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Stakeholder Involvement and Implementation of Projects by Kitui County Government, Kenya

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Abstract

Many projects do not meet customer-specific goals and do not address issues that are initially defined within the stated time, cost, scope, and quality requirements. The County of Kitui is also affected by project failure that has been attributed to poor change, risk and quality management as well as stakeholder involvement. The paper sought to determine the effect of stakeholders' involvement on project implementation by the Kitui County government. The paper adopted a descriptive survey research design, with the target population consisting of 93 projects undertaken by Kitui County government. A census was used and therefore all the projects were included in this paper. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Qualitative information was analyzed using thematic analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings indicated that stakeholders' involvement had a positive and significant effect on the implementation of projects by Kitui County government. The study recommended that project team members in Kitui County Government ought to be accountable to the stakeholders and this will enhance project success. In addition, project managers should highly involve stakeholders as well as consult them since they provide resources for the running of the project. The project managers should also group the stakeholders according to their levels of participation, interest, and influence on the project.

Keywords: *Stakeholder involvement, Project implementation, Kitui County Government*

1.0 Introduction

Project implementation means carrying out the work as defined in the project plan on how the project is to be carried out. A project is an incredibly complex activity since it calls for the coordination of a large range of tasks, team supervision, budget control, public relations, and other matters. For this study, project implementation was determined in terms of scope, time, quality, and cost (Chandra, 2008). Implementing a project entail carrying out tasks in a systematic manner to meet the project's objectives and generate results. Its achievements are based on many factors both internally and externally. Some of the major ones which are of importance are a well-organized team to execute the project and effective progress of the project monitoring and associated costs (Rasnacis & Berzisa, 2017).

A stakeholder is a person or organization that is directly or indirectly affected by or has an interest in the activities of a company. According to Van der Meer, et al. (2017) stakeholder communication is the involvement of stakeholders and the organization in line with the process of exchanging various information and data. To ensure better and more efficient stakeholder

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communication that is target-oriented, it is crucial to understand their attitudes, motivations, and goals.

The use of project management tools and practices is still in its early stages in less industrialized nations such as Africa. The approach is relatively new, and it appears to meet the anticipated objectives within a certain time frame and budget by making the best use of resources and implementing an integrated planning and control system. In Africa, according to a study conducted in Nigeria by Idoro and Patunola-Ajayi (2009), the use of modern project management tools, approaches, and techniques in the public sector is still under-recognized, failing public institutions and their contractors to meet budgets, specifications, and deadlines for assigned projects. According to studies, the hurdles for successful project execution in the Nigerian public sector include both social and political systems, cultural barriers, and a lack of financial assistance (Idoro & Patunola-Ajayi, 2009).

In Ghana, since the implementation of the Public Procurement Act 2003 (Act 663) and according to the Public Procurement Authority (2010), improvements and efficiency improvements have been observed during project implementation. The successful completion of the project is related to the effectiveness of the monitoring along with the evaluation phase. Quality, along with the success of a project, is not only judged by the perceptions of several stakeholders. Therefore, the project manager's job is to ensure that the project meets the established specifications and is within the government's time, cost, scope, and quality limits before being released to the public. Agyeman (2010) in his research purports that the process of identifying and implementing projects has been core, and ultimate of all leadership spheres around the world from the ancient times while conducting surveys in Ghana.

Different factors usually affect project implementation in Kenya, and they range from corruption, politics, nepotism, embezzlement, and technology levels that are low and misplaced priorities (World Bank, 2012). In the past, UNDP (2010), started publishing different reports that wanted to ascertain the nature of projects including their polarization rates in Kenya. From the survey conducted, it was clear that the failure rates of projects in the nation are high, and this was due to nepotism and tribalism, and this was evidenced by the fact that major tribes in Kenya and those that had big populations held big offices and projects. Devolution in Kenya was introduced so that every individual in the country could get an equal and proportionate share of the resources from the national government and the elimination of development barriers while bringing the development prospects near the people. The process of devolution was also to ensure that relevant development projects were brought near those who needed them when they needed them more so in the slums, in the villages, and among those that are marginalized. Strict adherence and application of project management practices during project implementation come in handy in addressing some of these challenges.

As a County government, Kitui County records achievements and challenges from the implementation of various projects. These are drawn from what the County planned and what the County achieved from different sectors. For the financial year 2018/2019, Kitui County had capital and non-capital projects summing up to 172. The County Government of Kitui records that the challenges experienced during the implementation of these projects include management of risk, quality, and change as well as stakeholder communication (Kitui County Annual Development Plan 2020/2021, 2019).

