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Project Management Dynamics and Performance of Infrastructure Development Projects in Kenya;s Energy Sector

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Abstract: **Implementation of infrastructure development projects in Kenya's energy sector is subject to numerous challenges affecting project performance, including bureaucratic delays, heavy capital requirements, and inaccessible financing. This study examined the influence of project management dynamics specifically stakeholder involvement, project planning, project leadership, and risk management on the performance of infrastructure development projects in Kenya's energy sector. An explanatory research design was adopted, targeting 1,996 employees across 7 infrastructure projects, from which a stratified random sample of 333 respondents was drawn using the Taro Yamane formula. Data were collected via semi-structured questionnaires, validated through construct and content validity, and assessed for reliability using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.70$). Both descriptive statistics and inferential analyses (Pearson correlation and multiple regression) were employed. Findings revealed that stakeholder involvement ($\beta = 0.551$), project planning ($\beta = 0.674$), project leadership ($\beta = 0.663$), and risk management ($\beta = 0.406$) each had a positive and statistically significant influence on project performance ($p < 0.05$). The model explained 61.1% of the variance in project performance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.611$). The study concludes that early stakeholder involvement, comprehensive planning, resilient leadership, and robust risk management are critical determinants of successful energy infrastructure delivery in Kenya. Recommendations include institutionalising stakeholder engagement platforms, deploying project management software, fostering leadership capacity development, and establishing historical risk databases to guide future projects.**

Keywords: **Project management dynamics, stakeholder involvement, project planning, project leadership, risk management, infrastructure development, Kenya energy sector.**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Project performance is one of the most important factors of overall organisational effectiveness, particularly in strategic planning and management contexts. As Zwikael and Smyrk (2019) note, resource allocation must be focused on projects closely aligned with strategic objectives so that time, budget, and workforce are directed toward initiatives that advance the organisation. Consequently, project managers must develop thorough project plans addressing goals, outcomes, schedules, and resources that align with organisational objectives.

Project management plays a fundamental role in project success irrespective of project size or complexity, with its practices applicable across all industries (Zwikael & Meredith, 2019). The dynamics of project management encompassing planning, execution, monitoring, and closure when effectively mastered, significantly improve delivery outcomes (Barclay & Osei-Bryson, 2020). Globally, the application of these dynamics in energy infrastructure is multifaceted, merging diverse methodologies and tools toward project optimisation (Anantatmula & Rad, 2018).

In the United States, the construction of the Mount Signal Solar plant in California employed advanced project management measures, compressing planning and scheduling timelines through Gantt charts and critical path analysis (Sidwell, 2022). In Germany, the Hornsea One offshore wind project utilised the PRINCE2 framework to effectively

mitigate risks and prevent delays (Spang & Riemann, 2021). In Brazil, stakeholder consultation and workshops for the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Dam substantially reduced conflicts and secured social licence to operate (Ribeiro et al., 2022).

In Africa, South Africa's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) has driven a massive uptake of solar energy through structured project management incorporating rigorous bidding systems and stakeholder engagement (Maharaj, Heil & Van Rensburg, 2022). In Kenya, the Olkaria Geothermal Power Station has exemplified phased project management, allowing incremental development and adaptive challenge resolution (Ochenge, 2018). Similarly, the Lake Turkana Wind Power Project the largest wind energy facility in Africa implemented the PRINCE2 framework, ensuring clear communication and alignment of project objectives among all parties (Theuri, 2023).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The inadequate performance of infrastructure development projects in Kenya's energy sector reflects a multifaceted array of challenges. As of 2023, reports from the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority indicate that only approximately 30% of rural households have access to electricity, compared to over 90% in urban areas (Gakuo, 2020). Most energy projects in Kenya are characterised by delays of one to three years, as evidenced by the Lamu Coal Power Plant delays arising from regulatory and environmental challenges. Furthermore, infrastructure project budgets are frequently overrun by up to 30%, constraining available funds and deterring future investment. Energy losses of approximately 20% have also been reported by Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC).

While prior studies have examined project management dynamics in related contexts including economic empowerment projects (Kaluai, 2020), corporate social responsibility initiatives (Waindi, Kitheka & Ogolla, 2022), and KenGen projects (Theuri, 2023) contextual and conceptual gaps persist with respect to infrastructure development projects in Kenya's energy sector specifically. This study therefore addresses the influence of project management dynamics on performance in this underexplored context.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research was to determine the influence of project management dynamics on the performance of infrastructure development projects in Kenya's Energy Sector. The specific objectives were to:

(i) Establish the influence of stakeholder involvement on the performance of infrastructure development projects in Kenya's Energy Sector.

