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Merger process and Organizational performance: A case of a merger between Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Danish Demining Group (DDG) in Uganda and South Sudan

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Abstract

The research report was carried out with an aim of establishing the aspects of merger process and post merger organizational performance considering DRC-DDG as the case study. The study commenced with three research objectives; establishing conceptual and mandatory issues in relation to a merger, establishing the post merger organization performance of DRC-DDG and establishing the influence of a merger process onto post merger organizational performance. The respondents for the research study were the employees of the current DRC-DDG in Uganda. Data was collected using questionnaires which were sent online to the respective respondents located in different parts of East Africa. The data collected was analyzed using the SPSS package. From this package the researchers managed to establish a descriptive analysis, correlation and regression analyses. Basing on the analysis conducted, the researcher managed to establish that the pre-merger processes were carried out as expected only that there were some challenges of failing to involve most of the employees. They were however ably represented by their leaders in this. Both preparation for merger and transitional management (components of a merger process) were significantly influential to the post-merger organizational performance. The findings indicate that together they explain up to 36.5% of the changes in the post-merger organizational performance. Basing on this therefore, it was recommended that the merger process be considered seriously when two or more entities, through their leadership, find it wise to merge their operations. Though the influence is 36.5% in the case of DRC-DDG, it could be higher in entities which are not NGOs in nature.

Key words: *Merger process, organizational performance, merger, performance*

1. Introduction

Merger relationships are very important in a market place especially when resources are not enough for one entity to embark on a new activity. This is also the case when a humanitarian entity wants to extend its services in a new area of expertise which may not be available at that particular moment. These challenges have been overcome by many other entities through a merger relationship. In the process of a merger relationship, entities merging are expected to be in position to realize the synergies, resources and skills from both entities. These are expected to be useful in embarking on a new project that seemed to be impossible before a merger relationship (Fich, Rice & Tran 2011, Pg. 3).

Much as there is always a high expectation from a merger arrangement, there are times when the merger fails to achieve the set objectives. Previous research studies indicate that this is something that entities involved in a merger arrangement need to guard against. A need to manage the transition is very important to realize new organizational effectiveness as planned before a merger (Smith 2001, Pg. 311). This could happen in a merger whether it takes place in a developed world or developing world. Besides possible collapse of a merger, its success is likely to enable the merging entities realize bigger market coverage (or coverage of areas of operation for NGOs).

In this study, the merger process and organizational performance were investigated with specific interest on the merger between Danish Refugee Council [DRC] and Danish Demining Group [DDG]. The main objectives of focus in this study were to review the merger process that the two entities followed, the organizational performance before and after the merger as well as the relationship and hence influence of the merger process onto organization performance of the merged entity.

2. Theoretical review

The term merger refers to the getting together of two or more companies in such a way that they start operating as one big company comprised of the two of them. In principle, this process of companies coming together involves these companies losing their individual identities and attaining a new identity together as one big entity. When this happens, the two parties (companies/entities) that come together are said to have merged their operations. This merger however is reported to be in position to benefit some more than others. On the other hand, this is likely not to be considered as important since after the merger, the merged entities cease to exist as separate and start operating as one big entity (Gruidl & Tucker 2010).

Considering it literally, merger refers to fusion of one thing into the other. In the process of this fusion, a complete new thing appears as a result. From a business point of view, a merger refers to a business arrangement between two or more companies, entities and or businesses to put together their assets and liabilities with an aim of forming a much more powerful entity (Western India Regional Council [WIRC] Reference Manual 2012, Pg. 1). According to the research and practice of WIRC, the merger relationship ends up in making the shareholders and directors of a new company (Post merger arrangement) become one team formed of two or more groups sourced from the different companies that have been involved in a merger.

In the process of a merger, there are a number of issues that need to be brought to the attention of the merging entities. These are referred to as the conceptual and mandatory issues that the merging entities need to be aware of as they get ready to enter into a merger. Key among these issues is the merger process itself, transitional management process and organizational performance of the newly formed entity after the merger has taken place (Knilans 2009, Pgs. 1 – 2). Understanding of the key issues as highlighted by Knilans (2009) is important for one to be able to understand the whole merger event.

Merging entities can have various levels at which they merge. There are some entities that decide to merge in everything whereas there are those that decide to merge only at a branch level and the head offices remain distinct entities. There are even some other entities which end up signing a memorandum of understanding only to govern their operations in form of a joint venture. All these are considered to be forms of a merger with different levels of intensity. Whichever level a merger takes place, employees are considered to be affected since they are the ones who go through the changes brought about by the merger process (Hallgrimson 2008).

