

INFLUENCE OF STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF HEALTHCARE PROJECTS IN MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract: The health sector in Kenya has been on turmoil for years orchestrated by inadequate focus on the sector by the relevant stakeholders. The projects in this sector are instrumental in steering it success. However, even after the devolution, the sector has seen minimal progress as key projects aimed at enhancing access to quality healthcare remain incomplete. Machakos County has also faced key challenges in its healthcare, as most of healthcare projects carried out remain incomplete. Therefore, this study investigated the influence of stakeholder identification on the performance of healthcare projects in Machakos County, Kenya. A descriptive method was employed, with emphasis on project managers of important healthcare projects in Machakos County. Machakos, chosen as one of the counties to pilot UHC, had the most beneficiaries. There was a focus on a total of 341 healthcare projects in the county. The projects were distributed in the 8 sub-counties, namely Machakos Town, Yatta, Mavoko, Kangundo, Masinga, Matungulu, Kathiani, and Mwala sub-counties. A total of 184 participants were selected using a sampling formula. The participants were selected through a method called stratified random sampling, with the sub-counties serving as the different categories. A questionnaire was used to gather data, which was then analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. By utilizing a descriptive approach, the study analyzed quantifiable data using SPSS. Furthermore, inferential analysis was used to examine statistical connections between predictor variables and predicted variables. The findings were displayed using both frequency tables and bar graphs. The research found that recognizing stakeholders as part of project stakeholder management practices greatly impacted the outcomes of healthcare projects in Machakos County. It was clear from the study that most healthcare projects surveyed did not effectively prioritize stakeholder identification by recognizing project stakeholders, analyzing them, and documenting their information. The research suggests that project managers and other leaders of healthcare projects in Machakos County must prioritize identifying key stakeholders linked to the projects, whether directly or indirectly, to understand their requirements and determine the most effective way to engage them in project implementation.

Keywords: Stakeholder Identification, Project Performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Project performance as defined by the Project Management Guide Book is the process of setting a project right from the inception phase to its completion and ensuring that the project meets the intended mandate. Initiating a project could be easy but seeing the project into completion will require intensive commitment from all the project stakeholders. Quality healthcare is a fundamental determinant of a country's sustainable growth and development. For a country to realise its

goals and potential, it must have a healthy productive population, and this can only be determined by availability of quality and affordable healthcare (WHO, 2016). To provide quality healthcare, however, the governments and other entities ought to implement healthcare projects. The successful performance of these projects implies that such accomplishments are effectively delivered through intended budget and in good time, and they are able to offer the intended healthcare services and at the intended costs. World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes healthcare project managers as essential determinants of the success of healthcare provision through leading effective performance of healthcare projects (WHO, 2019).

Many governments across the globe have been focusing on provision of affordable and quality healthcare, especially to the vulnerable communities. In USA, Obamacare was introduced with the aim of ensuring that the poor and vulnerable people access quality healthcare, just like the rest in the society (Banerjee et al., 2021). This has also been the norm in other developed countries like Canada, Spain and Japan (Faizi & Kazmi, 2017). To ensure equal access to quality healthcare, these governments have been coming up with various models which are aimed at reducing the costs of treatment for the low-income earners, and putting in place healthcare schemes that enable the government to cater for the costs of treatment among the vulnerable groups. In view of this, the WHO has been championing for Universal Health Coverage (UHC), which is a framework where governments ensure equal access to quality and affordable healthcare for all. This has been championed as one of the ways that the burden of treatment can be eased and ensures a healthier population. According to the WHO (2017), the UHC comprises of three fundamental pillars which are: Population coverage, out-of-pocket expenditure and the range of health services provided. This is whereby the concept seeks to be availed to large pool of benefices without considering their social and economic status, provide a bigger pool of healthcare services, and have these services offered at the cheapest possible cost.

Project stakeholders are integral for running projects satisfactorily and achieving any intended deliverables. According to Govender (2016), stakeholders comprise of groups, entities, establishments or individuals impacted by a project. Stakeholders fundamentally determine how capable a project is to deliver what is projected in that they have various roles to play in the project, and their involvement and input in program enhances performance of a project. The main project-stakeholders comprise project users, program financiers, project team, and authorities or regulators of project. Managing these stakeholders is a process that involves identification, analysis, continuous engagement, and monitoring of the stakeholders to ensure that their needs are met (Ignatius, Buertey, Amofa, & Atsrim, 2016). For a project to achieve its full potential, it is appropriate to manage the stakeholders in an effective manner, where their views are sought and considered in making decisions during the project performance process. The UHC program in Kenya would require extensive management of the stakeholders as a way of ensuring they support the program and embrace it fully. These stakeholders include the general public, the policy makers, the international agencies and non-governmental agencies as well as the project team.