(ii) Examine the influence of project planning on the performance of infrastructure development projects in Kenya's Energy Sector.

(iii) Determine the influence of project leadership on the performance of infrastructure development projects in Kenya's Energy Sector.

(iv) Assess the influence of risk management on the performance of infrastructure development projects in Kenya's Energy Sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three theoretical frameworks: Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), Theory of Change (Weiss, 1995), and Risk Aversion Theory (Ellsberg, 1961).

Freeman's Stakeholder Theory posits that an organisation must consider the interests of all parties affected by its operations, not solely shareholders. This theory underscores the importance of communication and cooperation with stakeholders throughout project implementation to ensure their expectations are met (Stieb, 2019). In Kenya's energy sector, stakeholders range from government agencies and private investors to local communities and international partners, making this theory highly pertinent. Child and Marcoux (2022) affirm that establishing strong ties with stakeholders and understanding their perspectives is essential to achieving positive project outcomes.

The Theory of Change, developed by Carol Weiss (1995), provides a systematic strategy for defining the conditions necessary to achieve success and clarifying the causal chain from inputs to long-term outcomes. McLaughlin et al. (2019) argue that this theory supports the evaluation of interventions and helps justify resource expenditure. In Kenya's energy context, this framework enables stakeholders to trace how investments in power generation, transmission, and renewable energy contribute to broader national goals.

Ellsberg's (1961) Risk Aversion Theory describes the tendency of individuals and organisations to prefer certain outcomes over uncertain ones. In Kenya's energy infrastructure context, both domestic and foreign investors tend to be reluctant to engage in large-scale projects with unstable returns. Policymakers can address this through guarantees and subsidies to reduce perceived risks and attract investment (Antoncic, 2023).

2.2 Empirical Review

Regarding stakeholder involvement, Nederhand and Klijn (2019) demonstrated a positive relationship between stakeholder participation and project success in public-private partnerships. Heravi et al. (2021) found a favourable interplay between stakeholder engagement and project design, though noted an inverse relationship between participation and project expenditure. Demirkesen et al. (2021) confirmed stakeholder engagement as a key determinant of project success in Polish government programmes.

On project planning, Gonzalez, Alarcon, and Mundaca (2020) found that partner commitment and effective project organisation significantly contribute to infrastructure development. Agyeman-Boakye, Kissi, and Abu (2022) demonstrated a favourable relationship between project planning initiatives and project success in Ghana's construction sector. Muute and James (2019) similarly confirmed that quality project planning contributes to effective project execution in Nairobi.

Concerning project leadership, Buba and Tanko (2017) found that a project manager's contribution to outcomes is linked to their ability to organise, oversee, and optimise resources. Ahmed and Anantatmula (2022) identified a correlation between management leadership practices and project success, with project control emerging as the highest-impact factor. Omonyo (2019) confirmed a significant positive impact of leadership on mega-project success in Kenya.

On risk management, Simon and Mutiso (2021) found that risk management practices significantly determine the performance of agricultural projects in Nakuru County, Kenya. Njuguna (2019) demonstrated that risk transfer positively impacts project success in Nairobi. Ouma, Sang, and Kinoti (2020) confirmed that risk analysis significantly determines information technology project success in Kenyan commercial banks.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted an explanatory research design, which enables the collection of rich, detailed data to reveal nuances of the research topic, supports generalisation to broader populations, and promotes systematic documentation that minimises bias (Doyle et al., 2020). This design was appropriate for examining causal relationships between project management dynamics and infrastructure project performance.

3.2 Target Population and Sampling

The study targeted 1,996 employees across 7 infrastructure development projects in Kenya's energy sector. A stratified sampling technique was employed to categorise participants by project, and simple random sampling was used for respondent selection within strata. Using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula at a 5% margin of error, a sample size of 333 respondents was derived, representing 16.7% of the target population.

