

INFLUENCE OF STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract: Community-based projects have had a tremendously positive influence on development in many countries around the world. The efforts of community-based projects are having a positive impact on an estimated two million people in Kenya. However, it has been noted that the majority of community development initiatives in Kenya have failed to sustain themselves, become self-sufficient, and the communities have failed to continue running them. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the influence of stakeholder participation on the performance of community development projects in Machakos County, Kenya. The research design for the study was descriptive. In Machakos County, Kenya, seven community livelihood projects that were finished between 2018 and 2022 were the study's target population. To ensure that every respondent is fairly represented, the study employed stratified sampling. A simple random sampling method was used to choose the respondents. 259 respondents make up the sample. The data for this study were gathered using a semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire's validity was assessed in this study using criteria validity, construct validity, and content validity. This study was evaluated for reliability using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient test. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviation, frequency, and percentages). Inferential statistics (regression analysis) were used to determine the extent to which one variable affects another. The study discovered that the effectiveness of community development projects in Machakos County, Kenya, was positively significantly impacted by stakeholder participation. The study comes to the conclusion that stakeholders are an essential part of every project and company. According to the study, in order for a project to succeed, all parties involved must have a thorough understanding of its goals and procedures.

Keywords: Stakeholder Participation, Project Performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Projects are often created and implemented to achieve an organization's strategic goals. The process of planning, carrying out, and project performance management is the oversight of initiatives that improve an organization's performance and strategy (Dai & Wells, 2018). Meng (2019) asserts that in order to develop strategies for enhancing project performance, it is necessary to recognize significant related performance factors and comprehend their interrelationships. This is because improving project performance depends on both people and project management procedures. If a project fulfills those requirements and contributes to a strategic business goal, that is the true test of its success.

Munns and Bjeirmi (2016) observe that the success on a project denotes that specific goals for a particular stakeholder were achieved. One of the best ways to enhance project delivery efficiency is usually seen as reviewing project success and critical success factors (CSFs), but each stakeholder's expectations may vary. According to Jha and Iyer (2020) an organizational project's management and control are essential to its success, and utilizing essential project management

techniques, as well as industry standards and best practices, will be required to successfully complete the project. Therefore, the decision-making support provided by the CSFs is more beneficial, and this has a big impact on how well projects perform.

Projects are made up of a number of essential success factors that, when well-managed and organized, can contribute to their success. Frefer et al. (2018), argue that if these factors are not given the right level of importance, the project as a whole could fail. According to Thi and Swierczek's (2019) observations of Vietnam, CSFs differ from one nation to the next depending on the local environment, which is frequently changing as a result of changes in policy and industry. For instance, the performance of Habitat for Humanity-based projects in Vietnam was determined to mainly depends on goal management, design management, technical elements, top management support and risk management.

Community-based projects have had a tremendously positive influence on development in many countries around the world. Through the implementation of programs that improve their lives, community-based projects have made it possible for numerous local communities in developing nations to emerge into the light (Crawford, Kasmidi, Korompis & Pollnac, 2019). The rural development programs in Nigeria have helped millions of rural residents escape poverty, but the majority of them still live in poverty. This is a result of Nigerian rural development historically not receiving top priority. The majority of policies emphasized empowering and advancing urban residents. In Nigeria's rural areas, there are no basic services like access roads, electricity, or healthcare. Although Nigeria engaged in some community self-help prior to colonial rule, international organizations have also made significant contributions to rural development in Nigeria. They have supported the development of agriculture, trained extension personnel, delivered primary healthcare, stopped soil erosion, and improved the river basins that provide a living for rural areas.

According to Aputo (2017), project financing is one of the problems that contribute to project delays, project failures, subpar workmanship, and cost overruns, which in turn affect the performance of the entire project, in many non-governmental institutions in Kenya. It is argued that projects cannot be successfully completed within the budget, timeframe, and scope once delays and cost overruns start to occur. Sammy and Muturi (2018) note that the inability of contractors to access funds compromises the performance and completion of Kenyan government projects. Therefore, it can be argued that when projects are underfunded or not funded on time, project performance is affected, which then affects the projects' ability to be completed on schedule.

According to Mbachu and Nkando (2019), community-based projects are one of the most recent strategies for reducing poverty in Kenya's rural areas. It is estimated that CBPs have a positive impact on two million people. These community-based development projects are designed to last for a specific amount of time, after which they are expected to be managed and self-sustaining by the community. However, according to a World Vision (2020) evaluation report, the majority of community development initiatives in Kenya have failed to generate enough income to support themselves, become self-sufficient, and be maintained by the local populations.

