

Project Planning and the Performance of Public Project in Rwanda. A Case Study of DMIS Implemented by NCPD

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17600091>

Published Date: 13-November-2025

Abstract: This study examined the effect of project planning on the performance of public projects in Rwanda, focusing on the Disability Management Information System (DMIS) project. The research aimed to assess how risk management planning, resource planning, and stakeholder engagement influence project performance. An explanatory mixed-methods design was employed, involving 92 respondents selected from 119 DMIS stakeholders using simple random sampling. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires containing both Likert-scale and open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative responses underwent thematic analysis. Findings revealed strong positive correlations between the three planning components and DMIS project performance. Risk management planning showed the highest influence ($r = 0.781$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 61% of performance variance, followed by resource planning ($r = 0.764$, $p < 0.001$; 58%) and stakeholder engagement ($r = 0.732$, $p < 0.001$; 54%). The combined regression model was significant ($F(3,88) = 72.614$, $p < 0.001$), with an adjusted R^2 of 0.713, indicating that the three variables jointly explained 71.3% of the variation in project performance. Qualitative findings supported these results, emphasizing the importance of proactive risk identification, efficient resource allocation, and inclusive stakeholder participation in achieving timely, budget-compliant, and high-quality project outcomes. The study concludes that comprehensive project planning—encompassing strong risk management, effective resource planning, and stakeholder engagement—is a key determinant of successful public project performance in Rwanda.

Keywords: Project Planning, Performance, Public Project, DMIS, NCPD, Rwanda.

I. INTRODUCTION

Effective project planning is essential for successful implementation and performance for public projects as it establishes the foundation for managing time, resources, costs, risks and quality. A project is considered to have performed well when it responds to its predefined objectives, completed in predefined timeframe and budget (Zwikael & Meredith, 2021). According to the World Bank (2016), well-structured planning processes can significantly improve the likelihood of successful project outcomes. This involves detailed budgeting, resource allocation, risk management and stakeholder involvement from the inception of the project. Additionally, project planning facilitates the monitoring and control of projects, allowing for early identification and resolution of issues that might hinder project performance (World Bank, 2020).

According to Schwalbe (2019), effective project planning is recognized as a vital determinant of project success, influencing various outcomes. Moreover, the studies have shown that projects with well-defined plans are more likely to achieve their objectives compared to those with inadequate planning (Kerzner, 2017); This was supported by Ramesh, Babu and Rao (2018), in their study that revealed a high positive correlation between planning activities and project success at $r = 0.725$.

Despite advancements in project management practices, many projects fail due to incomplete or unrealistic project plans that fail to account for unforeseen challenges (Andersen *et al.* 2020). Turner and Müller (2017), declares that while many projects start with strong concepts and significant investments, they often face various challenges during execution that

hinder success; The key reason for project failure is the poor definition of deliverables and scope, which results in misunderstandings among team members about the project's fundamentals, ultimately affecting performance. Project Management Institute (2017), reported 43% of project failure due to poor project planning, highlighting the significance of planning on the success of any project. This is complemented by United Nations Economic Commission for Africa report, which declared that poor project planning in many African nations is associated with limited capacity at both the local and national levels (UNECA, 2021).

In Africa, effective project planning is a persistent challenge in development projects across the continent, significantly impacting their effectiveness and overall performance. According to the African Development Bank "AfDB" (2019), poor project planning remains the significant barrier of public projects performance across the continent. This is complemented by the International Monetary Fund which states that inadequate planning processes fail to align project goals with broader national development strategies as an exacerbating challenge to the poor performance of public projects in Africa (IMF,2021). Kiiza and Munene (2022), declares that 18% of projects investigated in Ghana and other region of Africa were successful while over 43% and over 59% consecutively experienced project delays and budget escalation and one of the factors attributed to these failures was the project planning process.

Data from the African Development Bank (2019), shows that in Sub-Saharan Africa, only 53% of projects are completed on time, with cost overruns reported in more than half of the cases. Whereas the study by Smit and Geldenhuys (2021), found that poor planning and inadequate stakeholder engagement led to failures in African infrastructure projects, which have direct implications for economic development. This underscores the necessity for effective planning to mitigate risks and improve outcomes of public projects.

