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MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE OF AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS IN NYAMIRA COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract

The study sought to establish the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to examine the influence of M&E communication advocacy on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya, to determine the influence of M&E financial capacity on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. This study used a descriptive research design. The total target population was 437 respondents involving Nyamira County officials, project managers, community leaders and Ministry of Agriculture officers. The sample size was derived from the target population using Yamane's sample size determination formula. Therefore, the sample size for the study was 209 respondents. Primary data was used in this study. The study's primary data was obtained using semistructured questionnaires. Quantitative and qualitative data was generated from the closedended and open-ended questions, respectively. Inferential and descriptive statistics were employed for analysis of quantitative data with the assistance of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25). The study results were presented through use of tables and figures. The study concludes that M&E communication advocacy has a significant effect on Performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. In addition, the study concludes that M&E financial capacity has a significant effect on Performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. From the results, the study recommends that Nyamira County government should ensure effective flow of monitoring and evaluation information to all stakeholders to enhance project performance. In addition, the county should ensure adequate budget is allocated for monitoring and evaluations to ensure agricultural projects are implemented effectively.

Keywords

Monitoring and evaluation practices, M&E communication advocacy, M&E financial capacity, agricultural projects

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INTRODUCTION

Project performance, especially in the agriculture sector, has continued to receive great scholarly attention. For instance, according to IFAD (2019), of the projects evaluated in 2017, 50 per cent including in the agricultural sector, were rated as moderately even the best planning, that are designed to work effectively, may fail to produce good performance in community based agriculture projects if they are not successfully implemented to realize sustainability. In support of this, a UNDP Evaluation (Mugabe & Kanda, 2018) notes that there are many different that influence the success of community based projects, including planning and the systems or mechanisms in place for co-ordination and control. Monitoring & Evaluation support entails provision of materials, evaluation champions to enhance advocacy and surveillance effectiveness, for instance, the case of Zambian minister as well as assets and ICTs (Kusek & Ray, 2016).

Organizations need leadership that supports, recognizes and appreciates Monitoring & Evaluation functions and the use of Monitoring & Evaluation data to enhance project performance. Project success can be regarded as having been achieved once sustainability of the project has been realized. Nuguti (2019) states that in developing countries project success is immensely difficult, owing to inherent challenges. However, even with these challenges, almost all developed countries see Monitoring and Evaluation as important tools for line management within individual government ministries, and for enhancing sound accountability and surveillance in relationships between the government, Parliament and civil society (Mackay, 2018).

For them to be useful, Monitoring & Evaluation systems should be driven by demand and not by supply. The application of Monitoring & Evaluation results is a major determinant of project sustainability and it results from good planning, project implementation based on requisite capacity and informed decisions based on sound and relevant data (Mackay, 2017). Further, Mackay (2017) notes that Monitoring & Evaluation data provides a basis to feed back into the projects, improve policy analysis and policy development and aid in project and managerial activities. This enhances transparency, surveillance and project success. Capacity building can bridge the gap between planning and data demand and use. If officials and, indeed, farmers are deficient in capacity project success will most likely be negatively impacted. Therefore, it is important to identify and deal with this to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of M & E in women based agriculture based projects (John & Khilesh, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

For a period of about three decades, many agricultural projects have been developed in the country. While most of these projects have not been successful, they have spent a lot of tax payers' and donor money (FAO, 2016). This is in spite of the fact that agriculture remains a critical sector in national development. It has particularly dropped from 4.7% to only below 2% in the last five years. This has been attributed to lack of accountability to clientele, farmers are not empowered and involved in the projects and that access to institutional

services such as extension and training has been minimal and these affect agricultural projects put in place in Kenya. The NGO funded agricultural projects have not been an exception, they have not been performing well, where they don't meet the budget and their deadline, this is because communities are not involved in the management of those projects right from their initiation where the community end up not supporting them (Karanja, 2017).

In Nyamira County, out of the 98 projects initiated in the year 2012 and 2015, among them livestock farming, horticultural farming, bee keeping and home economics, 29 of the projects were terminated due to issues related to project management such as project team, stakeholders' participation, financing, monitoring and evaluation and top management support. In spite of the agricultural projects being funded by ECDP, most of the population still suffers under the yoke of poverty and starvation not just because the rain does not come in its season, but because there is poor planning and evaluation and lack of farmer's unity. Zvoushe and Gideon (2016) established that monitoring and evaluation practices influence project performance. Jahaf (2018) revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship between monitoring and evaluation practices and project performance. It is therefore essential to establish the influence of monitoring and evaluation on performance of agricultural projects.