Project performance is the act of carrying out tasks and achieving objectives within a project, and its success relies on team members consistently delivering strong performance and possessing valuable abilities to execute project tasks (Ledbetter, 2018). According to Leung, Chan and Olomolaiye (2019) the emphasis placed on continuous improvement through a variety of project types demonstrates the significance of project management performance. The principal objective of task execution is to work on the venture's outcomes, which calls for the creation of a framework for defining project success. As a result, efforts to evaluate project performance they need to be clearly defined and accurately measured in order for project operations to be properly understood and monitored.

According to Frefer et al. (2018), completing a project on time requires many components that must all work in harmony. According to Milosevic and Patanakul (2019), critical success factors (CSFs) are qualities, conditions or factors that can essentially affect project achievement if appropriately kept up with, upheld or made due. Furthermore, Milosevic and Patanakul (2019) point out that KVPs can be divided into five main categories: Project procedures, project management activities, people elements, project elements and the external environment are some of these elements.

Project stakeholders are people, teams, or institutions that work on a project and help it get implemented, completion, or outcomes. They can also influence project goals and outcomes (Achterkamp & Vos, 2018). Atkins and Skitmore (2020) note that stakeholders benefit greatly from appropriate open communication channels that allow for the recognition and management of stakeholder expectations and ensure that stakeholders understand and support the project. This is why it is important to identify legitimate and valid stakeholders and understand their authority, influence and proximity to the project in order to deal with their potential influence.

Machakos County is situated in the Eastern Region of Kenya and is one of the 47 counties in the country. 1,098,584 inhabitants live in the area. The county is divided into 22 districts, 71 locations, 233 sub-districts, 8 constituencies and 8 counties. The constituencies include Machakos, Masinga, Yata, Cangondo, Onion, Katiani, Mavoko and Mwala towns. Water, sewerage and educational institutions and other infrastructure. Some of these projects are still ongoing, such as the Ngongeta Power Project in the Community Development Initiative, which is implemented by several development professionals and is widespread in Machakos County, resolving issues connected with the climate. Through CDF's initiative, the government took the lead and was able to construct and/or rehabilitate Mungala boreholes in Mutituni and Mumbuni. Completed CDF projects in Mwara Constituency include Ikrata Pharmacy in Ikrata.

In Machakos County, NGOs collaborate with the local community through the Community Development Programme (CDP). In 2001, the Kenya Red Cross partnered with community members and authorities to provide training on forecasting, coping with, and recovering from the effects of recurring droughts. This was in response to the country being hit by famine in 2000, with the Eastern region being the worst affected. The United States Agency for International Development (USAIDAPHIA)'s PLUS KAMILI program supports health initiatives like the Machakos HIV Community Project, which centers around individuals residing with HIV and gives them admittance to locally situated care as well as monetary strengthening. Another CDP run by Dorcas Aid International (D.A.I.) that primarily offers academic sponsorship programs to the underprivileged is the Machakos Child Sponsorship Program.

One of the biggest non-governmental organizations in Machakos County, INADES Formation Kenya (IFK) focuses on rural microfinance, agriculture, and the environment. The Kenyan NGO Coordinating Council has accredited it as an NGO. Although the company is now only operating in the counties of Machakos, Makueni, and Kitui, it is authorized to operate anywhere in the nation. In Talakanisi district, IFK collaborates with other development partners to carry out its operations and increased support for semi-arid agriculture and livestock in Kenya are just a few of the projects that IFK works on. These projects address various facets and needs of society.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The performance of community development projects is evaluated taking into account the achievement of project goals within time, cost and quality constraints (Amadi, 2019). According to Datta (2020), performance indicators provide the project team with up-to-date information on the status of the project as the project approaches its final goals and/or objectives during the project. Community livelihood projects in Machakos County are implemented by several implementers, including religious institutions, NGOs, and the county government. However, the implementation of community development programs remains a problem for the county. Projects are completed late, on target and/or over budget.

