



**STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF DONOR FUNDED
HEALTH PROJECTS IN KENYA**

¹ Okumu Silas Otieno, ² Dr. Senelwa Anayo & ³ Dr. Lango Benard

¹ Doctorate Student, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

² Lecturer, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

³ Lecturer, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

ABSTRACT

Donor funded projects are of great interest to the government, civil society organizations and the beneficiaries. Health projects are among the highly funded projects by governments and donors. The general objective of the study was to examine the effect of stakeholder management on performance of donor funded health projects in Kenya. The study was based on stakeholder theory. The study employed correlational research design. The target population of the study was 44 project managers, 115 project officers, 81 project monitoring & evaluation officers, and 68 project finance managers. Census method was used to enumerate the entire population. Data was then collected using questionnaires. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis, leveraging SPSS. The data was then presented in statistical tables. All ethical considerations were strictly adhered to. Findings show that stakeholder management has significant effect on performance of donor funded health projects in Kenya ($\beta_1=0.719$, p value= 0.000). The study recommends that project managers should give a platform for stakeholders to participate in all project's phases to understand what stakeholders exactly want by conducting needs assessment.

Key Words: Stakeholder Management, Project Management Practices, Performance, Donor Funded Health Projects

Background of the Study

Project managers engage in activities known as project management practices, to guarantee the success of their projects. Such practices comprise stakeholder management, scope management, risk management, and quality management (Kerzner, 2017). Joslin and Müller (2016) argue that poor project management practices frequently lead to projects being finished late; overspending; expected outcomes, or even dropped preceding the fruition after the consumption of extensive amounts of resources. Badewi (2016) opines that in the United Kingdom, the main purpose of using project management (PM) practices is to increase organizational value. The organization can benefit from using PM practices by increasing the effectiveness of human effort in the organization while increasing the efficiency of these efforts. Chen, Nakayama, Shou and Charoen (2018) contend that as China is extending its project management concepts from mainstream infrastructural projects, project managers in those new industries rely on the use of PM practices as tools and methodologies. However, it remains unclear to what extent the use of these PM practices can increase project success. Besides lack of organizational support, using project risk management tools and methodology effectively has been one major challenge to project success. Further, projects do not meet their desired strategic objectives and fail most of the time. In Saudi Arabia, one of the fundamental concerns in project management regards the extent to which Project Managers use and implement project management practices, and the implications for project success. In addition, a mismatch between the promises offered by project management practices and the project outcomes have equally been recognized (Aloitabi, 2019).

In Nigeria, Daniel (2018) states that PM practices adoption in the management of the donor funded health projects integrates the project management process of initiation, planning, executing, monitoring, controlling and closing; progressively through the project life cycle with the aim of satisfying the stakeholders and constituents according to the project's established requirements. Stakeholders are those who have a direct stake in the project while the project's constituents are those who may be affected by the consequences of the project. Project success is typically created when the stakeholders and constituents show their collective fulfillment according to the extent of their involvement. Abera (2018) considers the limited studies in the specific context covering project management in developing countries, especially adoption of project management practices in Ethiopia, the challenges the country has faced and how it has responded to these challenges when appraising projects and making optimal decisions for better impact. Murwanashyaka and Shukla (2017) views project management practices especially stakeholder's management practices on performance of projects in Rwanda to have been highly regarded because many international investment and delivery projects still have strikingly poor performance records in terms of economy, environment and public support due to poor stakeholders' relationship management. The effective adoptions of stakeholders' communication and conflict management practices have been established to improve performance of the projects.

According to Kiprop, Nzulwa, and Kwena (2017), little development has taken place in Sub-Saharan Africa despite donor funding for over a half a century. Well performing donor funded health projects start with organizations which have a mission that is clearly defined and have created a vision of what they want their impact to be and in their activities and plans they aim to follow (Kraeger, 2018). Other optimum performance enabling factors include adoption of project management practices, aligning activities with institutional strengths and capabilities and strategically building collaborative linkages with other players working in the sector. Strategic stakeholder partnerships, risk management and quality management with other players in the sector are also critical for health funded projects that aim to impact health outcome (Kaleeba, 2016).