The effect brought about the changes as a result of the merger process could be mild or significant depending on the reasons of the underlying merger process. This therefore calls for the people involved in the merger process acting as the leaders in the merger to prepare their employees to face the merger event. This is referred to as the preparation of employees to go through the merger event (Johansson & Petterson 2006).

In line with the preparation for the merger process, there is a need for the different parties to be involved in the merger event to be contacted and their views sought before they are caught unaware. Like any other form of a negotiation, the people who are actively involved in the operations of the merging entities need to be considered as important. This therefore calls for there to be a discussion of both or all parties to the merger arrangement to consider all the salient issues in the merger arrangement. This is considered to be very important since the people involved and especially the employees are the ones that are likely to be affected greatly in the process. Their views are therefore necessary to be considered in the pre-merger meetings and discussions (Berger 2011). This helps in the transition management process.

Transition management refers to the process of managing change. Often times than not entities keep changing from one state to another. These changes need to be managed for the entity experiencing change to realize value from the change (Investopedia 2010). This change can take place in many forms such as expansion, getting new location, getting new leadership and even undergoing integration in what is referred to as merger arrangement. In all these instances, transition takes place necessitating for there to be a mechanism for managing the transition and hence managing the change that is brought about by the merger (Aduloju, Awoponle and Oke 2008).

Basing on research findings from a research study conducted by Cigola and Modesti (2008; Pg. 1), it is evident that the merging companies benefit from the merging process. What is clearly stated as one thing that has been realized by most merging companies is synergy. According to them, synergy is something so powerful that makes the operations of post-merger arrangement smoother than before for all companies that were involved in a merger. The research findings further point out that to a bigger percentage, synergy makes the companies increase their overall revenue and significantly reduce their operational costs though this is sometime not easy to portray without empirical data to back it up.

Synergy could also be appreciated from a complementary point of view. The scenario of complementary nature allows two or more entities to come together in a merger arrangement with an aim of getting better results in terms of their performance. This could be as a result of those entities realizing that they could combine their resources and skills to make a better entity that can overcome all the challenges in the market place. This kind of scenario where resources and skills of different but related companies come together once happened in the United Kingdom (UK). In this arrangement, there was one firm referred to as "The financial skills partnership" dealing in financial related services and another entity called "Skills for justice". These two joined forces with an aim of combining their skills and resources to become one big company dealing with the professional services in the UK. According to the individual entities spokespersons, the merger was considered after realizing that the two services were the major professional services accounting up to 14% of the GDP in UK and employing about 2 million people. This way, the two companies managed to merge their skills and resources (Financial Stability Board 2012).

Though the tapping of resources and skills is expected and is actually the first priority for both entities, there is need for these entities to work hard through the post-merger period. The skills and resources already acquired and now being shared by both entities need to be handled well to create the value expected by both parties. This requires a great leader to manage the transition process in the formation and actualization of the new company. This is necessary to prepare members of the merging entities to start seeing each other as employees of the same entity. The working relationships need to further be improved so that the skills and resources merged can indeed bring about a positive impact to the new entity created after a merger (Knilans 2009, Pgs. 1 – 2).

3. Methodology

The study was conducted following a cross-sectional research design. This was as a result of a need to obtain a snapshot view of the responses in relation to the study. A total of 130 respondents were considered as the population for the study. Out of the 130, 10 were leaders of the DDG and DRC and the remaining 120 were employees from both organizations. A combination of census and simple random sampling designs were used in this study. The census was used to select the leaders who were 10 in number whereas the simple random sampling was used to select the employees. The leaders referred to here are mainly the donors and managers of DRC and DDG. Out of the population of 120 employees, a sample size of 92 employees was selected basing on the sampling table by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Data was collected using self administered questionnaires online to allow everyone participate in the study with ease. The link to the questionnaire was sent to their personal mails through which the responses were compiled and analyzed.

4. Data analysis, results and discussion

A combination of descriptive, correlation and regression analyses were carried out to respond to the objectives that were set for the study. Descriptive statistics provided information in relation to the first two objectives whereas the correlation and regression analyses provided information in relation to the last objective (third objective).

4.1 Descriptive results

The first objective that was analyzed was in relation with the conceptual and mandatory issues involved in a merger process. Based on the theoretical review, two key issues were identified; preparation for a merger process and transitional management. Descriptive findings of these two with respect to the current study are presented in the subsequent sections.