Table 1: Target Population and Sample Size Distribution

Project	Population	Sample Size
Geothermal Energy Development Projects	263	44
Solar Energy Projects	206	34
Wind Energy Projects	152	25
Last Mile Connectivity Project	98	16
Rural Electrification Authority (REA) Projects	310	52
National Transmission Grid Expansion	560	94
Smart Grid Technology Projects	407	68
Total	**1,996**	**333**

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured questionnaires incorporating Likert-scale items were employed as the primary data collection instrument. A pilot study involving 33 respondents (not included in the main study) was conducted to assess reliability. Content and construct validity were assessed through expert review. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.709 to 0.789, all meeting the minimum threshold of 0.70. Data were analysed using SPSS v20.0, employing descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), Pearson correlation, and multiple regression:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y = Project performance; X_1 = Stakeholder involvement; X_2 = Project planning; X_3 = Project leadership; X_4 = Risk management; β_1–β_4 = Regression coefficients; ε = Error term.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

4.1.1 Stakeholder Involvement

Table 2: presents descriptive statistics for stakeholder involvement items.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics — Stakeholder Involvement (n = 321)

Statement	M	SD
Active stakeholder involvement fosters ownership and commitment to project success	4.43	1.219
Stakeholder agreement leads to increased funding and promotional support	4.53	1.219
Stakeholder involvement ensures project alignment with organisational goals	3.30	1.494
Goal alignment through stakeholder involvement secures management support	4.58	0.756
Early stakeholder involvement helps identify and address conflicts proactively	4.11	0.835
Facilitating collaborative discussions leads to mutually beneficial solutions	4.08	0.744
Overall Score	4.17	1.045

The overall mean score of 4.17 (SD = 1.045) indicates that respondents generally agreed that stakeholder involvement positively influences project performance. The highest agreement was recorded for goal alignment contributing to project success (M = 4.58) and stakeholder agreement leading to increased support (M = 4.53). The neutral response on organisational alignment (M = 3.30) reflects a split opinion, contrasting with Nederhand and Klijn (2019), who emphasised that regular engagement clarifies goals and fosters shared understanding.

4.1.2 Project Planning

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics — Project Planning (n = 321)

Statement	M	SD
Effective project planning enables team members to understand desired outcomes	4.61	0.509
Clarity of objectives reduces ambiguity and enhances motivation	4.59	0.847
Project planning encourages collaboration by outlining roles and responsibilities	4.08	0.744
A solid project plan fosters effective communication among stakeholders	3.93	1.042
A comprehensive plan identifies personnel, budget, equipment, and material needs	3.94	1.060
Proper resource management prevents over-allocation or underutilisation	4.54	0.945
Overall Score	4.28	0.858

The overall mean of 4.28 (SD = 0.858) reflects broad agreement that project planning positively influences performance. Respondents strongly agreed that planning enables team understanding of outcomes (M = 4.61) and reduces ambiguity (M = 4.59), consistent with Srivastava, Kambhampati and Do (2021), who noted that a well-structured plan fosters shared understanding and minimises miscommunication.

4.1.3 Project Leadership

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics — Project Leadership (n = 321)

Statement	M	SD
A strong project leader establishes a clear vision and direction for the project	3.57	1.300
Leaders help team members understand how their work contributes to organisational strategy	4.15	1.101
Project leaders motivate teams by recognising individual contributions	4.10	1.670
Leaders ensure team engagement and commitment to delivering high-quality results	4.61	0.579
Leaders analyse situations and make informed decisions influencing project outcomes	3.93	1.070
Strong leaders foster collaborative environments where innovative solutions emerge	4.58	0.879
Overall Score	4.16	1.099

The overall mean of 4.16 (SD = 1.099) reflects broad agreement that leadership positively influences project outcomes. The strongest agreement was for ensuring team engagement and commitment (M = 4.61) and fostering collaborative environments for innovation (M = 4.58), consistent with Nixon, Harrington and Parker (2022), who found that collaborative, trust-based leaders enhance team morale and performance.

4.1.4 Risk Management

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics — Risk Management (n = 321)

Statement	M	SD
Risk identification helps project managers develop more accurate project plans	4.27	1.130
Identifying risks enables teams to create targeted mitigation strategies	4.52	0.558
Risk evaluation helps leaders prioritise efforts and assets on significant risks	4.05	0.829
Risk evaluation enables teams to develop informed strategies to address risks	4.29	0.606
Risk mitigation strategies reduce the likelihood of risks materialising	4.10	1.670
Risk mitigation ensures project progress even under unforeseen challenges	4.61	0.579
Overall Score	4.31	0.895

The overall mean of 4.31 (SD = 0.895) reflects strong agreement that risk management enhances project performance. The highest agreement was for risk mitigation ensuring project progress (M = 4.61) and targeted mitigation strategies reducing risk likelihood (M = 4.52), consistent with Carvalho and Rabechini (2018), who identified risk management as a cornerstone of successful project delivery.

