

THE IMPACT OF STRUCTURAL PATTERNS ON PERFORMANCE OF DONOR FUNDED PROJECTS IN RWAMAGANA DISTRICT: A CASE STUDY OF RURAL SECTOR SUPPORT PROJECT

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Abstract: Rwamagana is one of the districts that have attracted many donor funded projects in Rwanda. The question that this study sought to answer is why are these donor funded projects are not delivering the expected results or benefits to the recipient community? And this will be guided by answering the questions of what are the structural patterns affecting performance of these donor funded projects and how do these structural patterns impact the performance of donor funded projects in Rwamagana district by focusing on Rural Sector Support Project as one of the donor funded projects operating in Rwamagana district. The general objective of the study was to assess the impact of structural patterns on the performance of donor funded projects in Rwamagana district. The study used a survey research design. The target population of the study was made of 46 employees of Rural Sector Support Project in Rwamagana district and other project's staff located at the head office at Kigali as they have the information relevant to this study. The researcher preferred to use a census since the population under this study was quite small. The data collected were well examined and checked for completeness and comprehensibility. They were summarized, coded and tabulated. Means, standard deviation and frequency distribution statistical methods were used to analyze data. Data presentation was done by the use of frequency tables for ease of understanding and interpretations. Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used to execute simple linear regressions. Regression and correlation analysis were used to describe the impact of structural patterns on performance of Rural Sector Support Project. The researcher concluded a strong relationship between funds disbursement and performance of Rural Sector Support Project. Furthermore; the researcher concluded a significant relationship between competence of project implementers and performance of Rural Sector Support Project. Finally; the researcher concluded a significant relationship community involvement and performance of projects. The researcher recommend the project team and project managers elaborate and timely put in place the project budget so as to ensure that all tasks and activities are carried out within the expected time frame and this will ensure the project performance. The researcher recommend the project owners and managers to recruit the team that is experienced in implementation of donor funded projects because these projects are associated with a very risky and changing environment which needs special working experience to deal with it. Since this study focused on structural patterns and performance of donor funded projects in Rwamagana district, the research only investigated issues related to the subject matter of the study, however a few areas for further research were identified and the researcher suggest the same study to be carried on different donor funded projects outside of Rwamagana district so as to support or contract the findings of this study.

Keywords: Structural patterns, Performance of donor funded projects.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Musoni (2004), the Government of Rwanda in a bid to increase and ensure effective use of donor funds has mentioned strong concerns about current aid arrangements including: 1) A tendency of donors to be excessively prescriptive 2) The 'crowding-in' of aid to sectors and regions that are in fashion (e.g. governance in Rwanda's case) 3) A lack of clarity within the donor community about their accountability requirements 4) A lack of coherence in policies and practices between, and among donors 5) Donor-government policies and practices restricting trade access for exporters in low-income countries 6) IMF hegemony in setting macro programmes 7) An ineffective and inappropriate supply of technical assistance, and/or insufficient attention given to capacity building 8) A preference of most donors to set up separate procedures rather than to work jointly 9) The unpredictability of assistance, in particular disbursements by donors 10) An excessive number of conditions accompanying aid programmes 11) The tendency to fill gaps and write more detailed 'action plans' for government with insufficient attention to capacity building 12) Donors' preference for discrete project support 13) Long delays in disbursements and performance due to the rigidity of donor procedures 14) Non-transparency of donors and their inability to share information more actively.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Kotze (2007) demonstrates common problems with donor funded projects in South Africa which is pretty much the case with the problems seen in other parts of Africa. He offers proposals on how to make such projects effective using a model called 'simplify, standardize, replicate and monitor'. The problems with such projects are varied and include erroneous use of technology, monitoring and evaluation, empowerment of primary stakeholders, and accountability issues. These can be explained further by studying factors such as disbursement of project funds, community participation, implementing team competencies and how they impact the performance of donor funded projects.