1.1 Problem Statement

World Bank (2010) confirms that implemented government projects are often of great interest to the end-users. Successful projects must stay within budget, meet deadlines and produce products that meet the quality standards set by the client (Global Monitoring Report on Education for All, 2010). Also, project implementation involves carrying out the work as defined in the project plan on how the project is to be carried out.

Counties in Kenya are always implementing projects that are deemed to bring about positive developmental progress for their people. However, most of them encounter problems relating to change management, stakeholder involvement, risk management, and total quality management which are vital project management practices, and when void the project transition process is slowed. As a result, it can be definitively proven that the success of programs is greatly determined by their implementation while employing various management approaches appropriate to the project.

Application of project management practices can therefore be used to enhance implementation. Gwaya, Masu, and Wanyona (2014) agree that several projects in Kenya struggle to meet stakeholders' standards. Many projects do not meet customer-specific goals and do not address issues that are initially defined within the time, cost, scope, and quality requirements stated. The County of Kitui is also affected by project failure and this has been attributed to poor change, risk and quality management as well as stakeholder involvement (CIDP, 2014). In 2016, Kitui County's strategic plan reports that 30% of the 241 projects launched in the County in 2015 stalled. Kitui County is still underdeveloped and if this continues, the County will not be able to achieve its economic and development goals. The research intended to fill the gaps about the outcome of stakeholder involvement to understand how it affects project implementation. Therefore, the purpose of this paper was to examine the effect of stakeholders' involvement on the implementation of government projects in Kitui County.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Edward Freeman was the first to develop the stakeholder's theory in the year 1983. It holds that stakeholders are crucial participants in any project. They sponsor projects and invest in the successful completion of those projects. But this does not mean they just sit idly by and watch for the project to be completed. They are always involved and, based on their behavior; they may either bring about an effect that is negative or positive. The components of this theory include clients, workers, vendors, investors, and the community as the main stakeholders which are one of the independent variables of my study. This is a vital theory and in line with the current study because it does implore some effects on stakeholder communication as an independent variable of this study because stakeholders are very essential in the implementation of projects even in Kitui County and it, therefore, means that effective communication by the stakeholders enhances project implementation (Freeman et al., 2010).

The theory has received recommendations from researchers to be applied in project management. As discussed by Jones (1995), this is a theory that can be incorporated when dealing with the management of a project to buy the trust of the community. Wambao (2011) also asserts that this theory can be used for the provision of principles that help in identifying, analyzing, and fulfilling the interest of the community in a project as stakeholders. However, decisions can be made to prevent harm from coming to the community since there are many ways of identifying and analyzing the interests of the community.

2.2 Empirical Review

Atamba (2016) studied stakeholder governance and program performance in Kenya. A semi-structured questionnaire gathered data from the different respondents. The results of the research showed that stakeholder management in the IFMIS project was implemented through contact with stakeholders, appropriate project staffing, stakeholder opinion integration, and stakeholder complaint resolution. However, the different players, their expertise differences in the project, and the overall experience of stakeholders also had to be classified. The project has been successful in improving productivity in public transactions and providing an even forum for competitive opportunities for government business. However, the initiative did not completely boost public sector transparency and accountability. The parties concerned described IFMIS problems, such as recurrent system downtimes, the lack of dedicated support from the staff of IFMIS, and weak integration with other main government structures. They suggested that IFMIS be used by the National Treasury, that the framework is made tougher, and that training at IFMIS Academy is adapted to meet the needs of different users.

Afroze and Khan (2017) examined the impact of good communication and project complexity in implementing international constructs. Their study was aimed at exploring how project reinforcement in UN agencies in Kenya has affected projects. A cross-sectional study and a descriptive research methodology were used to drive the analysis for this study, and 60 questionnaires were issued to worldwide firms that were participating in similar programs. The results of this study indicate that this communication practice has a significant and positive impact on project implementation.

Njogu (2016) analyzed the effect of stakeholders on project outcomes. The research was conducted using a descriptive research strategy, which allowed data to be collected to answer research questions. Automotive vehicle firms, oil refineries, environmental z organizations, the ministry of energy, and NEMA were the target population to be used for this analysis. 181 respondents, including administrators, project management, operations managers, supervisors, and quality control officers, were included in the report. To obtain primary data, the questionnaire contained both open and closed questions. Primary data have been obtained from vehicle pollution management studies by organizations. The links between stakeholder participation and project success focused on the NEMA Vehicle Emission Control Project in Nairobi County were examined by inferential empirical correlation and regression.