Implementing a project means that an idea has been conceptualized, planned, designed and actualized into an actual project that delivers the intended purpose as per the original idea (Chung & Crawford, 2016). According to the PMKB (2019), project performance is the process in which a project is run right from its inception to its completion through integration of project management skills, the required resources and time. A program is said to have succeeded if it becomes capable of providing the projected services to the targeted users (Eskerod, Huemann & Savage, 2015). According to Sperry and Jetter (2019), project performance can be addressed in terms of the period the project took to be completed and the costs incurred. During the project inception and the planning phase, the project initiators set timelines when they intend to have the project realised. They also set the costs that the project would incur from its inception to completion (Silvius & Schipper, 2019). The performance will then mean that the project was not only completed, but met the timelines and within the budgeted cost.

In Mauritius, Mahadew, Addaney, and Cobbinah (2021) assessed project's success though its ability to meet expected output including delivering the projected services and ensuring satisfaction of the targeted users. According to Magazzino, Mele, and Golpira (2021), a well-implemented project will have more satisfied targeted users since it bares the capability to render the services it was meant to offer. While defining the performance of infrastructural projects in Nigeria, Igwe and Ude (2018) noted that project performance is synonymous to project completion where a program gets achieved under a set cost and timeframe, meets the expectations of the stakeholders in terms of quality, and it is capable of serving the intended purpose for a long foreseeable future. Eja and Ramegowda (2020) on the other hand address performance of projects in terms of accomplishment of a program to deliver the expected mandate. To Aka, Iji, Isa and Bamgbade (2021), performance

is mainly applicable to programs that are expected to continue rendering a specific purpose and comprise of several projects implemented on a gradual basis, as opposed to project completion which is for a project, thus a one-time endeavour focusing on a specific and narrow goal. This is also expounded by Igwe and Ude (2018) who indicate that for a project like the Universal Health Coverage (best defined as a program since it has several projects each with defined objectives to meet) can be implemented where several deliverables are met at sequence of timelines. For Olawumi and Chan (2021), completion would mean that the project has delivered all its intended purpose, which is most unlikely especially for long-term programs like the UHC.

In Kenya, Ongondo, Gwaya and Masu (2019) measured program accomplishments (performance) utilizing timelines, cost and target-user satisfaction. The authors considered performance as a process that goes on gradually as long as the project has been initiated and ground-breaking carried out. According to Musau and Kirui (2018), projects accomplishment will be determined by the daily processes of the project since it has been initiated to the time it is launched and put into the planned use. This means that the performance can be scored based on extent that a program has been actualised to projected outcome (Affara et al., 2021; Ocharo & Kimutai, 2018). This is unlike project completion that can only be achieved when the project is fully implemented. According to Abu and Elliott (2020), projects like the Universal Health Coverage are expected to be undertaken over quite some time, and performance is mainly gradual, with phases set at each defined timelines and costs. The performance of such projects can therefore be assessed in terms of what has been achieved for the completed phases and at what cost.

Stakeholder management is the process of identifying, analysing and engaging persons, group of persons or organisations that are likely to have connection/relationship with the project (Jahaf, 2018). In the context of project management, managing stakeholders is an integral process throughout the project performance phase. Unlike other project activities such as planning, design and project closure that take place once during the entire phase of project execution, project stakeholder management is a process that takes places in the entire duration of project execution (Amoatey & Hayibor, 2017). This is because projects have stakeholders who have varied needs and expectations and at varied timeframes of the project performance schedule. The project managers will therefore have the duty to identify these stakeholders right from the project initiation and engage them in the entire lifecycle of the project (Musheke & Phiri, 2021).

Stakeholder identification is the process of looking for the key persons, group of persons or organizations that are likely to be affected in any way with the project. Identifying stakeholders implies that the project team is actively collecting information and data regarding the main parties that could have interests on the project and documenting them for the purpose of analyzing their role in the project (Bahadorestani, Naderpajouh, & Sadiq, 2020). According to Hampel, Tracey and Weber (2020), before any plan regarding the stakeholders is carried out, they ought to be identified and documented, thus determining the extent to which each stakeholder can be engaged in the project. Based on Sanghera and Sanghera (2019), controlling participants in a program effectively is determined by the extent to which the stakeholders have been identified.