There have been several projects funded by donors such as the World Bank, Plan Rwanda, CARITAS, Rural Sector Support Project and Catholic Relief Services among others to help alleviate poverty in Rwanda. Most of these projects have been designed for various communities living in Rwanda. Rwamagana is one of the districts that have attracted many donor funded projects. The question that this study sought to answer is why are these donor funded projects are not delivering the expected results or benefits to the recipient community? And this will be guided by answering the questions of what are the structural patterns affecting performance of these donor funded projects and how do these structural patterns impact the performance of donor funded projects in Rwamagana district by focusing on Rural Sector Support Project as one of the donor funded projects operating in Rwamagana district.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of the study was to assess the impact of structural patterns on the performance of donor funded projects in Rwamagana district.

3.1 Specific objectives:

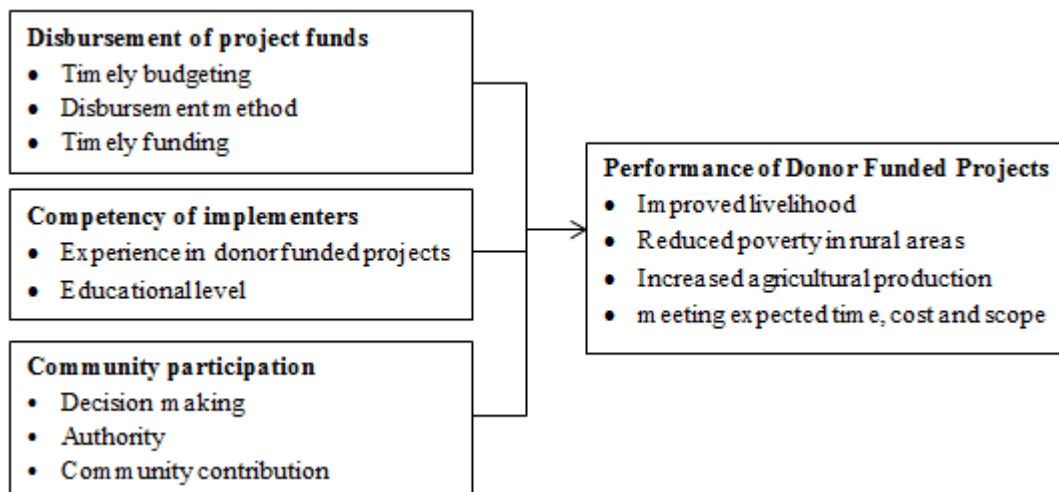
The specific objectives of this study were:

1. To examine the effect of disbursements of funds on performance of donor funded projects in Rwamagana district.
2. To determine the impact of competence of project implementers on performance of donor funded projects in Rwamagana district.
3. To analyse the extent to which community involvement influences performance of donor funded projects.

3.2 Research questions:

1. What is the effect of disbursement of funds on the performance of donor funded projects in Rwamagana district?
2. What is the impact of competency of project implementers influence performance of donor funded projects in Rwamagana district?
3. To what extent does community involvement influence performance of donor funded projects in Rwamagana district?

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- **Research Design:** This study used a survey research design. Surveys are suitable in gathering data whose intention is to describe the nature of the existing condition.

Target Population: The target population of the study was made of 46 employees of Rural Sector Support Project in Rwamagana district and other project's staff located at the head office at Kigali as they have the information relevant to this study.

Table 1: Target Population

S/N	Category	Number	Sample Size
1	Project manager	1	1
2	Coordinators at district level	1	1
3	Field staff	35	35
4	Support staff	9	9
Total		46	46

- **Sample Size:** Since the target population of the study is a small number, the researcher preferred to use a census by considering the total population as sample.
- **Data Collection Instruments:** The quantitative data was collected using questionnaires and they were made of close ended questions. This allowed for intensity and richness of individual perception in responding the asked questions (Babbie, 1998).

6. RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 Examining the effect of disbursement of funds on performance of Rural Sector Support Projects:

Table 2: Correlation between Funds disbursement and Performance of Rural Sector Support Project

		Resources estimation	RSSP Performance
Funds disbursement	Pearson Correlation	1	.699**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	46	46
Performance of RSSP	Pearson Correlation	.699**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	46	46

Source: Field Data (2018)

According to findings in the Table 2 above, the correlation between Funds disbursement and performance of Rural Sector Support Project was at the rate of 0.699 meaning that Funds disbursement influence the performance of Rural Sector Support Project at 69.9%. Therefore, the researcher concluded a strong relationship between Funds disbursement and performance of Rural Sector Support Project. By considering the level of significance which is 0.05, there is a significant relationship between Funds disbursement and performance of Rural Sector Support Project as their p-value (0.006) which is statistically significant at 5% level of significance.

6.2 The impact of competence of project implementers on performance of Rural Sector Support Project:

Table 3: Correlation between competence of project implementers and performance of Rural Sector Support Project

		Team Competence	RSSP performance
Competence of project implementers	Pearson Correlation	1	.642**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	46	46
Performance of Rural Sector Support Project	Pearson Correlation	.642**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	46	46

Source: Field Data (2018)

The Table 3 revealed that, the results of correlation between competence of project implementers and performance of Rural Sector Support Project was at 0.642 meaning that competence of project implementers affect performance of Rural Sector Support Project at the level of 64.2% which prove the strong relationship between correlation between competence of project implementers and performance of Rural Sector Support Project. If the researcher considers the level of significance which is 0.05, there is therefore a significant relationship between competence of project implementers and performance of Rural Sector Support Project because their p-value (0.000) is statistically significant at 5% level of significance.

6.3 Analysis of the extent to which community involvement influences performance of Rural Sector Support Project:

Table 4: Correlation between community involvement and performance of Rural Sector Support Project

		Community Involvement	RSSP performance
Community involvement	Pearson Correlation	1	.675**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	46	46
RSSP Performance	Pearson Correlation	.675**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	46	46

Source: Field Data (2018)

The results of correlation between community involvement and performance of Rural Sector Support Project was at the rate of 0.675 meaning that community involvement affect performance of Rural Sector Support Project at the level of 67.5%. Therefore there is a significant relationship community involvement and performance of projects. On the other hand, by considering the level of significance which is 0.05, hence community involvement has a significant effect on the performance of projects because their p-value (0.000) is statistically significant at 5% level of significance hence a strong correlation between community involvement and performance of Rural Sector Support Project.

6.4 Performance of Rural Sector Support Project:

In order to assess the performance of Rural Sector Support Project; respondents were asked to give their points of views on improving residents' livelihood, reducing poverty, increasing agricultural production and meeting the expected time, cost and scope.

Table 5: Performance of Rural Sector Support project (RSSP)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
RSSP improved residents' livelihood	46	1.2391	.43127
RSSP reduced poverty	46	4.4565	.50361
RSSP increasing agricultural production	46	4.4783	.50505
RSSP is meeting the expected time, cost and scope	46	4.3913	.64904

Source: Field Data (2018)

From Table 5, the mean values for the second, third and fourth statements are 4.45; 4.47 and 4.39 respectively which are rounded off to 4 the code for strongly disagree. This means that in general respondents have strongly disagreed that Rural Sector Support Project is meeting the expected time, cost and scope and the first mean value is 1.23 which is rounded off to 1 the code for strongly agree to mean that RSSP improved residents' livelihood, increased agricultural production, and completely failed to meet the expected time, cost and scope. The standard deviation for the first, second and third statements are less than or equal to 0.5 meaning that respondents' answers on these statements were not far different from the mean, in order words, their answers to the statement were homogenous.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.657 ^a	.431	.422	.69316
a. Predictors: (Constant), Independent variable				
b. Dependent variable: Rural Sector Support Project Performance				

Source: Field Data (2018)

Table 7: ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	64.813	3	21.604	44.965	.000 ^a
	Residual	85.523	43	.480		
	Total	150.335	46			
a. Dependent variable: Rural Sector Support performance						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Independent Variable						

Source: Field Data (2018)

Table 8: Estimate parameters between funds disbursements and project performance

Coefficients ^a					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error		
1	(Constant)	.098	.167	.588	.560
	Independent variables	.450	.117	3.858	.000
		.209	.087	2.387	.022
		.087	.049	1.765	.085