The Machakos County Government is in favor of the INADES Form Kenya program being begun at the local area level, especially while venturing into new regions and while completing activities. When working on initiatives that call for confined places, the government makes use of public communal resources like community buildings. However, as the initiative was being implemented, the committee ran into a number of difficulties. For instance, The establishment of Kangonde community hospital project and the establishment of Ekalakala community hospital project started in 2014 and completed according to the BQ, in 2016, but done wrong paints, tiles, fence and ceiling not done. Extra works for tiles, fence and ceiling re awarded in march 2019. Establishment of katulani community hospital project started in 2014 but stalled, exiting contractor terminated now the process of preparing new bill of quantities for the remaining works on going. The Youth businesses and entrepreneurship project, Machakos world cup championship (football & volleyball) project, up grading of sports play grounds and goal posts installations project were not done due to lack of funds.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory was first published in Edward Freeman's book "Good Governance: The Stakeholder Approach" in 1984. The idea of treating all parties as equal stakeholders was created from the shareholders' perspective, stating that the company's sole interest and responsibility is to maximize shareholder value. Freeman's book identifies and models stakeholder groups in a company, describes and suggests ways to protect their interests, and who is really important from a

company's point of view. Increased stakeholder value will improve all aspects of business. Stakeholder theory includes the business practices, management ethics, and values of stakeholders involved in a project or organization. The goal is to improve relationships with stakeholders, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the entire project or organization (Datta, 2020).

According to stakeholder theory, the organization's workers, clients, providers, lenders, neighborhood networks, government offices, ideological groups, exchange affiliations, associations and even contenders ought to be viewed as partners since they influence the organization (Freeman & Dmitriev, 2017). A major criticism of stakeholder theory (2019) is that there is simply no balancing the needs and interests of different stakeholders in justice. However, According to Phillips (2007), communication is the most crucial element in successful stakeholder management. This guarantees that all parties involved are kept up to date. As a result, centralized project management in one unified platform, your team and stakeholders can collaborate more effectively to achieve business goals because everyone is always on the same page.

The theory encourages effective feedback, ultimately leading to better outcomes for business owners and stakeholders. For example, when employees are seen as important stakeholders, they are motivated to do better, better work. Treating all project stakeholders, team members, sponsors and managers as key stakeholders can impact results.

Empirical Literature Review

Njogu (2016) conducted a study to look into how stakeholder engagement affected performance. Descriptive analysis was used in this study. Target audiences include automakers, refineries, environmental management agencies, the Department of Energy and NEMA. Using stratified sampling methods, 125 respondents made up the sample size. Both secondary data from organizational reports and primary data from questionnaires were used in the study. Study found that the implementation of vehicle emission control project projects is significantly influenced by the involvement of interested parties in project identification. However, there is a context gap in the study as it is limited to NEMA's vehicle emission control program.

Stakeholder engagement's effect on project performance was examined by Githinji, Ogolla, and Kitheka (2020). This investigation employed a descriptive research design. A sample of 70 respondents was drawn from 231 stakeholders from ferry service partners in Kenya who constituted the target group. After the pilot study, Data were collected through surveys and analyzed by taking only horizontal lines. The results demonstrate the importance and relationship between stakeholder participation in project analysis and project performance. However, the study has contextual differences as it was conducted in Kenyan ferry services.

Mambwe, Mwanaumo, Nsefu, and Sakala (2020) conducted a study to examine the impact of stakeholder engagement on the performance of arts production in the Lusaka District. The study methodology employed was descriptive. Semi-structured survey questions were used to gather primary data. The findings demonstrate the beneficial relationship between design and specification and stakeholder involvement. The study also found that stakeholder involvement in projects is closely but negatively related to project costs. However, there are methodological flaws as the respondents were purposively selected. A census methodology will be used to ensure that all respondents participate in the survey.

The study conducted by Demirkesen and Reinhardt (2021) analyzes how stakeholder involvement influences the success of projects carried out by the Polish government. This study used a descriptive research design. Thirteen government programs were included in the target group. The project manager and other support staff act as an observation unit in the project. The research instrument is a questionnaire. The results show that an important factor affecting project performance is stakeholder engagement. However, the study examined government projects in Poland which may not be a true reflection in Kenya.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design for the study was descriptive. In Machakos County, Kenya, seven community livelihood projects that were finished between 2018 and 2022 were the study's target population. To ensure that every respondent is fairly represented, the study employed stratified sampling. A simple random sampling method was used to choose the respondents. 259 respondents make up the sample. The data for this study were gathered using a semi-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire's validity was assessed in this study using criteria validity, construct validity, and content validity. This study was evaluated for reliability using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient test. The quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviation, frequency, and percentages). Inferential statistics (regression analysis) were used to determine the extent to which one variable affects another.