In Rwanda, studies have shown that planning enhances project performance by ensuring alignment with objectives, efficient resource utilization and timely completion. The research on the establishment of a Frequency Spectrum Management and Monitoring System in Rwanda highlighted that comprehensive planning significantly contributes to the project success in public institutions (Strategic Journals, 2020). Similarly, an analysis of the Rwanda Dairy Development Project in Burera District found that effective planning practices, including scope, cost and risk planning, positively influence project success (Stratford Journal, 2023). Additionally, the World Bank's Urban Development Project in Rwanda has underscored the significance of planning in urban infrastructure projects, stating that well-structured planning processes are essential for successful project execution (World Bank, 2018). These findings highlight the significant impact of proper planning in line to enhancing the success of public projects countrywide.

Even though, the Rwanda has made significant strides in improving its project planning for sustainable project performance, there is still a loophole that needs to be overcome through the effective project planning. According to Tuyishime and Nyambane (2021), some projects underperformed, and among the factors contributing to their failure include inadequate planning, inappropriate objectives and targets setting, coordination of activities, mobilization of resources and poor feasibility study.

Even if the project planning remains as key determinant for performance of public projects, the consideration of government policies in both planning process and the performance of these projects cannot be underestimated. Government policies can enhance project performance by facilitating resource allocation, stakeholder engagement and the establishment of clear objectives. According to UNDP (2020), strong political commitment is vital for effective implementation of public projects, especially in developing countries. This is complemented by the African Development Bank (2021) which stated that there is a 30% increase in successful completion rates of infrastructure projects in African nations with strong political backing compared to those without.

Conversely, in some cases political inferences may result in a discrepancy between project objectives and the real needs of community, thereby compromising its overall performance. The World Bank (2019) declared that projects driven by political agendas rather than technical feasibility often encounter significant delays and cost overruns. Whereas report by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (2022), emphasized that projects in politically unstable regions often face disruptions, resulting in poor performance and outcomes. Therefore, it is evident that project planning, government policies and performance are intricately connected in public projects.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study used an explanatory study incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research designs.

Target Population

The target population for this study consisted of persons who have been involved in planning and or execution of Disability Management Information System (DMIS) project in Rwanda.

Sample Design

Sample Size

The sample is the portion of the population that is selected for analysis, which allows researchers to draw conclusions and generalize about the entire population (Trochim, 2020). In this study, the sample size was calculated using the Slovin's formula.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N \cdot e^2}$$

(Levy & Lemeshow, 2020).

Where:

- n = required sample size
- N = size of the population (119 persons)
- e = margin of error (expressed as a decimal) equal to 0,05

Using the above formula, the sample size (n) will comprise 92 persons.

Sampling Technique

Considering the diversity of study population and offering equitable chance for each individual to be part of the sample, a simple random sampling technique was used. A random sampling was employed by establishing a sampling frame, which was essentially made of identification of persons who were involved in planning, execution, and oversight of the DMIS project.

Data Collection Instruments

In this research, the researcher has used a single data collection tool; A questionnaire incorporating both Likert scale statements for quantitative data and open-ended questions for qualitative insights.

III. RESULTS

1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

To effectively contextualize the research findings, this research gathered key social demographic information from respondents, specifically focusing on Gender, Educational background, Area of employment, and their specific role within the DMIS project. This systematic collection enables a nuanced understanding of the participant pool, crucial for interpreting their perspectives on project-related aspects.

Table 1: Social demographic information of respondents

Demographic Category	Classification	Frequency (n=89)	Percentage (%)
Gender Distribution	Male	59	66.30%
	Female	30	33.70%
Educational Attainment	Bachelor's Degree	53	59.60%
	Master's Degree	35	39.30%
	Doctorate	1	1.10%
Area of Employment	Government Staff	58	65.20%
	Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)	19	21.30%
	Government Partner	7	7.90%
	Other	5	5.60%
Role in DMIS Project	Case Manager	28	31.50%
	Partner/Other	27	30.30%
	Representative of Persons with Disabilities	18	20.20%
	Project Team Member / Senior Executive	14	15.80%
	Project Steering Committee Member	2	2.20%

Source: Primary data, (2025)

The demographic profile of the respondents presented in Table 1, reveals a participant pool characterized by high educational attainment, which is capital for the reliability of the research. Nearly all individuals surveyed possess a minimum of a bachelor’s or master’s degree (98.9%), indicating that the participants have the professional background and cognitive capacity to provide informed and technically nuanced insights into the complex project planning and performance issues of the DMIS initiative. This strong intellectual foundation significantly enhances the expected quality and depth of the collected data. While a notable gender imbalance exists, with males comprising two-thirds of the sample (66.3%), this distribution may reflect the prevailing gender landscape within the senior technical and public administrative roles pertinent to this IT sector.