The healthcare sector has been an integral factor of economic growth and development in both developed and developing countries, owing to its ability to promote productivity through a healthy population (Ogbuabor & Onwujekwe, 2019). However, the cost of quality healthcare services among the population has been a nightmare in many countries, especially poor countries where a majority of the population lives below the poverty line (WHO, 2016). This has seen most governments including the Kenya come up with various measures to enhance access to affordable, equitable, and quality healthcare to the citizens. Universal health coverage (UHC) has been highly drawn from a constitution and set policies by World Health, dating back in 1978. The framework outlines efficiency as one of deliverables for an effective UHC where the healthcare system is run smoothly and in consideration of people's needs. The framework also outlines financing as a core indicator of quality health where there is adequate sources of funds to stimulate the healthcare processes. The other parameter is accessibility where fundamental technologies and medicines are supposed to be availed to hospitals and at such, patients can access them with ease. Another parameter is capacity where it is projected that a quality healthcare system should have capacity to treat patients. This capacity is characterized by adequate trained personnel, committed personnel and motivated to offer quality health services; Nthenya, 2022). To achieve this mandate, there has been a focus on healthcare projects where key projects are implemented to ensure effective delivery of healthcare projects.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To enhance access to quality and affordable healthcare, the government of Kenya has been committed to coming-up with different programmes and policies supporting the sector, including the devolution of healthcare to the counties (Okech & Lelegwe, 2016). Even after the healthcare was devolved, its success has still been meagre across the country. Most of the

counties have recorded an increased number of stalled healthcare projects, despite a big part of the devolved funds spent on healthcare. In Machakos County, the healthcare sector remains poor just like the rest of the counties. This has mainly been attributed to poor performance of the healthcare projects in the county. With over 800 healthcare projects having been launched in the county in the past 10 years of devolution, less than 40% of these projects have been successfully completed and fully running to offer the expected services. The county has been ranked last among the neighbouring counties in terms of healthcare delivery, and this can be mainly attributed to underperformance of the healthcare projects. It also raises the question on the preparedness, involvement of stakeholders, and proper management of the healthcare projects in the county.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

Stakeholder Theory

The theory was put across by Freeman (1984) where he referred to a stakeholder as an individual, entity or formation that has a given link with given program. Freeman (1984) indicated that programs or institutions do not operate in vacuum, thus they have parties who have direct or indirect link with them. These parties have varied needs, demands and expectations, thus have a hand to play in how well the programs are run. Based on variations in their needs, expectations and roles, stakeholders have varied links with projects, and this also is the case to their inclusion and engagement (Shauka *et al.*, 2022). This is an implication that involving stakeholders takes an approach on level at which they're affected by the said programs.

The UHC projects have several stakeholders that need to be involved in the entire process, for the project to be successful. Identifying these stakeholders and analysing them to establish their contribution to the project success would be essential in stimulating the performance of the project (Lehtinen, Kier, Aaltonen & Huemann, 2023). According to Nguyen and Mohamed (2018), projects can only achieve their intended purpose if the stakeholders are satisfied. On the other hand, stakeholders can only be satisfied if they are identified and involved effectively in the project performance. The stakeholder theory upholds the need for analysing the stakeholders to establish how they are affected by the project, and inviting them to be part of the project. This is aimed at ensuring that the stakeholders are brought on board and their views and opinions converted as key inputs to the project's success.

In the context of this study, stakeholder theory will be used to expound on the role played by stakeholder identification in enhancing the success of the projects. The theory has highly emphasised on a clear identification and analysis of the stakeholders to ensure they are made part of the project even before they themselves seek inclusion in the project (Jahaf, 2018). According to Chung and Crawford (2016), through the stakeholder theory, the project managers see the need to include stakeholders even though they are not directly attached to the project. This is made possible by identifying and analysing the stakeholders to establish those that could have a high impact on the project despite not being closely attached to the project. The theory is therefore integral in enabling this study to underpin the relationship between stakeholder identification as an aspect of stakeholder management on the performance of Universal Health Coverage program in Kenya.

Empirical Literature Review

Wang and Aenis (2019) did evaluated how stakeholder identification drove success of programs based in Southwest of China. Their assessment evaluated role played by identifying, assessing and analysing the stakeholders based on their connection with the project on the success of the projects. Their study utilized a comparative research approach and did a comparison between the projects that had fully identified stakeholders and those that did not identify the stakeholders and document them. Obtained outcomes portrayed stakeholder identification notably contributed to projects' success. Based on Wang and Aenis (2019), projects that had identified, analyzed and documented their stakeholders were more capable of reaping the benefits of engaging stakeholders towards enhancing their performance as compared to those that did not identify the stakeholders. This is also supported by Saad, Zahid, and Muhammad (2022) who indicated that stakeholder identification is an essential process in stakeholder management that ensures the project team has a record on the stakeholders they are dealing with and how they are engaged. Their assessment was based on public projects in China. This being a more developed country than Kenya, it would be inappropriate to generalize the findings, hence the need for a study in a local context.