Preparation for the merger

Findings in relation to this are presented in Table 1 below;

Table 1: Preparation for the merger

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Before the current merger took place between DDG and DRC Leaders of DDG collected information about the activities of DRC	1.00	5.00	3.7500	1.22474
Before the current merger took place between DDG and DRC Leaders of DRC collected information about the activities of DDG	1.00	5.00	3.5833	1.28255
Before the current merger took place between DDG and DRC Leaders of DDG collected information about the mission and vision of DRC	1.00	5.00	3.8333	1.12932
Before the current merger took place between DDG and DRC Leaders of DDG collected information about the mission and vision of DRC	1.00	5.00	3.7500	1.15156
Before the current merger took place between DDG and DRC Leaders of DDG collected information about the areas of operation of DRC in East Africa	1.00	5.00	3.9167	1.13890
Before the current merger took place between DDG and DRC Leaders of DRC collected information about the areas of operation of DDG in East Africa	1.00	5.00	3.7500	1.18872

Source: Primary data

The findings in table 1 indicate that the members of two organizations had practical leaders who wanted to get it right from the beginning of the process of merger. The findings indicated that leaders of DDG collected information about the activities of DRC before the merger process took place (mean = 3.7500). The same was done by the leaders of DRC relating to the information about DDG (mean = 3.5833). Most of the respondents that were contacted for this research study indicated that there was some form of collaboration between the leaders especially in relation to information drilling. This is considered to be a good move by the leaders which enabled them to get all the necessary information before they decided to get into a merger. The findings further indicate that the leaders managed to get information in relation to the missions and visions of the respective organizations (mean = 3.8333) as well as the areas of operation that the organizations concentrated on in East Africa (mean = 3.9167).

The respondents contacted for the research indicated that the leaders who wanted the merger to take place took caution on what they were going into. This is evidenced by the key pieces of information that they looked for during the phase of preparation for merger.

Transitional management

Preparation for a merger is indeed the beginning step of a merger process. However, there was a need to establish whether in this particular merger between DRC and DDG, there was any form of transitional management. Findings in relation to this are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2: Identification of transitional issues

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Leaders of DDG held consultative meetings on things that needed to change	2.00	5.00	3.5217	.89796
Leaders of DRC held consultative meetings on things that needed to change	2.00	5.00	3.5217	.89796
Leaders of DDG considered all views of employees for change	1.00	4.00	2.8261	.93673
Leaders of DRC considered all views of employees for change	1.00	4.00	2.7826	.95139
Leaders of DDG and DRC discussed things that needed to change amongst themselves to accommodate the merger	1.00	5.00	4.0000	.90453

Source: Primary data

From table 2, the study managed to establish that leaders from both DDG and DRC got involved in consultative meetings with their staffs to plan the way forward in relation to the merger (mean = 3.5217). In these consultative meetings however, findings revealed that not all views of the employees were considered as important in the transitional process. This is reported to have been the case in both DDG and DRC (mean = 2.7826; mean = 2.8261). In line with form of discussion and consultative meetings, the study managed to further establish that leaders had to have their consultative meetings to discuss things that needed to change amongst themselves to accommodate the merger (mean = 4.0000).

The process of forming the transitional management plan

In line with the discussions to form the way forward for the merged entities, there was a need to establish an issue related to transitional management plan. Findings in relation to this are further displayed in table 3 below.

Table 3: Transitional management plan

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Management of DRC knows the strengths and weakness of the employees working with them	1.00	5.00	3.6957	.92612
Management of DDG knows the strengths and weakness of the employees working with them	1.00	5.00	3.9130	.94931
Leaders of DRC managed to lead their employees into having anxiety to get into the merger state	1.00	5.00	3.0870	1.12464
Leaders of DDG managed to lead their employees into having anxiety to get into the merger state	1.00	5.00	3.3043	1.22232
Leaders of DRC are participative in all activities of the entity	2.00	5.00	3.7391	.96377
Leaders of DDG are participative in all activities of the entity	1.00	5.00	3.6522	1.11227
In DRC, employees at all levels participate in making plans	1.00	4.00	2.6522	.77511
In DDG, employees at all levels participate in making plans	2.00	4.00	3.0435	.87792
Representatives of DDG and DRC coordinated their planning activities for transition	2.00	5.00	3.5652	.66237
Employees in both DDG and DRC got actively involved in all stages of the transition	1.00	5.00	3.1739	.93673
Only employees in DDG got actively involved in all stages of the transition	1.00	4.00	2.0000	1.00000
Only employees in DRC got actively involved in all stages of the transition	1.00	4.00	2.0952	1.04426

Source: Primary Data

Findings in table 3 indicate that in the process of setting transitional plans for both the DDG and DRC, management bodies of both entities considered the strengths and weakness of the employees working with them (mean = 3.6957). The respondents further revealed that their leaders managed to lead their employees into having anxiety to get into the merger state (mean = 3.3043). This is also evidenced in the level of participation that these leaders have in the merger and transitional process in the new DRC-DDG. Findings indicate that leaders of DRC as well as those of DDG have been very participative in all activities of the entity (mean = 3.7391).