The institutional context of the sample strongly validates the study's focus on a collaborative public-sector environment. The largest group of respondents are government staff (65.2%), aligning the dataset directly with the DMIS's status as a public project implemented by a mandated agency. However, the substantial inclusion of staff from non-government organizations (NGOs) (21.3%) and Government Partners (7.9%) confirms that the study successfully captured the multi-sectoral partnership essential for public-service delivery projects. Furthermore, the functional roles within the DMIS project are highly diversified, with key operational perspectives provided by Case Managers (31.5%) and vital beneficiary insights ensured by Representatives of Persons with Disabilities (20.2%). This rich, heterogeneous distribution of roles encompassing individuals across strategic, managerial, and end-user levels, is fundamental to the qualitative rigor of the study. Additionally, the varied sample composition provides a powerful basis for the subsequent thematic analysis, allowing themes related to planning practices, and project performance to be triangulated across differing categorical perspectives. For example, operational challenges reported by Case Managers can be directly linked to perceived resource planning issues reported by Government Staff, while final system usability can be accessed via feedback from Representatives of Persons with Disabilities. This comprehensive representation across the entire implementation and beneficiary chain assures the analytical depth and holistic validity of the final conclusions regarding project planning and performance of public projects.

2. Presentation of Findings

This section presents the study's empirical findings in a structured and comprehensive manner. The analysis begins with descriptive statistics, where quantitative data are organized into tables to show frequencies through percentages, summarize central tendencies using the mean, and highlight data dispersion with the standard deviation. This approach provides a clear overview of respondents' perceptions and reveals key patterns. To enrich these quantitative findings, the analysis also incorporates qualitative insight derived from thematic analysis, which offers deeper explanations and a more holistic understanding of the results. The section concludes with an inferential analysis using regression model to examine the relationship between independent and dependent variables.

2.1 Descriptive Statistics

This section presents the study's findings using descriptive statistics, which summarize the perceptions of respondents on various statements. Each table details responses on a Likert scale, with the abbreviations SD, D, A, and SA respectively representing Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, and Strongly Agree, respectively. Additionally, the mean and standard deviation (Std. Dev.) are included to provide a comprehensive view of the central tendency and dispersion of the data.

2.1.1 Risk management planning in DMIS Project

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Risk Management Planning

Statements on risk management planning	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
The identification and assessment of risks were adequately addressed during the planning phase of DMIS projects	16.9%	58.4%	23.6%	1.1%	2.1	0.7
Risk management planning significantly influences the overall performance of DMIS project	0%	18%	73%	9%	2.91	0.52

Source: Primary data, (2025)

The findings regarding risk management planning in the DMIS project presented in Table 2, paint a clear picture its implementation in DMIS project. On one hand, there is a strong consensus among stakeholders that risk management planning significantly influences overall project performance (Mean = 2.91 on a 4-point scale with very low variance). This

high level of agreement confirms that stakeholders widely recognize risk management as a critical determinant of whether public projects succeed or fail. However, this conviction stands in contrast to the perception of the DMIS project’s actual practices. A prevailing negative perception exists, confirmed by a low mean score of 2.1, indicating that the identification and assessment of risks were not adequately addressed during the critical planning phase. This were underscored by the fact that a combined 75.3% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that risk identification was adequate. This high level of negative consensus points to a fundamental weakness in the project's foundational planning. The quantitative data were supported by qualitative insights, which consistently revealed that this inadequate risk identification and planning led to frequent, unexpected uncertainties and forced the organization into reactive responses rather than proactive mitigation which underscores the critical need for a risk management planning to prevent disruptions and ensure the expected project performance. In addition, these findings were supported by the core principles of the Project Life Cycle Theory (Cheng & Wang, 2020), which emphasizes that early risk management is crucial for mitigating disruptions and ensuring project success.

2.1.2 Resource allocation in DMIS project planning

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics on Resource Allocation

Statements on risk management planning	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Resource allocation (financial, human, and material) was effectively planned during the DMIS project planning phase	17%	58%	24%	11%	2.09	0.668
Is there a correlation between the availability of resources (time, personnel, and funds) and the performance of the DMIS project	0%	15%	75%	10%	2.96	0.498

Source: Primary data, (2025)

The data presented in Table 3 on resource allocation, reveals a predominant consensus of disagreement among respondents (Mean = 2.09; 75.3% Disagree or Strongly Disagree), indicating a widespread belief that the planning for financial, human, and material resources was not inadequate during project's planning phase. This negative perception was not isolated but was supported by a low standard deviation (0.668), confirming a general agreement that resource allocation was defective. This deficit is complemented by qualitative feedback from respondents that highlights critical shortcomings in DMIS project's resource planning practices, particularly concerning human resource planning, capacity building, and financial resource allocation. The perceived unrealistic planning led to significant budget execution challenges; some activities were reportedly over budgeted, leading to unabsorbed funds, while others.