The findings indicate that participants in project preparation played a constructive and significant role in the success of the auto emissions control project. The results have also shown the optimistic and important effect of stakeholder participation in project implementation. The impact of stakeholder activities on the implementation of a rural road project in Machakos District was identified by a study conducted by Ndunda and Mbura (2017). This study is based on a road project by the Kenyan Road Authority. This study is characterized by a growing focus on stakeholders who, although independent of the analysis, are considered important in project implementation.

To gather data from interviewees, a semi-structured questionnaire was used. An analysis of the relationship between study variables was provided by descriptive statistics. The analysis of data was conducted using a social sciences statistical kit. The data is presented based on research objectives in tables, charts, and interpretations. Analysis studies have drawn conclusions and recommendations. The study's findings revealed that Machakos County's financial actions had a favorable and significant impact on road project delivery. In terms of supervisory actions, the study discovered a favorable and significant impact on the implementation of rural road projects. KERRA's approvals and evaluations have contributed to improved market recognition and implementation of organizational environment quality. The road project works of eligible contractors ensured the efficiency of road projects by ongoing inspections that did not affect quality.

Wandabwa and Yusuf, (2019) conducted a Kenya National Hospital Insurance Fund report on the influence of stakeholders' management on healthcare project results. This study focuses on the priorities, coordination, involvement, and monitoring of stakeholders in the success of the NHIF health project. Five strata were developed for the 324 stakeholders who participated in NHIF ambulatory medical systems and have an accredited Contract B system. The sample population was chosen using a stratified random sample and a simple random sample. The sample size is 176 respondents with a response rate of 73.3%. The findings revealed that project implementation and stakeholder interests had a negative linear relationship (r = - 642), whereas project implementation and stakeholder interaction had a positive linear relationship (r = 635). Project implementation and stakeholder participation (r = 862) as well as between project implementation and monitoring evaluation (r = 0.881*). Following the results of the research, they concluded that the interests of the stakeholders in the project should be understood. Throughout the project cycle, stakeholders should be involved, with a focus on monitoring and appraisal that ensures that project priorities and outcomes are within this framework.

3.0 Methodology

The paper adopted a descriptive survey research design, with the target population consisting of 93 projects undertaken by Kitui County government. A census was used and therefore all the projects were included in this paper. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The qualitative information was analyzed using thematic analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation, were used. Pearson correlation analysis was used to determine the connection between constructs. Linear regression analysis was used to determine the effect of stakeholder involvement on project implementation.

4.0 Results and Discussion

This section presents results on descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis.

4.1 Project Implementation

The participants were requested to state their views on statements relating to project implementation. Results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Project Implementation

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev
The project was implemented on-schedule	8.2%	5.50%	6.80%	45.20%	34.20%	3.92	1.18
The project was implemented on-budget	6.8%	1.40%	4.10%	58.90%	28.80%	4.01	1.01
The project implementation observed quality	5.5%	2.70%	17.80%	38.40%	35.60%	3.96	1.07
Project implementation was on scope of the project	8.2%	1.40%	21.90%	38.40%	30.10%	3.81	1.14
Overall						**3.93**	**1.10**

According to the findings, 79.4 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that the audited project was prepared on time. In addition, the majority of respondents 87.7% agree with the statement that the project was implemented within the budget. In addition, 74.0% agreed with the statement that the project implementation observed quality. In addition, 68.5

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percent of respondents agreed that the implementation of the project is within the project. The average response rate was 3.93, indicating that most respondents agreed with the project implementation statement. A standard deviation of 1.10 means that most responses are close to the average.

4.2 Stakeholders Involvement

The respondents were requested to indicate their views on statements relating to stakeholders' involvement. Results are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2 Stakeholders Involvement

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev
Project plans are a reflection of the real needs and priorities	6.80%	4.10%	2.70%	24.70%	61.60%	4.30	1.16
Create an environment of trust by listening to the voices of stakeholders and identifying their issues.	8.20%	1.40%	2.70%	24.70%	63.00%	4.33	1.17
The project team members are accountable to the stakeholders	17.80%	2.70%	21.90 %	15.10%	42.50%	3.62	1.50
Transparency is ensured within the project	6.80%	5.50%	19.20 %	30.10%	38.40%	3.88	1.19
Stakeholders have more ownership because they believe the initiative is listening to their concerns, which inspires them to sponsor the project, which eventually leads to sustainability.	5.50%	9.60%	6.80%	21.90%	56.20%	4.14	1.23
There was evident stakeholder support of the project who were committed	5.50%	6.80%	8.20%	23.30%	56.20%	4.18	1.18
Overall						**4.08**	**1.24**

The participants (86.3 percent) agreed with the statement that project plans are a representation of real needs and objectives. In addition, the majority of respondents (87.7 percent) agreed that there was an atmosphere of confidence that stakeholders had heard and published their calls. In addition, the majority of respondents (57.6 percent) agreed with the statement that project team members are accountable to stakeholders. Other results showed that 68.5 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that transparency within the project is guaranteed. In addition, 78.1 percent of respondents agreed that there is enhanced ownership among stakeholders that they believe the project understands their visions and motivates them to sponsor the initiative, which ultimately leads to sustainability. The findings showed that 79.5 percent of respondents agreed that the initiative taken had the clear support of stakeholders.