Statement of the Problem

According to the World Bank (2017), donor funded health projects are of great interests to the government, civil society organizations and the beneficiaries. Health projects are among the highly funded projects by governments and donors. NGO Coordination Board 2020 Report shows that the 1,026 Kenyan NGOs contributed a sum of 34.9 billion Kenyan Shillings in the financial year 2018/2019 as they helped in adopting health projects associated with the Kenyan government's "Big Four" agenda. Specifically, NGOs registered in Kenya spent a sum of 30.8 billion Kenyan Shillings on healthcare and related projects and 3.8 billion Kenyan Shillings on nutrition and food security. Despite the guidelines set out by donors on the implementation of various health projects in Kenya, the performance of such projects is still below expectation (Osedo, 2015; Sikudi & Otieno, 2017; Mwangi, 2018). Despite the continued funding and other attention given to the healthcare projects by international NGOs and the Kenyan government at large, most of these projects have remained a pipe dream with minimal completion rates while others are not meeting the expected goals (WHO, 2021). According to WHO (2021), 21% of health projects are subject to cost manipulation at the design stage and 15% are subject to distorted procurement plans. The NGO Council (2021) reported that more than half of all projects carried out by non-governmental organizations are not sustainable and collapse in less than one year after the exit of the donors. According to the report, 40% of the projects implemented by NGOs were facing time overrun due to poor management and lack of timely allocation of resources. According to Osedo (2015), donor funded health projects have been underperforming as more than 60% of donor funded health projects in Kenya have either failed or have been completely abandoned. This implies that the projects delayed and the budgets were higher than the initially planned. According to Muchungu (2018), 58% of donor funded projects in Kenya show poor performance as measured by time, budget, scope and client satisfaction. Gitonga and Keiyoro (2017) found out that health grants were not utilized well in the implementation of health care projects due to corruption resulting in high failure of projects funded by NGOs. Additionally, according to Nyanje and Wanyoike (2016), poor project performance and low sustainability of NGO projects can be explained by lack of focus on key project management practices. They aver that 40% of projects implemented by NGOs were facing time overrun due to lack of timely allocation of resources. Various studies related to project management practices and performance of projects have been conducted locally in different sectors. No study has focused on performance of donor funded health projects in Kenya. The studies were also collected in single counties in Kenya and not the national perspective. The studies focused on projects in other sectors other than health sector. The application of the project leadership, project management practices and performance of projects cannot be assumed to be similar with health projects. There is hence contextual and scope gaps that this study sought to fill. It is on this premise that this study, therefore, investigated the effect of project management practices (stakeholder, and quality management) and performance of donor funded health projects in Kenya

Research Objective

The general objective of the study was to examine the effect of stakeholder management on performance of donor funded health projects in Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Stakeholder Theory

The area of stakeholder management was pioneered by Freeman (1984) where he introduced the idea that corporations have stakeholders and outlined the basic features of the stakeholder concept. The stakeholder approach has been described as a powerful means of understanding the firm and its environment. Mitchell et al., (2018) argue that, this approach is intended to broaden

the management's vision of its roles and responsibilities beyond the profit maximization function and stakeholders identified in input-output models of the firm, to also include interests and claims of non-stockholding groups. Donaldson and Preston (2019) elaborated that the stakeholder model requires that all persons or groups with legitimate interests participating in an enterprise do so to obtain benefits and that there is no pre-set priority of one set of interests and benefits over another. Consequently, stakeholder theory argues that in addition to stockholders, there are other external constituencies involved, including communities, community groups, trade unions, trade associations, environmental groups, governmental bodies, associated corporations, employees, customers, and the public that need to be taken into consideration. The basic idea of stakeholder theory is that the organization has relationships with many constituent groups and that it can engender and maintain the support of these groups by considering and balancing their relevant interests (Jones & Wicks, 2019).

Overall, a central and original purpose of stakeholder theory is to enable managers to understand stakeholders and strategically manage them (Freeman, 1999). The managerial importance of stakeholder management has been accentuated in various studies (Jawahar & McLaughlin, 2001; Mitchell et al., 1997; Rowley & Moldoveanu, 2003) that demonstrate that just treatment of stakeholders is related to the long-term survival of the organization. Stakeholder theory has been applied to a number of fields, research management (Bunn, Savage & Holloway 2002; Elias, Cavana & Jackson 2002), water utilities (Ogden & Watson 1999), and project management (Bourne & Walker, 2005). Donor funded health projects, as a field of research, has tended to focus on planning and managing the complex array of activities required to deliver donor funded projects, such as a road or building (Morris, 2016). Being able to manage donor projects, stakeholders expectations and concerns is a crucial skill for managers of health projects (Vinten, 2018), as failure to address these has resulted in countless project failures (Bourne & Walker, 2015), primarily because construction stakeholders tend to have the resources and capability to stop health projects (Lim et al., 2015). Successful delivery of projects is therefore dependent on meeting the expectation of stakeholders (Cleland, 2018). The stakeholder theory in this study implies that donors have a responsibility to all stakeholders who should be involved in all stages of project from planning to implementation. Involving stakeholders could lead to successful performance of projects funded by donors in Kenya.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework represents the researcher's synthesis of literature on how to explain phenomena (Trochi & Arora, 2016). It is a diagrammatic, flow chart or figurative illustration of the relationships between factors and variables identified, relevant to the study (Muchemwa, Padia & Callaghan, 2016). It is a set of broad ideas and principles taken from relevant fields of enquiry and used to structure a subsequent presentation.