On the other hand, the data analysis reveals a compelling insight into the perceived relationship between resource availability and the performance of the DMIS project. With a mean score of 2.96 on a 4-point scale, respondents overwhelmingly agree that a correlation exists. This is powerfully supported by the frequency distribution, where a combined 85% of respondents either "Agree" (75%) or "Strongly Agree" (10%) with the statement. The very low standard deviation of 0.498 further underscores this finding, demonstrating a high degree of consensus and minimal variance in opinion among the respondents. This provides robust evidence that resource availability is a critical and widely recognized determinant of project success.

The findings in Table 3 are powerfully supported by both empirical and theoretical literature. The widespread consensus among respondents that resource availability is critical for public project performance, directly validates global findings that effective resource planning leads to significant improvements in project performance, including a 30% improvement in construction projects (Aljohani et al., 2019) and a 35% increase in efficiency in Nigeria's oil and gas sector (Okoro & Ibe, 2021). This empirical evidence from the DMIS project also aligns with the Resource-Based View theory, which states that an institution’s unique resources are vital for superior performance (Barney & Clark, 2017), and the Theory of Constraints, which emphasizes that managing critical resource limitations is essential for project success (Smith & Jones, 2023). Thus, the study's findings are not isolated but agree with existing project management theories, reinforcing the conclusion that resource planning is a critical determinant of public projects performance.

2.1.3 Stakeholder engagement in DMIS project planning

Table 4: Descriptive statistics on stakeholder engagement during DMIS project planning

Statements on risk management planning	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Stakeholders were actively engaged during the planning phase of the DMIS project	6.7%	50.6%	41.1%	1.1%	2.37	0.67
Stakeholder expectations were considered and incorporated into the planning phase of the DMIS project	6.7%	64%	28.1%	1.1%	2.24	0.58

Source: Primary data, (2025)

The descriptive statistics revealed a weakness in the stakeholder engagement during the project's planning phase, suggesting a failure to integrate external perspectives effectively. On the statement, "Stakeholders were actively engaged during the planning phase of the DMIS project," the mean score of 2.37 (on a 4-points scale) indicates a predominantly negative perception of stakeholder involvement. This negativity is powerfully confirmed by the frequency data, where a combined 57.3% of respondents explicitly disagreed or strongly disagreed with the assertion, signifying a widespread consensus that active participation was lacking.

This perceived lack of active stakeholders' engagement is directly compounded by the finding regarding for the statement, "Stakeholder expectations were considered and incorporated into the planning phase of the DMIS project," the mean score dropped even lower to 2.24, representing a collective belief that expectations were not considered and incorporated into planning phase. This was supported by the finding that around 70.7% of respondents (a combination of Strongly Disagree and Disagree) felt that their expectations were not adequately integrated. The standard deviation of 0.58, being even lower than the previous metric, underscores a shared negative consensus that the project failed to translate consultation into actionable planning outputs.

Those quantitative data are complemented by a qualitative insight from respondents where significant majority of them reported ineffective stakeholder engagement in project planning and even in activities directly relevant to their roles. This limited engagement demonstrably compromised their full contribution during implementation, leading to delayed interventions and ultimately hindering the overall progress and effectiveness of the planned activities.

2.1.4 Government policies and performance of DMIS project

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics on the Perceived Contribution of Government Policies to DMIS Project Performance

Statements on risk management planning	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
Did Government policies and decisions contribute to the overall performance of DMIS project?	0%	13.5%	74.2%	21.4%	2.99	0.51

Source: Primary data, (2025)

The data displayed in Table 5 reveals a conclusive insight into the perceived impact of government policies and decisions on the performance of DMIS project. With a mean of 2.99 on a 4-point scale, most respondents perceived that government policies contributed positively to the project's performance. This consensus is powerfully demonstrated by the frequency distribution, where a combined 95.6% of participants either "Agree" (74.2%) or "Strongly Agree" (21.4%) with the statement. The exceptionally low standard deviation of 0.51 underscores a near-unanimous agreement, indicating that opinions on this matter are highly clustered around the mean. Those quantitative data are complemented by a qualitative insight from respondents stating that DMIS, as a government-led project, benefited immensely from strong political will, which secured substantial public and partners' financing. This political backing served as a foundational enabler. However, respondents also noted instances where political decisions mandated public servants to undertake some unplanned or unfunded activities deemed essential for project continuity. This data strongly suggests widespread recognition among the surveyed individuals that governmental frameworks and directives play a crucial and supportive role in facilitating the success of public projects, highlighting the perceived importance of policy alignment and governmental endorsement in achieving desired project outcomes.