Previous studies have provided link between Monitoring & Evaluation and project performance. For example, the study of Paulinus and Iyenemi (2019) in Nigeria and Ghana revealed that the lack of project planning partnership due to M&E facilitated poor project performance. While Karanja (2019) revealed that financial management, appropriate training and leadership are the major determinants that influence the performance of the projects in Kenya. As indicated by Marcus (2018), the expected success benefits of half of the World Bank project investments had failed after the completion of the project. Therefore, when projects fail to meet their desired objectives as planned, it becomes a big threat to both management and beneficiaries of the projects. This study therefore sought to establish the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the influence of M&E communication advocacy on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya
- ii. To determine the influence of M&E financial capacity on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory was developed by George Homans (1958). The theory focuses on the social behavior in the interaction of two parties that implement a cost-benefit analysis to determine risks and benefits. The theory also involves economic relationships—the cost-benefit analysis occurs when each party has goods that the other parties value. Social

exchange theory suggests that these calculations occur in romantic relationships, friendships, professional relationships, and ephemeral relationships as simple as exchanging words with a customer at the cash register. Social exchange theory says that if the costs of the relationship are higher than the rewards, such as if a lot of effort or money were put into a relationship and not reciprocated, then the relationship may be terminated or abandoned.

Social exchange theory views exchange as a social behavior that may result both in economic and social outcomes. Social exchange theory has been generally analyzed by comparing human interactions with the marketplace. The study of the theory from the microeconomics perspective is attributed to Blau. Under his perspective every individual is trying to maximize his wins. Blau stated that once this concept is understood, it is possible to observe social exchanges everywhere, not only in market relations, but also in other social relations like friendship. Social exchange process brings satisfaction when people receive fair returns for their expenditures. The major difference between social and economic exchange is the nature of the exchange between parties. Neoclassic economic theory views the actor as dealing not with another actor but with a market and environmental parameters, such as market price. Unlike economic exchange, the elements of social exchange are quite varied and cannot be reduced to a single quantitative exchange rate. According to Stafford, social exchanges involve a connection with another person; involve trust and not legal obligations; are more flexible; and rarely involve explicit bargaining. Social exchange theory was used in this study to examine the influence of M&E communication advocacy on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya

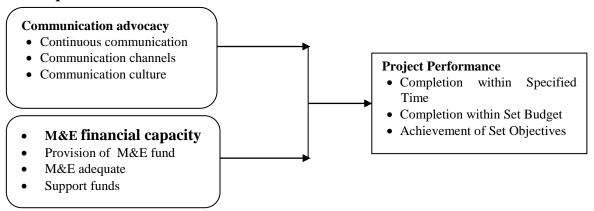
Resource Based View Theory

Resource based view theory was developed by Barney's 1991. Resource Based view (RBV) is a way to deal with accomplishing upper hand that rose in 1990s, after the significant works distributed by Barney's 1991, "The Resource Based View of the Firm", Prahalad and Hamel "The Core Competence of the Corporation", Barney, "Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage" and others. The supporters of this view contend that firms ought to glimpse inside the organization to discover the wellsprings of upper hand as opposed to taking a gander at focused environment for it.

The Resource-based View (RBV) is a strategic management theory that is broadly used in project management; it examines how assets can power competitive advantage. Competitive benefit is the capacity to make more noteworthy esteem than opponents, and in this way produce higher rates of profitability. Reasonable focused pick up requires persisting points of interest through skills that can't be effortlessly imitated (Killen *et al.*,2016). The RBV is constructed on the notion that assets and abilities are not heterogeneous throughout different organizations, and through this thinking the success rate variations between corporations can be explained. Kraaijenbrink *et al* (2016) stated that if an organization is to get a condition of supported upper hand, it have to secure and control significant, uncommon, incomparable, and non-substitutable assets and capacities. According to this theory, all resources are equally necessary to decide the project success and overall performance. Findings exhibit that intangible assets are necessary determinants for project successes such resources are rare, particular and hard to exchange or mimic (Beam et.al, 2004). Assets can be depicted as the

beneficial property of the organizations the capacity through which errands are achieves (Mathews 2016). RBT hypothetically predicts elusive assets as crucial variables for accomplishment of a project. Elusive assets are money related, physical, human, scholarly, hierarchical reputational and innovative assets. Resource based view theory was used in this study to assess the influence of M&E financial capacity on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya.

Conceptual Framework



Communication Advocacy

Communication of the project vision should be done in a creative manner describing clearly what the end result looks like; A good objective here is to enable those you are communicating with to build a clear picture within their mind including important details. One should also tap into the power of emotion and the importance of 'feelings' to reinforce levels of understanding. If people you are communicating a vision to can also imagine what it feels like, having delivered the benefits and objectives, this will be really powerful aspect (Jager, Kovesdy, Langham, Rosenberg, Jha, & Zoccali, 2019).

