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Project Planning and Performance of Community Based Projects

Prof. Charles Ogendo Bii

Department of Entrepreneurship, Catholic University of Eastern Africa

Corresponding author's e-mail: jharper@edithcowanjournals.org

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of project planning on the performance of Community based projects

Methodology: The study used descriptive survey research method and adopted stratified random sampling to identify a sample size of 151 respondents out of the target population of 249 NPOs implementing projects in the 12 sub-Counties in Kiambu. A structured questionnaire with closed and open ended questions collected primary data. A pilot study to test the validity and reliability of the research instrument using Cronbach's alpha was undertaken. The collected data was edited, cleaned and analyzed using descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 21.0). Correlation and regression was used to determine the relationship between critical success factors and project performance of Community based projects. Data was presented in tables, charts and figures.

Results: The study found that project planning had a significant and positive relationship with performance of Community based projects in Kenya.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: Project objectives should be aligned to the organizations strategic plan, with top management allocating sufficient resources for the project and giving the project manager room to run the project.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Community-based projects play a crucial role in addressing various socio-economic and developmental challenges in developing countries. These projects encompass a wide range of initiatives, from healthcare and education to infrastructure and livelihood improvement. Effective project planning is essential to ensure the successful implementation and impact of these projects. Project planning involves the systematic process of defining project goals, objectives, strategies, and resources required for execution. It serves as a roadmap for project activities, guiding resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, and overall project management. In the context of developing countries, where limited resources and complex socio-economic conditions prevail, robust project planning can contribute significantly to achieving sustainable and positive outcomes for communities.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Project success criteria have evolved beyond simplistic quantifiable measures such as time, scope, and cost, which primarily emphasize project efficiency. Instead, they now encompass measures that have a broader, long-term perspective, directly linked to effectiveness and the impact of organizations (Bryde, 2005; Muller, 2016). Pinto and Prescot (1988) propose the identification of critical success factors (CSFs) at the project's outset, which should be integrated throughout the project lifecycle. Wateridge (1995) concurs, emphasizing the need to clarify project success criteria and select CSFs during project initiation, with consensus from all stakeholders. To mitigate subjectivity in defining project success, stakeholders should establish a clear understanding before project commencement.

The triad of time, cost, and quality as a gauge of project success has gained universal acceptance among project management scholars, with Baker et al. (1974) adding client satisfaction as an additional facet. Scholars have expanded upon this criterion by incorporating strategic project objectives, beneficiary satisfaction, and engagement of various stakeholders (Ika, 2009; Baccarini, 1999; Lim & Mohamed, 1999; Shenhar, Levy & Dvir, 1997).

Critical success factors represent elements of projects deemed essential for achieving excellent outcomes. Neglecting these factors can lead to problems that hinder overall success (Andersen et al., 2006). Development projects often fall short of their goals due to managerial, institutional, structural, contextual, and sustainability-related issues (Ika, 2012). Ika (2012) suggests that addressing these categories of project management problems can significantly enhance the implementation of community-based projects.

Rotich et al. (2014) identified project leadership, planning, and monitoring and evaluation as critical success factors for NGOs operating in Narok County. As the context shifts to Narok County, these factors play a pivotal role in achieving project success. Successful project leadership ensures effective coordination, communication, and decision-making, while comprehensive planning guarantees alignment with project objectives and timely execution. Monitoring and evaluation facilitate continuous improvement by assessing project progress and identifying necessary adjustments.

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In conclusion, the evolution of project success criteria underscores the shift from mere efficiency to broader effectiveness and impact. Clear understanding and integration of critical success factors from the project's inception, along with adaptive measures to address management, institutional, and contextual challenges, are vital for realizing successful community-based projects, particularly in Narok County. The identification of key factors like project leadership, planning, and monitoring and evaluation tailored to the local context contributes to the achievement of positive project outcomes and lasting community impact.

