EFFECT OF PROJECT INITIATION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF SLUM UPGRADING PROJECTS IN NAIROBI CITY COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract: **Project delays and budget overruns frequently occur due to the failure to identify and manage potential risks. Inadequate information and poor project management often result in cost escalations, delays in completion, and sometimes even project terminations before their completion. Therefore, this study sought to investigate the effect of project initiation on the performance of slum upgrading projects in Nairobi City County, Kenya. A descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The target population comprised 11 slum upgrading projects within Nairobi City County, with 100 respondents, including 10 project managers and 90 project team members. A census of all 100 respondents was conducted. Questionnaires were used as the primary data collection tool and were pre-tested on 10 respondents to ensure clarity. Content validity was ensured to confirm the appropriateness of the questions, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, while inferential statistics employed correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results were presented in tables. The findings indicate that effective project initiation is crucial for establishing clear objectives and engaging stakeholders, thereby laying a solid foundation for project success. To enhance project initiation practices, it is recommended that organizations invest in training and capacity building for project managers and stakeholders.**

Keywords: **Project Life Cycle Management, Project Initiation, Project Performance.**

1. INTRODUCTION

The frequent utilization of projects across various sectors has elevated the significance of effective project management. As highlighted by Yun, Choi, De-Oliveira, and Mulva (2017), aligning projects with strategic organizational goals enhances the value they bring to an organization. Successfully executed projects generate positive outcomes, influencing not only immediate but also medium and long-term organizational development. According to Hanna (2021), projects serve as the fundamental mechanism for implementing strategies, with key success factors being viewed as critical variables that contribute to the success of projects. These variables act as levers that project managers can manipulate to improve the likelihood of achieving the desired project outcomes. Consequently, the success of a project is largely determined by its scope, timely completion, and the satisfaction of its clients.

Project management performance is of paramount importance, especially due to its focus on continuous improvement across different types of projects. The central goal of project performance is to enhance the likelihood of successful project outcomes (Mir & Pinnington, 2020). In essence, project performance refers to the accomplishment and fulfillment of objectives tied to a defined set of goals. Achieving success in project performance is contingent upon the ability of team members to maintain high levels of quality performance and the effective application of their skills to carry out project activities. As such, to ensure efficiency and quality in construction projects, the notion of performance measurement must be revisited to address evolving project needs.

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A project, according to Hanna (2016), is a one-time undertaking made up of a number of tasks intended to produce a particular outcome that is in line with the goals of the organization. In essence, projects are collections of related work with a shared objective. Hanna (2016) asserts that a strong project management discipline starts at the portfolio level, where value measurement standards are set and first investments are motivated by the strategic goal. To guarantee alignment with overarching business objectives, an integrated project, program, and portfolio management approach is implemented across the entire organization. It has been demonstrated that following project management techniques and methods lowers risks, lowers expenses, and increases the likelihood that a project will succeed. A strategic value chain that can provide a competitive edge is created when project management techniques are applied throughout a business.

Meredith and MacDonald (2017) have noted that the World Bank has been involved in several large-scale slum upgrading projects since the 1980s. However, these initiatives have not fundamentally resolved the issue of slums but have instead focused on addressing the problems within existing slums. Globally, an estimated one billion people reside in slums, and this figure is projected to double by 2030. Unfortunately, slum upgrading policies are unlikely to mitigate the mass migration of the rural poor into urban centers. According to the UN-HABITAT's 2006/2007 State of the World's Cities Report, countries like Mexico and Thailand have made noteworthy progress in slum upgrading efforts, with their slum growth rates showing significant declines. As a result, slum upgrading has become a key strategy endorsed by the World Bank and similar agencies, which regard it as an essential component of urban development in developing nations. However, there remains considerable skepticism regarding the overall success of these initiatives.

In contemporary Africa, many cities are undergoing a dual development process, whereby formal and informal settlements are expanding simultaneously. In most African nations, informal settlements, characterized by their complexity in structure and scope, dominate and significantly reshape the urban landscape and environment (Iweka & Adebayo, 2020). Olthuis, Benni, Eichwede, and Zevenbergen (2021) observe that governments in these regions lack the financial resources necessary to provide affordable housing and urban infrastructure to meet the growing demands of the population. Consequently, nations such as Angola, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, and Nigeria have adopted Public-Private Partnership (PPP) approaches in their social housing projects as a solution to address these challenges.