Source: Field Data (2018)

According to the information from table above, if: Y= Rural Sector Support Project performance and X= funds disbursement (timely budgeting, funds disbursement methods, and timely funding) the positive coefficient of determination indicates that there is positive correlation between funds disbursement and project performance. The β_1 , β_2 , β_3 of Rural Sector Support Project performance are 0.45; 0.209 and 0.087 with a statistically significant ($p = 0.000$). Therefore, the model equation derived was: $y = 0.98 + 0.45x_1 + 0.209x_2 + 0.087x_3 + e$. The positive coefficient further demonstrates that a 1% increase in the performance of project in term of improving residents' livelihood is

attributed to 0.45 improvement in Rural Sector Support Project performance and the high t-statistic value (3.858) indicates that the effect is statistically significant at 95% confidence level. An increase of 1% on the performance of project in terms of improving residents' livelihood will increase the Rural Sector Support Project performance given by 0.209 at the high t-statistic value (2.387) indicates the effect is statistically significant at 95% confidence level while a positive coefficient demonstrates a 1% increase in the performance of project in terms of improving residents' livelihood is attributed to 0.087 improvement in Rural Sector Support Project performance and the high t-statistic value (1.765) indicates the confidence level of 95%, the effect is statistically significant. This demonstrates that project performance exhibited in terms of effective funds disbursements.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusions:

According to the interpretation of collected and analyzed data during the course of this study; the researcher came up with the following conclusions:

Based on the information drawn from findings; the researcher concluded that there is a significant impact between all three variables under study namely funds disbursements, community participation, competence of implementers and performance of Rural Sector Project as one of the donor funded projects in Rwamagana district. The results of correlation between funds disbursement and performance of Rural Sector Support Project are at the rate of 0.699 meaning that Funds disbursement influence the performance of Rural Sector Support Project at 69.9%. Therefore, the researcher concluded a strong relationship between funds disbursement and performance of Rural Sector Support Project.

The findings further revealed that, the results of correlation between competence of project implementers and performance of Rural Sector Support Project was at 0.642 meaning that competence of project implementers affect performance of Rural Sector Support Project at the level of 64.2% which prove the strong relationship between correlation between competence of project implementers and performance of Rural Sector Support Project. Therefore the researcher concluded a significant relationship between competence of project implementers and performance of Rural Sector Support Project. Finally; the researcher concluded a significant relationship community involvement and performance of projects since the results of correlation between community involvement and performance of Rural Sector Support Project was at the rate of 0.675 meaning that community involvement affect performance of Rural Sector Support Project at the level of 67.5%. On the other hand, by considering the level of significance which is 0.05, hence community involvement has a significant effect on the performance of projects because their p-value (0.000) is statistically significant at 5% level of significance hence a strong correlation between community involvement and performance of Rural Sector Support Project.

7.2 Recommendations:

As the findings show a positive and a very high strong correlation between timely budgeting and performance of Rural Sector Support Project as a donor funded project in Rwamagana, the researcher recommend the project team and project managers elaborate and timely put in place the project budget so as to ensure that all tasks and activities are carried out within the expected time frame and this will ensure the project performance. As the study findings revealed that there is a positive and high correlation between funds disbursement methods the researcher recommend that the project manager and project team to use effective funds disbursement methods so as to ensure that funds are well disbursed and allocate since this helps to prevent and eliminate the risks of underestimation or overestimation. This in turn leads to performance of projects.

Since the study findings show a positive and very high correlation between competence of project implementers and performance of Rural Sector Support Project, the researcher recommend the project owners and managers to recruit the team that is experienced in implementation of donor funded projects because these projects are associated with a very risky and changing environment which needs special working experience to deal with it. Furthermore; as the researcher concluded a significant relationship community involvement and performance of donor funded projects, the project implementation should foster the community participation by allowing the community members to have a stake in the decision making process of the project decisions and let them take a sense ownership and contribution in order to ensure that the community members understand well what they are expecting from the project. Finally; this helps the project team, managers and owners to effectively managers the beneficiaries' expectations.

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