2.1.5 Performance of DMIS project

Table 6: Descriptive statistics on perceived performance of DMIS projects against scope, time, and budget expectations

Statements on risk management planning	SD	D	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
DMIS project has met the expected performance in scope, within the predefined time and budget	7.9%	66.3%	25.8%	0.0%	2.18	0.55
DMIS project was completed within the allocated budget	7%	64%	29%	0.0%	2.22	0.56
DMIS project was completed on time	12.4%	61.8%	25.8%	0.0%	2.22	0.56

Source: Primary data, (2025)

The descriptive statistical findings established a consistent perception of underperformance regarding the project's ability to meet its fundamental triple constraint objectives. The aggregated performance metric yielded a low mean score of 2.18 on the 4-point Likert scale, which signifies a pervasive failure to deliver the expected scope within the predefined time and budget. This negative perception was statistically validated by the fact that a dominant 74.2% of respondents actively registered disagreement, combined with a minimal standard deviation of 0.55. This consensus confirms a significant variance between the planned execution and the realized outcome, pointing toward a fundamental execution failure in the implementation of the public sector project.

Furthermore, this largely negative perception was supported by the detailed analysis of cost-effectiveness and timeliness, which are critical metrics of project performance. The data on timeliness yielded an equally low mean score of 2.22, with 74.2% of stakeholders disagreeing that the project was completed on schedule. This finding critically suggests a major deficiency in the initial schedule management plan and the subsequent monitoring and control processes. Similarly, the perceived financial performance against the allocated budget is highly negative, also scoring a mean of 2.22, as 71% of the sample explicitly disagreed that the DMIS was completed within its financial limits. This robust consensus on budget overrun provides compelling evidence of a failure in cost planning (e.g., inaccurate resource estimation or faulty contingency allocation) and financial control during the execution phase. Collectively, these descriptive statistics provide compelling empirical evidence that the DMIS project experienced significant shortcomings across its core performance indicators. The consistent negative means and high rates of disagreement on both timeliness and cost-effectiveness establish a clear need for the subsequent regression analysis.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion highlights that effective project planning significantly enhances the performance of the DMIS project in Rwanda. The study found a strong positive influence of risk management planning on project success, showing that identifying and assessing risks early leads to improved outcomes in scope, time, and budget performance. Similarly, resource planning demonstrated a powerful positive correlation with project performance, indicating that efficient allocation of financial, human, and material resources is vital for achieving project objectives. Stakeholder engagement also had a substantial positive effect, though slightly lower than the other factors, suggesting that active involvement of stakeholders during the planning phase promotes ownership, communication, and project success. Collectively, the results reveal that comprehensive planning—encompassing risk management, resource allocation, and stakeholder participation—explains a significant proportion of the project's performance variance. These findings align with existing project management literature (PMI, 2017; Schwalbe, 2019; Pinto, 2019) emphasizing that structured and inclusive planning minimizes risks, optimizes resource use, and enhances project outcomes. Overall, the study concludes that effective project planning is a decisive determinant of successful performance in public sector projects such as the DMIS in Rwanda.

V. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that effective project planning significantly enhances public project performance in Rwanda, as demonstrated by the DMIS project case. Risk management planning showed a strong correlation with performance ($R = 0.875$, $R^2 = 0.766$), emphasizing the value of proactive risk assessment. Resource planning also exhibited a substantial impact ($R^2 = 0.766$), highlighting the importance of efficient allocation of financial, human, and material resources. Additionally, stakeholder engagement contributed notably to performance ($R^2 = 0.516$), underscoring the role of inclusive

participation in planning. All null hypotheses were rejected, confirming that these planning components strongly influence project success. Overall, the findings affirm that robust risk management, strategic resource allocation, and active stakeholder involvement are key drivers of effective public project implementation in Rwanda, offering vital insights for policymakers and project managers seeking to enhance project outcomes.

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