Independent variable

Dependent variable

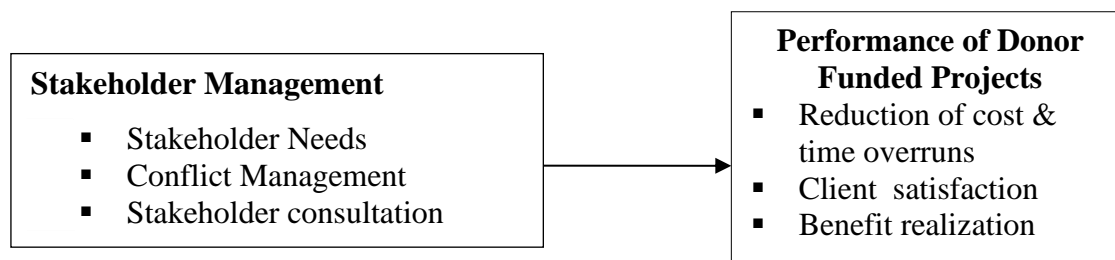


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Stakeholder Management

Stakeholder support is critical for the success of any project. Project stakeholders may be within or outside the organization. A project stakeholder may be an entity that have sponsored the project, have an influence in the project completion or have an interest in the completion of that particular project. Stakeholders of a particular project will vary during the life cycle of the project in terms of needs, numbers and influence. The interests, perception as well as the motivation of all the project stakeholders that have an influence on the success of the project should not be ignored. Stakeholder review and identification should be conducted throughout the project lifecycle (Njogu, 2016). Stakeholder management keeps decision-makers and influencers engaged and on-track which is the pathway for a successful project (Mahmoud, 2014). According to Olander (2016), any intervention attracts a vast number of interested parties. These interested parties in a project have different needs, expectations, motivation, power, influence, behaviors, traits, literacy levels. These interested parties of project are referred as stakeholders. Stakeholder definition is wider than that of a shareholder. A shareholder is a stakeholder, but a stakeholder is not necessarily a shareholder. A shareholder is interested on the going concern of the organization and the security of their returns on their investments in the entity. A stakeholder on the other hand is perceived to have a stake in the project whether they have monetarily invested in the project or not (Sutterfield, Stroud, & Blackwell, 2016). The aim of the concept of participation is to create the sense of self-reliance in the community and inculcating the aspect of ownership of the intervention (Oduor, Macharia, & Mbassana, 2015). Participation is a deliberate interaction of different stakeholders with distinct needs and expectations. According to Njogu (2016), Stakeholder participation in the project can take different forms from project identification; contribution of inputs; sharing of information; decision making; consultation; partnerships among others. The stakeholder participations take place at different times of the project life cycle.

Empirical Studies

Buertey, Amofa and Atsrim (2016) sought to assess the key factors affecting the success of construction projects in Pakistan. The study adopted descriptive research design. The target population was 6500 registered civil construction contractors. Questionnaires were used for data collection. Findings revealed that stakeholder involvement affected success of construction projects. Through supporting the stakeholders and involving them in all the project phases, project success could be achieved. Magassouba, Tambi, Alkhlaifat and Abdullah (2019) conducted a study on influence of stakeholders' involvement on development project performance in Guinea. This study adopted qualitative research design. Data was collected using secondary data through review of previous literature on influence of stakeholders in project identification, planning, implementation and monitoring on development project performance within organizations in Guinea. Findings revealed that stakeholder involvement in project identification, planning, implementation and monitoring enhances the chance of project success and it is an appropriate way to achieve an organization goal. Findings also indicated that there is a strong relationship between project performance and involvement of stakeholders.