While community-based projects hold promise for addressing local development challenges in developing countries, there is a pressing concern about the suboptimal performance and impact of many of these projects. Inadequate project planning has been identified as a key factor contributing to project failures, delays, and inefficiencies. Developing countries often grapple with issues such as insufficient capacity, limited access to resources, and diverse stakeholder dynamics that can hinder effective project planning. As a result, there is a need to critically examine the relationship between project planning and the performance of community-based projects in developing countries, with a focus on identifying the key challenges and opportunities for enhancing planning effectiveness and project outcomes.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study sought to establish the the influence of project planning on the performance of Community based projects.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The resource dependency theory offers a relevant theoretical lens to understand the complexities of community-based projects in developing countries. This theory posits that organizations, including community-based projects, are dependent on external resources, such as funding, expertise, and partnerships, for their survival and success. In the context of developing countries, where resource scarcity is often pronounced, project planners must navigate the dynamics of resource interdependence to ensure adequate resource allocation, collaboration, and sustainability in project planning.

2.2 Empirical Review

Toor et al. (2009) explored the perspectives of construction professionals regarding critical success factors (CSFs) for large-scale construction projects. They administered 80 questionnaires to project managers and deputy project managers engaged in 45 large-scale construction projects. These professionals were requested to assess the frequency of occurrence of each success factor on a five-point Likert-type scale based on their professional judgment. The study revealed that several success factors garnered consistent high ratings, such as effective planning and control, sufficient resource availability, clear and detailed written contracts, and project manager competence. Inadequate planning was identified as a significant cause of project delays and operational setbacks. This emphasizes the importance of clear, realistic goal-setting by stakeholders for project success (Lim & Mohamed, 1999).

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Paulo et al. (2014) conducted a study in the energy sector of Brazil to identify CSFs in project management. They administered questionnaires to 320 project managers involved in 900 major projects within the company. Employing a Likert scale of 1-5, the study highlighted upper management support, stakeholder involvement and commitment, realistic objectives, change control, transparent hiring processes, and effective communication as CSFs contributing to project effectiveness. The study also identified clearly defined scope, project monitoring and control, experienced project managers, and allocated resources as critical factors for project efficiency.

Dvir and Lechler (2004) delved into the correlation between planning and project performance. Their multivariate analysis established a positive relationship between planning and efficiency, as well as customer satisfaction. Sudhakar (2012) emphasized user involvement, proper planning, realistic expectations, top management support, and clear requirements as top project success factors. A study by Getachew and Kahsay (2016) focused on European Union-funded international development projects in Ethiopia. Their research identified clear policies, local ownership, consultative planning, motivated project teams, and compatible rules and procedures as crucial to project success. However, their study did not sufficiently address project management as a critical factor. Yamin and Sim (2016) examined CSFs for international development projects in Maldives and found that monitoring, environmental considerations, coordination, and training were important. Yet, they overlooked stakeholder support and acceptance by beneficiaries.

Effah et al. (2016) explored CSFs for public-private partnership (PPP) projects in water supply. They highlighted commitment of partners, consortium strength, asset quality, political environment, and support from the National Public Private Partnership unit as influential factors. However, their study lacked emphasis on management support, project management competence, and team dynamics. Umulisa, Mbabazize, and Shukla (2015) assessed project resource planning practices' effects on project performance in Rwanda. They found that human, financial, material, and time resource planning practices influenced project performance positively.

In the context of developing countries, many studies underscore the significance of project planning and critical success factors for project performance. The exploration of these factors helps enhance project outcomes and better address challenges unique to such nations. It is crucial for project managers, stakeholders, and decision-makers in developing countries to integrate effective planning and incorporate identified CSFs to ensure the success and sustainability of community-based projects.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey approach to investigate the correlation between project planning and the performance of community-based projects. Stratified random sampling was adopted to select a sample of 151 participants from the target population of 249 Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) engaged in projects across the 12 sub-Counties of Narok County. A structured questionnaire containing both closed and open-ended questions was utilized to collect primary data. Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted to assess the research instrument's validity and reliability, using Cronbach’s alpha. The gathered data underwent thorough editing, cleaning, and descriptive statistical analysis with the assistance of Statistical

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Package for Social Science (SPSS version 21.0). Correlation and regression analyses were employed to ascertain the relationship between critical success factors and the project performance of community-based projects. The outcomes were presented through tables, charts, and figures for comprehensive understanding.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis for Project Planning