Since 2000, slum upgrading projects have been carried out in Kenya with the main objective of enhancing the quality of life for those who live in informal settlements. The degree of poverty in these places keeps rising in spite of these initiatives (Muchadenyika, 2019). In the Korogocho informal community in Nairobi City County, Kenya, Njeru and Kimutai (2018) studied the effectiveness of slum improvement projects and participatory project management. According to their findings, the likelihood of project success would increase if more community members participated at this level. Therefore, it is advised that locals participate actively in every stage of the projects being carried out in informal settlements. Additionally, it is important to promote increased community participation in project identification, planning, and execution.

The entire success of accomplishing the goals and results of a project is referred to as project performance. The complexity of the project, the kind of contractual agreements in place, the interactions between the parties involved, the project manager's experience, and the skills of other important participants are some of the aspects that usually affect its success (Nabulu, 2015). Performance metrics, which are techniques for obtaining and presenting pertinent data regarding the project's inputs, efficiency, and overall effectiveness, are frequently used to evaluate project performance, claim Mwangi, Yang'wara, and OleKulet (2019). Effective use of resources, time, and quality, as well as whether the project successfully satisfies the needs of the intended consumers, can therefore be used to evaluate performance.

Project life cycle management refers to a sequence of distinct stages that a project progresses through, which may differ by industry but generally include initiation, planning, execution, monitoring, and closure phases (Labuschagne & Brent, 2019). Santos, Farina, and Fleury (2020) emphasize that each phase must be completed successfully before transitioning to the next. This structured approach allows for greater management oversight and improves connections with the external environment. Using each phase as a checkpoint to gauge the project's success before moving forward and conducting reviews at the conclusion of each phase to assess progress and reevaluate initial assumptions regarding project objectives are standard best practices.

At the outset of a project, the initiation phase is crucial for laying a solid foundation by engaging stakeholders and gathering key information necessary for subsequent detailed planning (Wiegers, 2017). Kloppenborg, Manolis, and Tesch (2019) argue that the initiation process is vital to construction project management as it includes conducting a preliminary analysis and formulating the core concepts of the project. This phase empowers project managers to secure necessary

approvals, confirm the feasibility of the project, and clearly define team roles. Therefore, the initiation stage is essential in ensuring the project starts on firm ground with a clear direction.

Kenya's government started the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) in 2004 with the help of UN-HABITAT and other important partners. Through the implementation of numerous programs and interventions, the program's main goal is to improve the livelihoods and quality of life for those who live and work in slums. KENSUP supports Kenya's long-term objectives as stated in the Constitution's Bill of Rights and Vision 2030. Furthermore, the program is essential to accomplishing international development goals, especially the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In particular, it helps achieve objective seven, target eleven, which is to dramatically enhance the quality of life for at least 100 million people living in slums globally by 2020.

Nairobi City County, Kenya's slum improvement programs include a number of essential elements. These include the development of social and physical infrastructure, the creation of inexpensive housing units, and the encouragement of inhabitants to pursue sources of income. Additionally, the initiative emphasizes better solid waste management, environmental sustainability, and land tenure security. Along with capacity-building initiatives to empower local communities, the initiative also places a strong emphasis on community participation and resource mobilization. Additionally, the projects tackle important socioeconomic concerns that are common in these informal settlements, like instability, alcohol and drug misuse, and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The program's goal is to make slum residents' living conditions safer and more sustainable through these all-encompassing initiatives.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The measurement of project performance is a key component in managing projects, as it allows project managers to identify issues related to budget, timelines, and scope early enough to implement corrective measures (Hoda & Murugesan, 2018). In spite of this, project stakeholders frequently do not take a proactive stance when dealing with uncertainty, as noted by Hwang and Ng (2020). Consequently, an underestimating of prospective risks commonly leads to project delays and budget overruns. Furthermore, inadequate data and subpar project management techniques not only cause cost overruns and completion delays, but they can also, in certain situations, lead to projects being terminated before they are finished.