Reviewing the level of participation to consider the employees, the findings revealed that in DRC, not employees at all levels participated in making the plans (mean = 2.6522). This imples that there are some employees who did not fully participate in setting the plans for transition. Though they did not participate, their presence was ably represented by their leaders.

Moving to the level of representatives, the findings revealed that representatives of DDG and DRC together coordinated their planning activities for transition purposes (mean = 3.5652). These are considered to be of great help since through them, the views of employees are indirectly incorporated in the plans for a merger. This is derived from the finding that employees of DDG were not actively involved in all stages of the transition process (mean = 2.0000). The same is reported to be the case for the employees of DRC (mean = 2.0952). However, through the representatives of both DDG and DRC, their views were reported to have been incorporated in the plans.

The findings indicate to be in support of the literature highlighting the conceptual and mandatory issues to be the preparation for the merger and transitional management. These two are reported to have been carried out carefully during the merger of DRC and DDG.

Post merger organizational performance

This was assessed by mainly considering the key indicators of performance for both DDG and DRC. They are both NGOs with a mandate to work with refugees as well as disarmament activities. To be able to check their performance therefore, there was need to check whether they were in position to attract as much financial resources as possible and use it effectively as well as efficiently (*value for money*). The level of skilled employees as well as their level of accomplishment were also checked as an important component of value for money. Findings in relation to these issues are presented in Tables 4 and 5 followed by further explanations of findings after the tables.

Financial attraction

The researcher wanted to establish whether the joint profile of DRC and DDG together as DRC-DDG managed to increase the levels of financial attraction. This was meant to be compared with the pre-merger situation. Descriptive analysis was carried out in this respect with the findings reported in table 4 below.

Table 4: Impact on organizational performance-Financial attraction

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Since DRC and DDG merged Salaries are paid in time	3.00	5.00	4.4783	.73048
Since DRC and DDG merged More work has been received	1.00	5.00	3.3913	.98807
Since DRC and DDG merged The donor community has had increasing preference of DRC-DDG group over other humanitarian groups	2.00	5.00	3.1739	.77765

Source: Primary data

To check the financial attraction component, the researcher considered using some form of obvious measures such as salary payments as well as the potential for the merged entity to attract new/additional funding for projects/programmes. Findings revealed that since the merger between DRC and DDG took place, salaries of employees were paid in time (mean = 4.4783). This is an indication that there may have been a challenge for both entities before the merger. Further face to face discussion revealed that this was particularly the case for the DRC staff while for DDG staff, the status quo of timely salary remittances were maintained. Additionally, the findings indicate that since the merger took place, the DRC –DDG has been in position to receive a lot of work than before (mean = 3.3913).

The resulting increase in work after the merger is therefore associated with the internal reorganization by having streamlined support sector now providing the support requirements for the merged entity which required for some staff to be retired or made redundant

Attraction of skills and talent

The other component of organizational performance that the researcher sought to look into was that of attracting valuable skills and talent to form part of the work force of the new DRC-DDG as well as the accomplishments of this workforce. Descriptive analysis was carried out to establish this with the findings presented in table 5 below.

Table 5: Organizational Performance--Capacity and skills

	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Since DRC and DDG merged More skilled staff members have been registered	2.00	5.00	3.6957	.76484
Since DRC and DDG merged More complicated assignments have been accomplished	2.00	5.00	3.5217	.73048
Since DRC and DDG merged Most times managed to accomplish their assignments within the stipulated deadlines	2.00	5.00	3.8261	.88688
Since DRC and DDG merged New categories of assignments have been registered by the former DRC	1.00	5.00	3.5217	.99405
Since DRC and DDG merged New categories of assignments have been registered by the former DDG	1.00	5.00	3.3478	1.02730
Since DRC and DDG merged The new entity has been able to attract new skills (talent)	1.00	5.00	3.5217	1.20112
Since DRC and DDG merged The new entity has been able to retain new skills (talent)	1.00	5.00	3.5652	1.03687

Source: Primary data

Findings from table 5 indicate that since DRC and DDG merged, the new entity has been able to retain new skills (talent) (mean = 3.5652). This therefore means that more skilled staff members have been registered in the work force of DRC-DDG (mean = 3.6957). Like in the previous findings in relation to financial attraction, the researcher managed to establish that more complicated assignments have been accomplished by DRC-DDG compared to the time when they were separate entities (mean = 3.5217). In line with getting more complicated assignments, the research revealed that the assignments that were obtained were completed within the stipulated deadline (mean = 3.8261).