Elsewhere in Egypt, Elfouly (2019) did an evaluation on how stakeholder identification correlated with success among urban development programs. It main focused to evaluate role played by recognition and analysis of interested parties on

performance of the development projects. The authors utilized a correlational approach and surveyed 107 respondents drawn from project managers in the development projects in Egypt. The collected data was analysed through mixed method approach where both quantitative and quality-based analysis method. Obtained outcomes revealed that project performance relies upon how team undertaking establishments capably identify the stakeholders, analyze their needs and engage them based on their needs and expectations from the project. According to Elfouly (2019), identifying the stakeholders ensured that the projects management team was aware of the type of stakeholders they were dealing with thus making the process of managing such stakeholders easier and more effective. Their findings compare with those by Olatunde, Awodele, and Odeyinka (2021) who contemplated that stakeholder identification is a process in stakeholder management that enables the organizations to come up with an elaborate list of the stakeholders who have interested in the projects. The study addresses identification of stakeholders as the only aspect that could enhance project success. However, the current study brings-in other aspects of stakeholder management that would enhance project performance.

A study by Mugata and Yusuf (2018) on project stakeholder identification in public sector projects in Kenya sought on examining level that project stakeholders once identified and adequately engaged contributed in program's accomplishment. Survey employed a descriptive approach and collected primary data from 377 respondents drawn from public road construction projects in Kenya. Attained info got categorized embracing descriptive-based and inferential-based approach through use of SPSS. Attained outcomes showed how stakeholder identification determined the effectiveness and the pool of stakeholders identified and how their involvement in the project would ensure project success. According to Mugata and Yusuf (2018), identifying stakeholders is the beginning of the essential process of managing stakeholders, thus its effectiveness would determine the success of the entire stakeholder management process towards enhancing project performance. Their findings are supported by Chepchirchir and Nyang'au (2022) who indicated that identifying stakeholders paves way for a more robust stakeholder engagement thus enhancing the success of stakeholder involvement in project performance. The study was on road construction projects which are managed and run different from the healthcare projects, and particularly the UHC projects.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive method was employed, with emphasis on project managers of important healthcare projects in Machakos County. Machakos, chosen as one of the counties to pilot UHC, had the most beneficiaries. There was a focus on a total of 341 healthcare projects in the county. The projects were distributed in the 8 sub-counties, namely Machakos Town, Yatta, Mavoko, Kangundo, Masinga, Matungulu, Kathiani, and Mwala sub-counties. A total of 184 participants were selected using a sampling formula. The participants were selected through a method called stratified random sampling, with the sub-counties serving as the different categories. A questionnaire was used to gather data, which was then analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. By utilizing a descriptive approach, the study analyzed quantifiable data using SPSS. Furthermore, inferential analysis was used to examine statistical connections between predictor variables and predicted variables. The findings were displayed using both frequency tables and bar graphs.

5. FINDINGS

The descriptive statistics results on stakeholder identification are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Stakeholder Identification

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
There is a set framework for identifying stakeholders before the healthcare projects are initiated	29.9%	21.2%	9.9%	17.1%	21.9%	2.61	1.43
The project team recognizes all the stakeholders who are likely to be affected by the projects	21.2%	29.2%	14.4%	18.8%	16.4%	2.78	1.01
The project team ensures the stakeholders are categorized based on their level of interaction with the project	34.9%	21.2%	7.5%	17.1%	19.2%	2.64	1.56
The stakeholders are analysed to establish the level at which they are affected or interrelated with the project	37.0%	15.5%	13.7%	20.1%	13.7%	2.58	1.53

There are reports documented to show the details of the identified stakeholders 38.4% 24.7% 11.6% 11.6% 13.7% 2.37 1.43

Possible stakeholders are informed of the impending identification process for it to be inclusive 41.1% 17.5% 8.2% 16.0% 17.1% 2.70 1.61

The documentation of stakeholders is shared with the relevant authorities 36.5% 18.2% 9.7% 27.4% 8.2% 2.34 1.53

The level of stakeholder identification in our projects has been instrumental in enhancing the success of the projects 41.8% 34.2% 8.2% 6.2% 9.6% 2.07 1.27

The findings portrayed that 51.1% of the respondents disagreed that there were set frameworks for identifying stakeholders before the healthcare projects are initiated in their respective hospitals (Mean = 2.61; Standard Deviation = 1.43). Further, the respondents disagreed that the project team recognized all the stakeholders who were likely to be affected by the projects (Mean = 2.78; Standard Deviation = 1.01); and that the project team ensured the stakeholders were categorized based on their level of interaction with the project (Strongly Disagree = 34.9%; Disagree = 21.2%; Mean = 2.64; Standard Deviation = 1.56). The findings imply that the recognition of stakeholders for the purpose of identifying the appropriate stakeholders was not adequately undertaken in most of the surveyed projects.