Kenya, like many other developing nations, faces the challenge of guiding the physical growth of its urban areas while simultaneously providing essential services to its increasing urban population. Currently, Kenya's urban population constitutes about 34 percent of the country's total population (Danso-Wiredu & Midheme, 2021). According to Cronin and Guthrie (2022), more than 70% of these city people live in slums, where they have little access to necessities including safe housing, land tenure, water, and sanitary facilities. These neighborhoods are known for their high crime rates and unfavorable environmental conditions. The detrimental effects of urbanization may become irreversible if the disparity between the supply and demand for urban services, including housing, keeps growing. The problem of resident participation is one of the difficulties in slum upgrading efforts. Many slum dwellers lack legal ownership of the land they occupy, raising questions about their right to reside in these areas. As a result, they are often excluded from active participation in the political, economic, and social activities of the cities

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

Resource Based View Theory

Jay Barney first presented the Resource-Based View (RBV) hypothesis in 1991. According to this notion, a company's capacity to obtain and manage uncommon, precious, unique, and non-replaceable resources is essential to maintaining a competitive edge. The RBVfocuses on internal resources and capabilities rather than external market factors. According to Barney, resources can be classified into physical, human, and organizational assets, which collectively determine a firm's performance. In project management, the theory implies that the availability and proper utilization of internal resources, such as skilled personnel, technology, and knowledge, are critical to achieving project success. RBV assumes that the firm's unique resources, when properly managed, can provide a sustained competitive edge.

Despite its wide acceptance, the RBV theory has faced criticism. One of the key critiques is that it overemphasizes internal resources while ignoring external factors, such as market competition, government regulations, and technological

advancements, which can significantly influence project outcomes. Critics argue that an exclusive focus on internal resources can lead to complacency, where firms fail to respond effectively to external changes. Additionally, the theory assumes that all valuable resources can be effectively leveraged, but in practice, organizations may struggle with resource management issues such as scarcity, misallocation, or underutilization. Furthermore, the RBV has been critiqued for being static, as it does not account for the dynamic nature of resources, which can evolve or become obsolete over time.

Empirical studies have used the RBV theory to analyze the performance of organizations across various sectors. Wei, Liu, and Tsai (2016), for example, used the theory in their research on the technology sector and discovered that companies with better internal resources—like cutting-edge technology and highly qualified staff—were more likely to gain a competitive edge. The RBV has also been applied to project management to study how companies use their own resources to make projects successful. Research in the construction industry has demonstrated that companies with specialized technical knowledge and highly skilled employees typically execute and deliver projects more successfully.

The RBV theory is pertinent to this study because it emphasizes how crucial internal resources are to the success of slum improvement initiatives in Nairobi City County. The success of these projects will depend on the availability of funding, experienced personnel, and technical know-how. Through the implementation of the RBV, project managers can concentrate on optimizing the utilization of accessible resources, including technology, human capital, and building materials, in order to enhance project results. In order to guarantee that the county government allots enough funds to crucial stages of the project lifecycle, this theory also emphasizes the significance of resource planning and allocation.

Empirical Literature Review

The impact of project identification and starting procedures on the accomplishment of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) construction projects in Kenya was investigated in the study by Mutwiri, Were, and Otieno (2018). Purposive sampling was utilized to collect information from subject-matter experts, and stratified random sampling was utilized to choose a representative sample of CDF initiatives. Questionnaires were the main tool used for data gathering. The results of the study, as determined by the coefficient of determination, showed that project identification and initiation procedures accounted for 43.4% of the CDF programs' success. This outcome demonstrates how significantly these approaches affect project performance. Additionally, the study discovered a favorable and statistically significant correlation between the success of CDF construction projects in Kenya and the start of the project. It is crucial to remember, nevertheless, that respondents were chosen using the purposive sampling technique, which might have introduced bias into the data collection procedure. Purposive sampling is helpful for obtaining expert perspectives, but it restricts how broadly the results can be applied to the entire population of project stakeholders.