4.1.5 Project Performance

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics — Project Performance (n = 321)

Statement	M	SD
Projects delivered are cost effective	2.97	2.030
Projects are delivered within the set timeframe	3.06	1.940
Projects completed are of high quality	3.45	1.550
Overall Score	3.16	1.840

The neutral overall mean of 3.16 (SD = 1.840), with high standard deviations, indicates divergent respondent views on project performance outcomes. This finding contrasts with Winch and Leiringer (2022), who associate infrastructure project success with the delivery of expected outcomes within budget and schedule, suggesting significant performance gaps remain in Kenya's energy sector.

4.2 Inferential Statistics

4.2.1 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation was used to assess the relationships between the independent variables and project performance. Results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Pearson Correlation Analysis — Project Performance (p < 0.05)**

Variable	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Stakeholder Involvement	.745**	.003	321
Project Planning	.791**	.002	321
Project Leadership	.755**	.003	321
Risk Management	.776**	.003	321

All four independent variables demonstrated strong positive and statistically significant correlations with project performance: stakeholder involvement ($r = 0.745$, $p = 0.003$), project planning ($r = 0.791$, $p = 0.002$), project leadership ($r = 0.755$, $p = 0.003$), and risk management ($r = 0.776$, $p = 0.003$). Project planning exhibited the strongest correlation, underscoring its critical role in energy infrastructure delivery.

4.2.2 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the combined predictive strength of the independent variables on project performance.

Table 8: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	0.902	0.814	0.611

Table 9: Multiple Regression Coefficient Analysis

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Constant	0.518	0.521	—	0.994	0.003
Stakeholder Involvement	0.711	0.112	0.551	6.348	0.004
Project Planning	0.796	0.234	0.674	3.402	0.002
Project Leadership	0.774	0.336	0.663	2.303	0.003
Risk Management	0.703	0.196	0.406	3.587	0.004

The adjusted R^2 of 0.611 indicates that the four project management dynamics collectively explain 61.1% of the variance in project performance, with 38.9% attributable to factors beyond the scope of this study. The regression equation is:

Project Performance = 0.518 + 0.551(Stakeholder Involvement) + 0.674(Project Planning) + 0.663(Project Leadership) + 0.406(Risk Management)

Project planning ($\beta = 0.674$) had the greatest influence on project performance, followed by project leadership ($\beta = 0.663$), stakeholder involvement ($\beta = 0.551$), and risk management ($\beta = 0.406$). All coefficients were statistically significant at $p < 0.05$, confirming the positive and substantial role of each dynamic in shaping infrastructure project outcomes.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This study concludes that project management dynamics exert a statistically significant and positive influence on the performance of infrastructure development projects in Kenya's energy sector. Early stakeholder involvement aids in gathering diverse perspectives, building trust, and identifying potential conflicts before they escalate, resulting in technically sound and socially acceptable projects. Comprehensive project planning facilitates the identification of essential financial, human, and material resources, reduces scope creep, and enables proactive risk response through contingency planning.

Effective project leadership is critical in navigating the inherent complexity of energy infrastructure projects. Active leaders who communicate transparently, recognise individual contributions, and nurture collaborative environments significantly improve team performance and decision quality. Robust risk management contributes to financial control by enabling timely identification of potential threats, development of mitigation strategies, and transparent communication among government entities, investors, and communities.

Notwithstanding these findings, the neutral performance ratings recorded for cost efficiency (M = 2.97), schedule adherence (M = 3.06), and quality (M = 3.45) underscore persistent performance deficits in Kenya's energy infrastructure, highlighting the need for sustained application of these project management dynamics.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study makes the following recommendations:

(i) The energy sector should institutionalise consistent multi-stakeholder engagement forums, including digital platforms, to collect diverse perspectives and foster collaborative ownership of projects from inception.

(ii) Project management software and structured planning tools should be adopted to streamline resource allocation, risk tracking, and decision making across project lifecycles.

(iii) Continuous professional development programmes for project leaders and team members should be established to strengthen negotiation, adaptive management, and technical competencies.

(iv) A centralised database of historical project risks and outcomes should be developed to inform evidence-based risk assessment and adaptive planning for future energy infrastructure initiatives.

(v) Agile and responsive project management methodologies should be explored to enhance flexibility in rapidly changing regulatory and environmental landscapes.

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