The findings further portray that majority of the respondents disagreed that the stakeholders in their respective projects were analysed to establish the level at which they are affected or interrelated with the project (Strongly Disagree = 37.0%; Disagree = 15.5%; Mean = 2.58; Standard Deviation = 1.53). The respondents further disagreed that there were reports documented to show the details of the identified stakeholders (Strongly Disagree = 38.4%; Disagree = 24.7%; Mean = 2.37; Standard Deviation = 1.43); and that the possible stakeholders in the projects were informed of the impending identification process for it to be inclusive (Strongly Disagree = 41.1%; Disagree = 17.5%; Mean = 2.70; Standard Deviation = 1.61). The respondents further disagreed that the documentation of stakeholders was shared with the relevant authorities (Strongly Disagree = 36.5%; Disagree = 18.2%; Mean = 2.34; Standard Deviation = 1.53); and that the level of stakeholder identification in our projects has been instrumental in enhancing the success of the projects (Strongly Disagree = 41.8%; Disagree = 34.2%; Mean = 2.07; Standard Deviation = 1.27). The findings are a clear indication that identification of stakeholders has not been effectively carried out among most of the surveyed projects. This justifies the argument by Olatunde et al. (2021) that project stakeholders can only be effective in driving the success of the projects if the right stakeholders are identified. As elaborated by Gregory et al. (2020), identification of project stakeholders is an essential process in the effective management of projects, which if not done appropriately could derail the project's success.

Inferential Statistics Results

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

	Project Performance		Stakeholder Identification
Project Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	146	
Stakeholder Identification	Pearson Correlation	.889**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	146	146

The results as shown in Table 2 revealed that stakeholder identification had a strong and significant positive relation with performance of healthcare projects in Machakos County. This is as evidenced by a Pearson Correlation coefficient (r) of 0.889 and a significance level of $0.000 < 0.05$. A strong correlation as expounded by Rinjit (2020) should exceed a correlation coefficient of 0.60.

Regression Analysis Results

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.794 ^a	.630	.619	.35664

The model summary results for the regression analysis are as shown in Table 3. As the results portray, an overall correlation coefficient (R) of 0.794 was obtained. This is an indication that when combined, the stakeholder identification had a 79.4% correlation with the performance of healthcare projects in Machakos County. The R-Square value on the other hand was 0.630, which implies that the stakeholder identification was responsible for 63.0% variation in performance of healthcare projects in Kenya. The findings are a justification that the performance of healthcare projects in Machakos County is strongly associated with how the stakeholder was managed.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	30.528	1	30.528	245.123	.000 ^b
Residual	17.934	144	.1245		
Total	48.463	145			

To ascertain that the regression model used was viable to predict the relationship between project stakeholder management and project performance, an ANOVA test was carried out. The results as shown in Table 4 revealed that an F-value of 245.123 was obtained. The F-value was within the 95% confidence level as shown by the P-value of 0.000<0.05. This is an indication that the model was statistically significant to predict the relationship between project stakeholder management and project performance.

Table 5: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	.256	.157		1.628	.106
Stakeholder Identification	.290	.050	.396	5.786	.000

The regression coefficient for the model is as shown in Table 5. As the results portray, stakeholder identification had an unstandardized coefficient of 0.290. This is an implication that stakeholder identification positively influenced performance of healthcare projects in Machakos County, where a unit change in project stakeholder identification would see an increase in project performance by 29.0%. The P-value for the variable was 0.000<0.05 implying that stakeholder identification significantly influenced performance of healthcare projects.

The final regression equation is presented as follows:

$$Y = 0.510 + 0.290X_1$$

6. CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that stakeholder identification as one of project stakeholder management practices had a significant influence on performance of healthcare projects in Machakos County. The results from the study were evident that stakeholder identification through recognition of project stakeholders, as well as analysis and documentation of the stakeholders was not effectively upheld in most of the surveyed healthcare projects. This is an indication that the poor performance of healthcare projects in Machakos County was significantly associated with ineffective identification of the stakeholders.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that there is need for project managers and other initiators of healthcare projects in Machakos County to uphold identification of key stakeholders who are associated with the projects either directly or indirectly in order to establish their needs and how to best involve them in the implementation of the projects.

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