4. FINDINGS

The descriptive statistics results on stakeholder participation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Stakeholder Participation

Statements	SD (%)	D(%)	N(%)	A(%)	SA(%)	M	SD
Stakeholder engagement creates an environment of trust by enabling stakeholders to be heard and their concerns to be addressed.	5.7	4.2	1.5	39.7	48.9	3.85	1.146
Stakeholder engagement makes projects accountable to stakeholders	4.6	9.9	0.0	43.9	41.6	4.11	0.889
Information sharing has led to efficient collaboration among the project stakeholders	0.1	5.7	0.0	62.2	31.3	4.56	0.439
Stakeholder involvement increases the transparency of project activities and ensures that projects are accountable for their actions.	4.6	15.6	1.9	37.8	40.1	3.99	1.010
Stakeholder engagement ensures that project plans reflect actual needs and priorities	1.5	7.3	3.8	48.5	42.4	3.67	1.329
Stakeholder engagement increases opportunities for sustainable development after project completion.	0.0	0.0	0.0	44.7	55.3	4.61	0.399
Aggregate score						4.15	0.89

The results in Table 1 indicate that the statement that stakeholder engagement creates an environment of trust by enabling stakeholders to be heard and their concerns to be addressed was agreed by most (88.6%) of the respondents, 9.9% disagreed and 1.5% indicated neutral on the same statement. The study revealed that most (85.5%) of the respondents agreed that stakeholder engagement makes projects accountable to stakeholders while 14.5% of the respondents disagreed. Majority (93.5%) of the respondents agreed that information sharing has led to efficient collaboration among the project stakeholders with 5.8% of the respondents disagreeing on the statement. The study found that 77.9% of the respondents agreed that stakeholder involvement increases the transparency of project activities and ensures that projects are accountable for their actions, 8.8% disagreed and 3.8% neutral. Stakeholder engagement, according to 90.9% of respondents, guarantees that project plans accurately reflect real needs and priorities, 8.8% disagreed and 3.8% neutral. The statement that stakeholder engagement increases opportunities for sustainable development after project completion was agreed by the respondents. In addition, the majority of the participants concurred with these statements, as evidenced by an average score of 4.15 and a standard deviation of 0.89 on a 5-point Likert scale.

This result is consistent with Achterkamp and Vos's (2018) observation that project stakeholders are people, teams, or organizations involved in the execution, conclusion, or results of a project. They can also influence project goals and outcomes. The finding also agree with Atkins and Skitmore (2020) who note that stakeholders benefit greatly from appropriate open communication channels that allow for the recognition and management of stakeholder expectations and ensure that stakeholders understand and support the project. This is why it is important to identify legitimate and valid stakeholders and understand their authority, influence and proximity to the project in order to deal with their potential influence.

Regression Analysis Results

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.809	.654	.645	1.341

The findings presented in Table 2 indicate that the adjusted R square value was 0.645 (64.5%). This value demonstrates the impact of stakeholder involvement on the project performance in Machakos County, Kenya. It is important to note that the remaining percentage (35.5%) represents other variables that were not examined in this study

Table 3: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	210.124	1	210.124	722.679	.000
	Residual	70.654	243	.2908		
	Total	280.778	244			

The results displayed in Table 3 indicate that the significance value is below 0.05, specifically at 0.000 and the statistical F value is 722.679 which is greater than the statistical mean square value of 210.124. Hence, this validates the significance of the model

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.687	0.115		5.974	.000
Stakeholder participation	0.814	0.314	0.263	2.592	.001

The results presented in Table 4 indicate that the constant value (0.687) signifies the extent to which the project's performance in Machakos County, Kenya would remain unchanged when stakeholder involvement is held constant. This leads to the following regression equation;

$$\text{Project performance} = 0.687 + 0.814 (\text{stakeholder participation})$$

The stakeholder participation measures included decision-making, information sharing, and expertise sharing. The research indicated that enhancing stakeholder involvement could enhance project performance in Machakos County, Kenya. Furthermore, stakeholder participation was found to have a statistically significant positive impact on project performance in Machakos County, Kenya ($\beta=0.263$, $p=0.001$). This finding agrees with an investigation into the effect of stakeholder engagement on the performance of arts production in the Lusaka District was conducted by Mambwe, Mwanaumo, Nsefu, and Sakala (2020) which found a significant relationship between design and specification and stakeholder involvement. The study also found that stakeholder involvement in projects is closely but negatively related to project costs.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that stakeholders are the key component of any project and organization. Their contribution and engagement ensure the success of any project. Effective engagement with stakeholders translates the needs and requirements of the business into goals and ensures every one related and relevant to the project is on board. Each stakeholder has a unique perspective on how the project and organizational success can be achieved. Shared understanding and consensus are vital for building positive momentum and vision for the project.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that all project participants must comprehend the goals and procedures in order for the project to be successful. Arranging a series of interactive engagements where stakeholders can discuss and debate is very valuable. Build the project around the involvement to foster a sense of forward motion, positivity, involvement, and momentum. Identify the benefits and wins for each stakeholder to understand the benefits a project can bring to them and their area of concern.

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