The findings in relation to attraction of new skills and talent indicate that the merged entity was able to retain the most skilled staff from the two entities and bring on board others to increase organizational competence as a whole. This is greatly manifested through the increase in the number of assignments accomplished by the organization. Accomplishment of these assignments in a record time also reflects organization competence and effectiveness as well as the ability of the new entity (DRC-DDG) to attain value for money in its operations (*efficiency, effectiveness and efficiency*). Attracting staff could also be attributed to the enriched profile of the merged entity. Consequently the merger is seen to have increased the attractiveness of the new entity especially when it came to being the destination of outstanding talents within the emergency and early recovery arena of the work of the NGOs. The merged entity did streamline its internal processes, improve the terms and conditions of staff since the attitude of the merged entity was to have a small, highly motivated and effective team.

From the general point of view therefore, the new DRC-DDG has been in position to perform well in some key areas like on the side of employee performance and attracting new skills by its new status. There is however a challenge that the merged entities need to look into. This is in relation to the financial attraction in terms of projects to be funded. This has not been well realized by the entity though generally, the performance is still considered to be good given the fact that it attracts many talents and is perceived to be a good entity to work for as a merger.

Influence of a merger process onto organizational performance

To be able to establish this, correlation and regression analyses were carried out. Findings from these analyes are displayed in Table 6 under sub-section 4.2 (*correlation*) and table 7 under sub-section 4.3 (*regression*)

4.2 Correlation results

This was carried out to test the degree of association between merger process and post merger organizational performance.

Table 6: Correlation Results

	1	**2**	**3**
Preparation for a merger (1)	1		
Transitional management (2)	.427**	1	
Post merger organizational performance (3)	.427**	.569**	1

Source: Primary data

The findings in table 6 show preparation for merger separately from transitional management. This is because the two form the merger process but there is need to test them separately. According to the findings, there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between preparation for a merger and post-merger organizational performance ($r = 0.427$; $p \leq 0.01$) as well as between transitional management and post-merger organizational performance ($r = 0.569$; $p \leq 0.01$). This implies that both components of the merger process (*preparation for a merger and transitional management*) have association with the way that the work is done after the merger in DRC and DDG.

4.3 Regression results

The relationship portrayed by the correlation results prompted the researcher to carry out a regression analysis to check whether there is any significant influence of the merger process onto post performance of DRC-DDG. Findings in relation to this are displayed in table 7.

Table 7: Results from Regression analysis

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.081	.111		18.821	.000
Preparation for merger	.091	.034	.225	2.711	.008
Transitional management	.224	.039	.473	5.699	.000

Dependent variable:	Post merger Organization Performance
R:	.604
R-Square:	.365
Adjusted R-Square:	.354
F-statistics:	32.442
Sig:	.000

Source: Primary data

Findings from the regression analysis (Table 7) indicate that they are in support of the earlier findings from the correlation analysis. The findings indicate that independent variables (*preparation for a merger and transitional management*) are statistically significant predictors of post merger performance. This is reflected by the significance values of prediction; 0.008 and 0.000 for preparation for mergers and transitional management respectively. The findings further indicate that transitional management (*or commonly known as change management*) is more influential (Beta = 0.473) than preparation for a merger (Beta = 0.225). The group influence further portrays that the merger process (*as composed of preparation for a merger and transitional management*) explains up to 36.5% of the changes in post merger organizational performance in DRC-DDG. This means that the other factors that influence post merger organizational performance but not included in this study influence 63.5% of the changes in the post merger organizational performance.

5. Conclusion

Basing on the study conducted and the findings obtained, it is important to appreciate that preparation for a merger is an important thing to do for two entities that plan to come together under one roof. The planning phase helps to eliminate many problems which could have otherwise affected the expected results of a merger. However, the phase of preparation for a merger needs to be supplemented by the actual implementation which is embedded within transitional management. The importance of planning is in the initial phase making it necessary to make a follow-up of how the plans are implemented. The phase of implementation and hence transition needs to be managed well (*chage management*) so that the positive results of a merger can be realized. This is what happened in the merger of DRC and DDG.

Findings and eventual conclusion of the current study needs to be taken into consideration for future mergers especially of NGOs. Though the study focused on the merger between DRC and DDG, the processes followed could be applicable in any other merger.

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