Statements	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Totally agree	Mean	Std. Deviation	CV
Clear objective definition	3.80%	5.40%	3.80%	31.50%	55.40%	4.29	1.04	0.24
Stakeholder consultation	5.40%	9.20%	12.30 %	30.80%	42.30%	3.95	1.19	0.30
Objective understood	2.30%	3.80%	9.20%	43.80%	40.80%	4.17	0.92	0.22
Parameters for appraisal	6.20%	10.00%	13.10 %	35.40%	35.40%	3.84	1.19	0.31
Aligned to strategic plan	3.10%	5.40%	7.70%	50.00%	33.80%	4.06	0.95	0.23
Stakeholder analysis	1.50%	6.90%	6.90%	46.20%	38.50%	4.13	0.93	0.22
Stakeholder expertise	3.90%	7.00%	7.00%	46.90%	35.20%	4.02	1.03	0.26
Beneficiary expectations	3.10%	6.20%	5.40%	40.80%	44.60%	4.18	1.00	0.24
Planning tools used	6.90%	10.00%	6.90%	37.70%	38.50%	3.91	1.22	0.31
Stakeholder management	3.10%	13.80%	10.80 %	40.00%	32.30%	3.85	1.12	0.29
Average						**4.04**	**1.06**	**0.26**

Results in Table 1 indicated that majority of the respondents who were 86.9% (31.5%+55.4%) agreed with the statement that the project's objectives are clearly defined and are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound. The statement had a mean score of 4.29 and a standard deviation of 1.04. This implies that most of the respondents were agreeing to the statement and response variation was very low. The results also showed that majority of the respondents 73.1% (30.8%+42.3%) agreed to the statement that all key stakeholders are involved in formulating project objectives. The statement had a mean score of 3.95 and a standard deviation of 1.19. This implies that most of the respondents were agreeing to the statement and the variation in response was very low. Further, the results indicated that majority of the respondents 84.6% (43.8%+40.8%) agreed to the statement that the project objectives are well understood by the project team. The response had a mean score of 4.17 and standard deviation of 0.92. This indicated that most of the respondents were agreeing to the statement and that the response variation was low. Furthermore, the results showed that majority of the respondents who were 70.8%

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(35.4%+35.4%) agreed with the statement that parameters for effective project performance appraisal are developed by the project team and key stakeholders during planning. The statement response had a mean of 3.84 and a standard deviation of 1.19. This indicates that most of the respondents were agreeing to the statement and the response variation was very low. Additionally, the results indicated that majority of the respondents who were 83.8% (50.0%+33.8%) agreed that project objectives are aligned with the organization's objectives/strategic plan. The statement had a mean of 4.06 and a standard deviation of 0.95. This indicated that most of the respondents were agreeing with the statement and the variations in responses were low. The results are in line with Drucker who popularized management by objectives. Further, Chandan (2011) notes that involvement of the project team in goal setting motivates the team to perform better and achieve the project objectives. Since projects are always implementing strategies, project objectives should be directly connected to the organizations strategic objectives (Osorio *et al.,* 2014).

In addition, results indicated that majority of the respondents 84.7% (46.2%+38.5%) agreed with the statement that stakeholder analysis is done to determine their level of power and influence. The statement had a mean of 4.13 and a standard deviation of 0.93. This is indicative that most of the respondents were agreeing to the statement and the variation in response was very low. Moreover, results revealed that majority of the respondents who were 82.1% (46.9%+35.2%) agreed to the statement that all key stakeholders have been involved in detailed project planning and reviews within their area of expertise. The statement had a mean of 4.02 and a standard deviation of 1.03 which indicates that most of the respondents were agreeing to the statement and that the variation in response was low. The results also revealed that majority of the respondents 85.4% (44.6%+40.8%) agreed that beneficiaries' expectations and desires are discussed and agreed by the project team. The statement had a mean of 4.18 and a standard deviation of 1.00. This means that most of the respondents were agreeing to the statement and that the variation in response was low.