Temba (2015) assessed the role of stakeholder's participation on sustainability of donor funded project: a case study of youth with disabilities community program in Tanga, Tanzania. A cross sectional descriptive research design was used with a sample size of 70 stakeholders. The study found that in order for stakeholders' participation to be effective in promoting sustainability of donor funded projects, it should be initiated from the beginning of the project. The study also found that the major role of stakeholders' participation in donor funded projects was mainly in the form of resource mobilization, collaboration and partnership, material contribution, and citizen control. Maina and Kimutai (2018) study investigated the influence of stakeholder management on project performance of projects in Nyeri County. The research adopted both

descriptive and exploratory research design. The target population was all the open air upgrading projects in Nyeri County. The results of the study established that the coefficients of “stakeholder’s need and expectation identification”, “communication”, “conflict management” and “stakeholder participation” were positive and significant and thus these factors determine project performance. Stakeholders’ participation positively enhances project performance of Open air Market project to a great extent followed by stakeholders’ needs and expectation identification, conflict management and finally communication.

Muli, Bwisa and Kihoro (2016) sought to examine the role of stakeholder management on the performance of projects funded by Constituency Development Fund in Kenya. The study adopted cross-sectional research design where the target population was all the projects funded by CDF in Machakos County constituencies. Questionnaires were used for collection of primary data. The results showed that those projects where stakeholder management had been done were five times more likely to succeed than those where stakeholder management hadn’t been done. Wamugu and Ogollah (2017) study sought to examine the role of stakeholders’ participation on the performance of constituency development fund projects in Mathira East constituency in Kenya. A descriptive research design was adopted. The study population was 85 local committee members of the development projects. The study concluded that most participation in project initiation activities such as identification screening and selection is the most critical as it is at this stage where stakeholders can have the highest influence on performance of CDF projects. Vaati and Nyang’au (2019) examined the influence of stakeholders’ involvement on successful implementation of projects in Kenya with reference to Kenya Railways Corporation. The study used descriptive research design. The population of the study was 200 staff of Kenya Railway Corporation. Questionnaires were used to collect primary data. Findings revealed that stakeholders’ involvement was the most significant variable that influenced project implementation. The study recommends that stakeholder’s involvement should be improved in project implementation to enhance project success.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a correlational research design. Correlation design describes in quantitative terms the degree to which variables are related. Correlational research designs are used to explore causal relationships between variables and to predict scores on one variable from research participants’ scores on other variables. The study targeted 44 donor funded NGOs in health sector in Kenya. The unit of observation was staff employed by NGO’s to implement the donor funded health projects Kenya. These included 44 project managers, 115 project officers, 81 M&E officers, and 68 project finance officers. These are the key stakeholders of these projects constituted the population of respondents from whom data was collected. Given the number of completed donor funded health projects for the period under study as described, a census survey was found to be appropriate. Primary data was collected from the respective respondents using self-administered structured questionnaire. The quantitative data collected was analyzed by use of both descriptive and inferential statistics.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study population comprised of 44 project managers, 115 project officers, 81 monitoring & evaluation officers, and 68 finance officers. The total target population was 308 and 10% (30) of this population was used during pilot study. Questionnaires were hence distributed to 278 respondents and 211 were answered successfully.

Descriptive Statistics

The study aimed at examining the effect of stakeholder management on performance of donor funded health projects in Kenya. Respondents were also requested to tick on the extent to which

they agreed/disagreed with statements related to effect of stakeholder involvement on project performance. Findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Effect of Stakeholder Management on Project Performance

Key: **SD**-Strongly disagree, **D**-Disagree, **N**-Neutral, **A**-Agree, **SA**-Strongly agree

Statement	SD%	D%	N%	A%	SA%	Mean	Std. Dev
Stakeholder involvement is critical to the success of donor funded health projects	0	0	2.8	28.4	68.7	4.66	0.532
Stakeholder determine whether a project fails or succeeds	2.8	4.3	5.7	23.2	64.0	4.41	0.979
Where stakeholders are actively involved in decision making process in all stages of projects, there is benefit realization from the project	5.7	3.8	9.0	57.8	23.7	3.90	0.993
Stakeholder's decisions are effective in ensuring uninterrupted flow of project activities	0.5	7.1	0	49.8	42.7	4.37	1.456
The concerns of stakeholders are timely taken care of to avoid unnecessary conflicts	6.6	5.7	10.0	49.8	28.0	3.87	1.092
When stakeholders needs are not fully taken care of during project implementation, there is cost and time overruns	2.8	3.8	1.4	75.4	16.6	3.99	0.768
Stakeholders participation during project implementation leads to beneficiary satisfaction	1.4	9.0	2.4	34.1	53.1	4.28	0.983
With effective conflict management, there is benefit realization	2.4	4.3	4.7	25.6	63.0	4.43	0.940
Stakeholders management does not necessarily affect the performance of donor funded health project	15.6	41.2	5.2	21.8	16.1	2.82	1.369
Stakeholder's feedback is well documented and analysed for execution	0	0.5	0.9	41.2	57.3	4.57	5.16

