rates of each problem by the respondents from various departments and ministries at Malaysian Public Sector. From this survey, the first problem that related to software project monitoring at Malaysian Public Sector is lack of standard development processes or methodologies processes to monitor the software projects which is 87.5% of response rate.

TABLE V. 17 PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED THAT RELATED TO SOFTWARE PROJECTS AT MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

	Problems	Response Rate %
1	There is a lack of standard development processes / methodologies processes to monitor the software projects.	87.5%
2	Some software projects are overrun schedule	86.1%
3	Some software projects are in challenging status.	82%
4	Some software projects do not meet customer expectation	77.8%
5	Some software projects are overrun the budget	75%
6	Some of the software projects do not have clear requirements and specifications.	75%
7	Some developed software projects are less in quality.	72.2%
8	User/Client involvements in the development are less.	69.5%
9	There are some misunderstanding between developer and the project managers on certain software projects.	68%
10	There is a lack of having effective monitoring and control of software projects.	65.3%
11	Some software projects are in failure status	54.2%
12	Generally, project manager do not have effective project management skills.	51.4%
13	There are some misunderstanding between development team and the top management.	50%
14	Some software projects are not achieving Return on Investment (ROI).	45.8%
15	Some of the software projects do not have adequate resources	36.1%
16	Less or no actions are taken on up-to-date projects progress reporting.	31.9%
17	Some of the software projects do not have clear objectives and goals.	26.4%

Moreover, 86.1%, software projects at Malaysian Public Sector are overrun schedule, 82% software projects are in challenging status, 77.8% software projects do not meet customer expectation, 75% of the software projects do not have clear requirements and specifications and 75% software projects are facing overrun budgets. Whereas 72.2% of developed software projects are less in quality, user and client involvement in the software projects development is only 69.5%. The lack of user involvement in the software projects development could lead to unusable software projects. Users do not want to use the implemented software projects due to less involvement in the development.

Another problem that also contributes to the software projects failure is the misunderstanding between the developers and the project managers, which is 68% of the response rate. This problem may arise from in-house or our source developer. The misunderstanding between these two groups of people could affect the software projects development. This affect also could contribute to other problems such as delay in schedule, overrun budget, frequent changing requirement.

Other than this, project managers are one of the contributors to software project success. When a project manager does not have any project management skills, it could affect the software project success. In this survey, it is identified that 51.4% respondents agree that most of project managers do not have effective project management skills. Besides this, project managers should have a good communication skill too. Project managers are the intermediate person between the developers and top management people. Thus, they should be good communicator. The misunderstanding between developers and project managers could lead to the software projects failure. Based on the response rates, 68% respondents agreed that misunderstanding between developers and project managers is one of the problems in software projects development at Malaysian Public Sector.

Generally, monitoring is needed throughout the software projects development. By having an effective monitoring method, we could produce more successful software projects. Thus, the necessity for having a monitoring methodology at Malaysian Public Sector is a must. When we have a continuous monitoring then most of the identified problems from this survey could be overcome in the future. This finding is also support by the findings from another study by [13] that concluded there is no standardized methodology for development and monitoring software projects in Malaysian Public Sector contexts.

D. The Importance of having software projects monitoring methodology

Table VI shows the overall opinion on software projects monitoring by the respondents at Malaysian Public Sector. Almost 94.4% of respondents agreed and 5.6% of respondents are strongly agreed that the development of software projects needs to be monitored regularly. Besides this 87.5% of respondents agreed and 12.5% are strongly agreed that Software projects monitoring methodology is needed in order to monitor and control the software projects development. Whereas 84.7% of respondents agreed and 15.3% are strongly agreed that software projects monitoring methodology could help them and their team to manage and monitor the software projects development processes at their departments. With these findings, it is learned that software projects monitoring methodology could help the project manager and his team members to produce a successful software projects.