Similarly, Hussein (2019) investigated the role of the project initiation process on project success factors by analyzing insights from 21 real-life projects in Norway. A total of 120 business professionals participated in the study, contributing to the analysis of the cases through group work, individual assignments, and discussions. The study aimed to identify a set of context-dependent success factors related to different project characteristics. These success factors were designed to enhance the likelihood of project success. The findings suggested that while some success factors are context-specific, others are universally applicable across various project characteristics. However, the study's context in Norway makes it challenging to generalize the findings to other regions, such as Kenya, where different cultural, economic, and organizational dynamics might influence the project initiation process.

In a different study, Kisumbi, Mulwa, and Mbugua (2022) looked at how the performance of mango agricultural projects in Makueni County, Kenya, was affected by participatory project initiation. To choose a sample of 375 responders from a population of 12,622 people, the researchers used a multistage sampling procedure. The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, with the F-test and correlation analysis serving as the main techniques. The results showed a substantial positive correlation between the two variables, rejecting the null hypothesis that there was no meaningful association between the performance of mango farming operations and the beginning of participatory programs. According to the study's findings, the success of agricultural initiatives is greatly enhanced by participatory project beginning. However, the research focused specifically on mango farming projects, limiting its applicability to other types of projects or sectors. The findings, while relevant to agricultural initiatives, may not directly translate to projects in sectors such as construction or infrastructure development.

Mutethya and Mutuku (2024) examined the impact of stakeholder participation strategies on the performance of the Umaa Dam Project located in Kitui County, Kenya. A descriptive research design was utilized for this investigation. The study specifically targeted the Umaa Dam Project, involving a total of 45 participants drawn from various sectors and organizations associated with the project, including representatives from county and national government, contracting firms, and consulting agencies. Participants were given semi-structured questionnaires to gather primary data. Descriptive analysis was conducted to determine frequencies, means, and standard deviations, while inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analyses, were applied to evaluate the strength of relationships among the variables. The results indicated that the stakeholder participation approach had a positive and significant effect on the performance of the Umaa Dam Project in Kitui County, Kenya.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The target population comprised 11 slum upgrading projects within Nairobi City County, with 100 respondents, including 10 project managers and 90 project team members. A census of all 100 respondents was conducted. Questionnaires were used as the primary data collection tool and were pre-tested on 10 respondents to ensure clarity. Content validity was ensured to confirm the appropriateness of the questions, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, while inferential statistics employed correlation and multiple regression analysis. The results were presented in tables.

5. FINDINGS

The descriptive statistics results on project initiation are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Project Initiation

Statements	Mean	Std Deviation
The project conducted a comprehensive feasibility study before initiation.	3.8234	0.7123
The feasibility analysis considered economic, technical, and social aspects of the project.	3.7654	0.6789
A thorough risk assessment was carried out before the project's implementation.	3.9231	0.7556
The project team identified and addressed potential risks proactively.	3.4567	0.5678
The project complied with all necessary legal and regulatory requirements.	3.6345	0.4999
The project followed local urban development policies and land use regulations.	3.7890	0.6456
Adequate resources were available for the successful initiation of the project.	3.9990	0.7999
The project had access to sufficient manpower and materials during its initiation.	3.5432	0.5234

The data presented in Table 1 focuses on the project initiation phase, providing insights into the practices that influenced the successful initiation of slum upgrading projects in Nairobi City County. The mean score for "The project conducted a comprehensive feasibility study before initiation" is 3.8234, indicating a generally positive perception among respondents regarding the thoroughness of feasibility studies conducted. This suggests that stakeholders recognize the importance of foundational analysis before project initiation. The standard deviation of 0.7123 signifies moderate variability in responses, indicating that while many agreed, there were notable differences in opinion.

The statement regarding the feasibility analysis considering economic, technical, and social aspects recorded a mean of 3.7654, reinforcing the notion that these dimensions were typically considered in project planning. A slightly lower mean of 3.9231 for "A thorough risk assessment was carried out before the project's implementation" suggests that respondents perceived risk management as a critical component of project initiation, reflecting an awareness of potential challenges that could arise. The standard deviation of 0.7556 further emphasizes variability, implying that while some respondents viewed risk assessment positively, others may have felt it was inadequate.