N=211

Findings show that majority of the respondents agreed that; stakeholder involvement is critical to the success of donor funded health projects (m=4.66), stakeholder's feedback is well documented and analyzed for execution (m=4.57), with effective conflict management, there is benefit realization (m=4.43), stakeholders determine whether a project fails or succeeds (m=4.41), stakeholder's decisions are effective in ensuring uninterrupted flow of project activities (m=4.37), and stakeholders participation during project implementation leads to beneficiary satisfaction (m=4.28). Respondents further agreed that when stakeholders needs are not fully taken care of during project implementation, there is cost and time overruns (m=3.99), where Stakeholders are actively involved in decision making process in all stages of projects, there is benefit realization from the project (m= 3.90), and the concerns of stakeholders are timely taken care of to avoid unnecessary conflicts (m=3.87). The respondents however disagreed that stakeholders management does not necessarily affect the performance of donor funded health project (m=2.82).

Findings imply that the project team members are aware that stakeholder involvement is essential to the success of donor funded health projects. They therefore make efforts to ensure that key stakeholders are meaningfully involved in the health projects. The project team members also ensure that the feedback from stakeholders is well documented and analyzed for future reference. This could also help the project managers to change the design of the project to meet the stakeholders' desires which could also help to improve stakeholders' satisfaction with the health projects. Effective management of stakeholders enables the project managers to resolve conflicts among the project team members and stakeholders amicably. This is because they understand the needs of each stakeholder. A stakeholder can derail the success rate of a project and this may happen if they are not listened to and may take actions that may lead to project delays. Involvements of stakeholders make them have a sense of ownership in the projects and thus willingly participate in the implementation of the projects. Findings concur with Buertey, Amofa and Atsrin (2016) who held that stakeholder involvement affects success of projects since involving them in all the project phases, leads to project's success.

Regression Model for Stakeholder Management

Table 2: Model Summary for Stakeholder Management

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.725 ^a	.526	.518	.490

a. Predictors: (Constant), stakeholder management
b. Dependent Variable: Project performance

The model summary was used to explain the variation in the dependent variable that could be explained by the independent variables. The r-squared for the variations in relationship between the stakeholder management and the project performance was 0.526. This implied that 52.6% of the variation in the dependent variable (performance of donor funded health projects) could be explained by independent variable (stakeholder management).

Table 3: ANOVA for Stakeholder Management

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	16.531	1	16.531	68.759	.000
	Residual	14.906	209	.240		
	Total	31.438	210			

a. Dependent Variable: project performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), stakeholder management

The ANOVA was used to determine whether the model was a good fit for the data. F calculated was 68.759. The **p** value was 0.000 which is <0.05. The model was considered as a good fit for the data. Hence, it can be used to predict the effect of stakeholder management on performance of donor funded projects in Kenya.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients for Stakeholder Management

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
		Coefficients		Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.516	.144		3.587	.001
	stakeholder management	.719	.087	.725	8.292	.000

a. Dependent Variable: project performance

The equation

$$y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \varepsilon$$

Becomes

$$\text{Project Performance} = 0.516 + 0.719 (\text{stakeholder management})$$

According to the results, stakeholder management has significant effect on performance of donor funded health projects in Kenya ($\beta_1=0.719$, p value= 0.000). The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.000 was less than the significant level of 0.05. The study hence rejects the null hypothesis since there is statistical evidence to prove that stakeholder management affects performance of donor funded health projects. Findings concur with Maina and Kimutai (2018) that stakeholder management had a positive and significant relationship with project performance.

Conclusions

Stakeholder management is essential in project management. When stakeholders are allowed to be part of project decision making, they give suggestions on the interests, needs and the project quality they desire; which, if effectively implemented, bring satisfactory outcomes. Stakeholder management aims at creating a sense of self-ownership of the project. However stakeholder involvement may lead to increase in projects costs especially when a high number of stakeholders are involved. These are costs to facilitate meetings and stakeholder forums. Time overruns may also be experienced since every stakeholder would like the project team to attend to the issues they raise. If the issues are not addressed they may not be satisfied with the project implementation process.

Recommendations of the Study

The project managers should adopt effective stakeholder management practices. They should give a platform for stakeholders to participate in all project phases and to understand what they want exactly through conducting needs assessment. This will ensure that the projects meet the needs of the stakeholders who are eventually satisfied with the projects. There should also be forums to sensitize the stakeholders particularly the community members on the importance of participating in project activities.

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