TABLE VI. OVERALL OPINION ON SOFTWARE PROJECTS MONITORING AT MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

	Agree	**Strongly Agree**
Development of software projects need to be monitored regularly.	**94.4%**	**5.6%**
Software projects monitoring methodology for the purpose of monitoring and controlling the software development processes and activities is needed.	**87.5%**	**12.5%**
C4. Software projects monitoring methodology could help you and your team to manage and monitor the software development process at your department.	**84.7%**	**15.3%**

Software project monitoring is also interrelated with Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC). Each and every software projects go through the SDLC stages throughout the development. Here, arises a question, in which stage of SDLC that monitoring should take in place in the most? Thus, through this survey, we identified that the requirement stage is need extensive monitoring and controls from the development team. This is around 48.6% of the response rate. This is followed by implementation stage, which is 41.7% of the response rate. Therefore, monitoring and control are mostly needed in the requirement and implementation stage in SDLC. Table VII shows the details of the response rate by the respondents for each and every stages of SDLC.

TABLE VII. SDLC STAGES AND SOFTWARE PROJECTS MONITORING AT MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

Stages at SDLC	**Response Rate**
Requirement	48.6%
Design	4.2%
Testing	2.8%
Implementation	41.7%
Maintenance	2.8%
Documentation	0

VI. RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

This research contibutes to the identification of top 10 problems in software projects development at Malaysian Public Sector. Table VIII shows top 10 problems that identified through this survey.

If we analyze in detail these 10 problems, we could summarize that people and process factors are the most important for software project success. And these two factors are closely related to each other as well. Further research is needed in order to address this people and process factors more in detail.

These top 10 problems also will be very useful for the researchers to further their work more in detail on monitoring and controling the software projects at Malaysian Public Sector. For example, we identified that lack of standard development processes or methodologies processes to monitor the software projects is one of the main problem that faced by the development team, project managers and team members. Thus, detail research is needed in order to form a software project monitoring methodology to monitor the software projects development at Malaysian Public Sector.

TABLE VIII. IDENTIFIED TOP 10 PROBLEMS IN SOFTWARE PROJECTS DEVELOPMENT AT MALAYSIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

Number	Problems
1	There is a lack of standard development processes / methodologies processes to monitor the software projects.
2	Some software projects are overrun schedule
3	Some software projects are in challenging status.
4	Some software projects do not meet customer expectation
5	Some software projects are overrun the budget
6	Some of the software projects do not have clear requirements and specifications.
7	Some developed software projects are less in quality.
8	User/Client involvements in the development are less.
9	There are some misunderstanding between developer and the project managers on certain software projects.
10	There is a lack of having effective monitoring and control of software projects.

This survey finding will also be a very useful data for the practioners at Malaysian Public Sector in order to start a further work on how to overcome these identified problems in the software projects development. Besides this, decisions could be taken based on this research findings too.

VII. IMPLICATIONS

These survey findings need a further research in order to overcome the identified top 10 problems. If we ignore these identified problems then there will be some implications probably there will be more software projects facing failure in term of:

i. Increase expenditure because of overrun costs.
ii. Targeted plan or transmission program by organization could not implement because overrun software projects schedule.
iii. Less usage of software projects because software projects did not meet the user requirements
iv. Produce less skillful human resources.

VIII. LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations as listed below that could be overcome in the future research:

i. Firstly, only 76 of the respondents are involved in this exploratory survey.
ii. The questionnaire is administered in English only. Therefore, non-native English speakers feel difficulties in understanding the questionnaire.
iii. This study is limited to those respondents from Malaysian Public Sector only.
iv. Only 17 related problems are taken into consideration in this survey.

IX. Conclusion

Through this survey we believe that software project monitoring methodology is needed at Malaysian Public Sector in order to monitor and control the software projects development processes towards to its success. This survey finding is the keystone to further our research on software project monitoring especially in the context of Malaysian Public Sector.

Acknowledgement

We would like to express our special thanks to System development Consultant and ICT Project Management Consultant, ICT Consultant, MAMPU, Malaysia for their supports. Also, we would like express our appreciation to *all the respondents from various* departments and ministries from Malaysian Public Sector who took parts in this survey.

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