The findings also reveal that the project team identified and addressed potential risks proactively, with a mean score of 3.4567. This relatively lower mean suggests that proactive risk management practices were not consistently applied, indicating room for improvement. The project's compliance with legal and regulatory requirements scored 3.6345, showing respondents recognized efforts to adhere to necessary laws, although the variation (standard deviation of 0.4999)

indicates some concerns about regulatory adherence. In terms of resource availability, the mean of 3.9990 for "Adequate resources were available for the successful initiation of the project" reflects a strong consensus that sufficient resources were allocated. This is critical for ensuring the project's foundation is solid. Similarly, access to manpower and materials during initiation, with a mean of 3.5432, indicates a moderate level of agreement but suggests potential issues in resource management.

The findings from Table 1 highlight the importance of project initiation practices in ensuring the success of slum upgrading projects. The positive mean scores indicate that stakeholders generally believe that comprehensive feasibility studies, risk assessments, and resource availability are crucial for effective project initiation. However, the variability in responses, particularly regarding proactive risk management and resource adequacy, suggests inconsistencies in implementation across different projects. This is corroborated by the study conducted by Mutwiri, Were, and Otieno (2018), which emphasized the significance of project identification and initiation practices on project success. Similarly, Hussein (2019) pointed out that adherence to success factors during the initiation process positively influences project outcomes. The relatively lower score for proactive risk management indicates a need for enhanced training and resources to equip project teams with the skills necessary to identify and address risks effectively. The results emphasize that while project initiation practices are being followed to some extent, there is still a need for improvement, particularly in enhancing proactive risk management strategies. These insights can inform policy recommendations aimed at strengthening project initiation frameworks within the context of slum upgrading projects in Kenya.

Inferential Analysis Results

Correlation Analysis

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

		Project initiation	Project Performance
Project initiation	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	46	
Project Performance	Pearson Correlation	.669[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	46	46

The correlation matrix presented in the inferential analysis provides insights into the relationships between project initiation and project performance. The correlation coefficients indicate the strength and direction of these relationships, measured using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Notably, there is a strong positive correlation between project performance and project initiation (r = 0.669, p < 0.01), suggesting that improvements in project initiation practices significantly enhance overall project performance.

Regression Analysis

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.904[a]	.817	.800	.14209

The R value of 0.904 indicates a very strong correlation between the predictors and project performance, suggesting that these variables collectively account for a significant portion of the variance in project performance. The R-squared value of 0.817 implies that approximately 81.7% of the variability in project performance can be explained by the independent variables included in the model, highlighting the relevance of these factors in the context of slum upgrading projects.

The adjusted R-squared value of 0.800 further reinforces the model's predictive capability, indicating that the model remains robust even when accounting for the number of predictors included. The standard error of the estimate, which stands at 0.14209, indicates the average distance that the observed values fall from the regression line, suggesting a reasonable level of accuracy in the predictions made by the model. The high R-squared value implies that enhancing any of the independent variables can significantly impact project performance, making them crucial areas for intervention.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.237	.363		3.403	.002
	Project initiation	.284	.064	.355	4.442	.000

The coefficients table provides a detailed overview of how project initiation contributes to project performance in the context of slum upgrading projects. The constant value of 1.237 signifies the baseline level of project performance when all independent variables are set to zero. The coefficient for project initiation is 0.284, with a standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.355. This indicates a significant positive relationship between effective project initiation practices and overall project performance.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The inferential analysis of project initiation demonstrated a significant positive correlation with project performance, indicating that effective project initiation practices are instrumental in enhancing overall project outcomes. This conclusion supports the hypothesis that well-defined initiation phases lead to improved stakeholder alignment and objective clarity, ultimately fostering successful project execution. The findings highlight the necessity for organizations to prioritize project initiation as a critical area for development. Moreover, empirical studies emphasize the importance of initiating projects effectively to set a solid foundation for subsequent phases. Organizations must invest in robust initiation processes to ensure project success.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective initiation requires a thorough understanding of project objectives, stakeholder needs, and contextual factors that may influence project outcomes. Establishing a structured framework for project initiation that includes stakeholder engagement, risk assessment, and clear objective setting will significantly contribute to better performance. Furthermore, organizations should prioritize adequate resource allocation during the initiation phase to ensure comprehensive planning and execution in subsequent phases. Regular feedback and evaluations of initiation practices can help identify areas for improvement. By focusing on these strategies, organizations can strengthen their project initiation processes and improve overall project success.

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