The aggregate mean of responses was 4.08, indicating that most respondents agreed with the stakeholder statement; however, the responses varied, as seen in the standard deviation of 1.24.

Qualitative Responses on Stakeholders' Involvement

The respondents were asked to indicate the purpose of engaging with stakeholders. Majority of the respondents indicated that stakeholders provided resources for the running of the projects. They were further asked to indicate whether they provide information, consult, involve and/or

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collaborate with the stakeholders. The majority of respondents stated that they inform, consult, involve, and/or work with stakeholders.

Respondents were also asked to identify their stakeholders and how they ranked them in terms of priority. The following were the stakeholders that were reported; governor, county treasury, County Assembly County Executive Committee, and community. The respondents further indicated that they group the stakeholders according to their levels of participation, interest, and influence on the project.

Respondents were also asked to describe the implementation process, including whether they conducted a consultation, a series of face-to-face meetings, meetings, or telephone conversations. Most respondents stated that they had conducted a consultation that included a series of face-to-face sessions, meetings, and phone calls. Respondents were also asked to describe how they use digital technology. The respondents indicated that they use technology such as Facebook, emails, and WhatsApp in communicating with their stakeholders.

Respondents were also asked how they would judge the results. The respondents indicated that they evaluate the results of the project implementation by; reviewing the situation, gathering evidence for the evaluation, analyzing the evidence as well as sharing findings with others.

The respondents were further asked to indicate how they adjust and correct their approach based on feedback. The following were some of the responses; being honest, making their feedback formative as well as focusing on the issue.

Respondents were also asked how they ensure their plan is actionable and is evaluated regularly by the appropriate personnel. Here are some of the answers; set clear goals, define roles and responsibilities, delegate work, implement the plan and also take corrective action.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

This section presents results on the correlation between stakeholder involvement and project implementation. The findings are captured in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Results

		Project implementation	Stakeholder involvement
Project implementation	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Stakeholder involvement	Pearson Correlation	.746**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The findings demonstrated a high positive and substantial association between stakeholder involvement and project implementation (r=0.746, p<.05). These findings supported the findings of Atamba (2016), who found that stakeholder governance has a major impact on program performance in Kenya.

4.4 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the effect of stakeholder involvement and project implementation. Table 4 shows the output of the model summary.

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Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.746[a]	.556	.550	.40278

a Predictors: (Constant), Stakeholders' involvement

The findings in Table 4 reveal an R square of 0.556, implying that stakeholders' involvement explains 55.6% of the variations in the outcome construct, project implementation. The results imply that stakeholder involvement is a strong determinant of project implementation.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.442	1	14.442	89.026	.000[b]
	Residual	11.518	71	.162		
	Total	25.961	72			

a Dependent Variable: Project implementation

b Predictors: (Constant), Stakeholder's involvement

The results in Table 5 show that the model was statistically significantly supported by F statistic 89.026 with a p-value of 0.000 <0.05. This implies that stakeholders' involvement is a good predictor of project implementation.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.235	.394		.598	.552
	Stakeholder's involvement	.906	.096	.746	9.435	.000

a Dependent Variable: Project implementation

The findings in Table 6 showed that stakeholder involvement had a positive and significant effect on project implementation (β= 0.906 p<0.5). This meant that increasing stakeholder participation by one unit would likely improve project implementation by 0.906 units. These findings coincided with Njogu (2016), who stated that the involvement of stakeholders had a positive impact on project outcomes.

5.0 Conclusion

The study concluded that the inclusion of stakeholders had a positive and noteworthy impact on project implementation. Furthermore, a trusting climate that allows stakeholders' opinions to be heard improves project success. Furthermore, evidence of committed stakeholders' support for the project improves project performance. The study also indicated that the primary goal of connecting with stakeholders is to offer resources for project implementation. In addition, the use of digital technologies in project management enhances project implementation.

6.0 Recommendations

The study recommended that project team members in Kitui County Government ought to be accountable to the stakeholders and this will enhance project success. In addition, project managers should highly involve stakeholders as well as consult them since they provide resources for the running of the project. The project managers should also group the stakeholders according to their levels of participation, interest, and influence on the project.

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