The results equally revealed that majority of the respondents who were 76.2% (37.7%+38.5%) agreed that planning tools such as Gantt chart, work plans, operational plans are used in an effective way in project planning indicating the role of each stakeholder. The mean of the statement was 3.91 and the standard deviation was 1.22. This implied that majority of the respondents were agreeing to the statement and that the variation was low. Finally, majority of the respondents 72.3% (40%+32.3%) agreed that the project has stakeholder management plan in place. The statement response mean was 3.85 and the standard deviation was 1.12. This implies that majority of the respondents were agreeing to the statement and the variation in responses was low. Wateridge (1995) noted that while not all the interests of stakeholders may be satisfied by the project, it's important to ensure that key stakeholder interests are addressed. The decision on which stakeholders is key or not can only be realized by undertaking a stakeholder analysis, Overall, the average mean of the responses was 4.04 which means that majority of the respondents were agreeing to the statements in the questionnaire on project planning. The standard deviation was 0.06 meaning that the responses were clustered around the mean response. The findings are in line with Umulisa, Mbabazize and Shukla (2015) who noted that human resource planning practices influenced the performance. They also found out that financial resource planning practices influenced the project performance. A positive and significant relationship between financial

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resource planning practices including; budgeting, forecasting and having plans for money generation and project performance existed. Budgeting, forecasting and having plans for money generation can lead to improved project performance. Material and time resource planning practices also influenced project performance positively. Further, Lemma (2014) findings indicated that the main planning input factors that affect the performance of planning processes are: human, management, technical and organizational factors.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Correlation Analysis Results between project planning and Project Performance

Variable		Project performance
Project planning	Pearson Correlation	.386**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

4.3 Regression Analysis

Table 3 presents the model fitness for used for regression model in explaining the study phenomena.

Table 3: Model Fitness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.533a	0.284	0.223	0.55963

The results in table 3 show that project planning was found to be satisfactory in explaining project performance. This is supported by coefficient of determination also known as the R square of 28.4%. This means that project planning explains 28.4% of the variations in the dependent variable which is project performance. Sudhakar (2012) noted that proper planning, realistic expectations and clear requirements are project success factors. Table 8 presents the ANOVA results for project planning

Table 4: ANOVA Results on Project Planning

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	14.523	10	1.452	4.637	0.000
Residual	36.643	117	0.313		
Total	51.166	127			

Table 4 provides the results on the analysis of the variance (ANOVA). The results indicate that the overall model was statistically significant. Further, the results imply that the independent variable which is project planning is a good predictor of project performance. This was supported by an F statistic of 4.637 and the reported p value (0.000) which was less than the conventional probability of 0.05 significance level. Lemma (2014) identified the main planning input factors that affect the performance of planning processes as: -human, management, technical and organizational factors. Table 5 presents the optimal model for project planning.

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Table 5: Optimal Model for Project Planning

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.79	0.228		12.246	0
Project Planning	0.283	0.06	0.386	4.736	0.000

Regression coefficients in Table 5, revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between project planning and project performance (r=0.283, p=0.000). This was supported by a calculated t-statistic of 4.736 which is larger than the critical t-statistic of 1.96 (Kothari, 2011). These results agree with Naoum, Fong and Walker (2004) who described planning as one of the key tools that stakeholders use to ensure that projects are successful. Further, Faniran, Oluwoye and Lenard (1998) noted that the measures of the effectiveness of project planning and the measures of the performance of the project itself are the same. Therefore, the planning of a successful project can be regarded as effective while that of a failed project can be described as ineffective.

The model for project planning is

$Y=2.79+0.283X_1$

Where:

Y= Project Performance

X_1= project planning

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, effective project planning is a cornerstone for the success of community-based projects in developing countries. By applying the principles of resource dependency theory, project planners can navigate the complexities of resource availability and stakeholder collaboration, leading to more impactful and sustainable development outcomes for marginalized communities..

Recommendations

- Foster meaningful and inclusive engagement with local stakeholders, including community members, local authorities, and non-governmental organizations, throughout the project planning process.
- Tailor project planning approaches to the specific socio-economic, cultural, and environmental context of the target community, ensuring that projects are attuned to local needs and realities.
- Invest in building the capacity of local stakeholders, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective project planning, implementation, and management.

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- Establish strategic partnerships with governmental agencies, international organizations, and private sector entities to leverage resources, expertise, and networks for improved project planning and execution.
- Implement robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess project progress, identify challenges, and inform adaptive planning strategies.
- Integrate sustainability considerations into project planning, focusing on building local ownership, promoting income-generating activities, and exploring mechanisms for long-term funding and support.

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