Clearly, organizations that communicate more effectively have more successful projects. Findings show that high performers are more effective communicators. Thus, it is no surprise that highly-effective communicators are five times more likely to be high performers than minimally-effective communicators. As reported in the Pulse study, high-performing organizations put 14 times fewer dollars at risk (Gulliver, Fielding, & Louis, 2021).

Financial capacity

The project budget should provide a clear and adequate provision for monitoring and evaluation activities. The M&E budgetary allocation should clearly be delineated from the main project budget so that M&E unit is accorded some autonomy in utilization of its resources (Park, Kim, & Chen,2022). M&E budget should be about 5 to 10 percent of total projects' budget which will give the M&E unit adequate resources to ensure its effectiveness (Juma, 2021)). However, according to Gitonga (2012), there is no specific percentage to be allocated for M&E but normally varies between 2.5% and 10% depending with the overall budget and the project. Gitonga further states that the more participatory M&E is, the higher its budget. Irene and Yusuf (2021) concur with Gitonga by stating that there is no set formula

for proportion of project's budget to be allocated to M&E. Most donors and organizations recommend between 3 to 10 percent of the project's budget. The general rule of thumb is that the M&E budget should not be too little as to affect the accuracy and credibility of results and neither should it consume much resources to the extent of interfering with other projects activities. M&E activities and 22 their cost should be estimated and properly be planned for to ensure funds needed are sufficiently allocated. This should be done at the project design stage so that funds are allocated specifically to M&E and are available to implement M&E tasks (Hejnowicz & Chaplowe, 2021). as the basis for any necessary mid-course corrections in monitoring and evaluation policies

Empirical review

Cervone (2017) conducted a study on effective communication for project success. The approach of this paper is to provide a general overview of common themes in the project management literature related to communication within projects. While communication failures in projects are caused by many factors, the project team ultimately bears the burden for ensuring successful communication within a project. There are several common causes of communication failures. Thankfully, there are also some simple things that project teams can do to lessen the likelihood of miscommunication. Research limitations/implications – As this is a general overview, this article only explores the more commonly experienced issues related to project miscommunication. Originality/value – By observing some relatively easy to remember questions and concerns related to communication, a project team can be more effective in communicating with their project stakeholders.

Setiawan, Hansen and Fujiono (2021) conducted a study on Measuring the Influence of Communication Planning Towards Construction Project Performance. This paper aimed to investigate how far the communication planning has been effectively implemented in several construction projects in Jakarta and measure how big the influence to project performance. It adopts a quantitative method by distributing questionnaire surveys to contractors and consultants in Jakarta. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the data which presents that communication planning has been implemented by 78.02 % of the responses and significantly impact the project performances. This paper offers useful implications for practitioners on how construction project teams (from contractors and consultants) should carefully manage the communication process particularly during its planning stage.

Amami and Beghini (2017) stated that although email is regarded by Weinstock (2018) as a useful communication technology, the ability to convey the meaning via body language, cadence and tone are lost, with the potential for content to be misconstrued. For these reasons, Cheng *et al.* (2016) and Hua *et al.* (2018) prefer face-to face communication both at project award phase and construction phase. Again, in multicultural project teams the loss of face-to-face communication can lead to misunderstanding and the loss of non-verbal signals such as eye contact and body language

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive research design. The study focused on the beneficiaries of agricultural projects funded by both county and National governments in Nyamira. There are

156 agricultural projects in Nyamira County that are funded by both county and National governments. Therefore, the target population comprised of Nyamira County officials, project managers, community leaders and Ministry of Agriculture officers. The sampling frame of the study was the 437 respondents. The sample size was derived from the target population using Yamane's sample size determination formula. Therefore, the sample size for the study was 209 respondents. The 209 respondents were chosen with the help of stratified random sampling technique. Primary data was used in this study. A questionnaire which is a form of quantitative data collection tool was used to collect primary data. Inferential and descriptive statistics were employed for analysis of quantitative data with the assistance of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25). Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, mean (measure of dispersion), standard deviation, and percentages were used. Inferential data analysis was conducted by use of Pearson correlation coefficient, and multiple regression analysis.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Descriptive Statistics Analysis M&E Communication Advocacy and Performance of Agricultural Projects

The first specific objective of the study was to examine the influence of M&E communication advocacy on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. The results were as presented in Table 1.From the results, the respondents agreed that monitoring and evaluation communication advocacy influences project performance. This is supported by a mean of 3.968 (std. dv = 0.636). In addition, as shown by a mean of 3.830 (std. dv = 0.972), the respondents agreed that continuous communication is ensured to facilitate performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County. Further, the respondents agreed that the channels used for communication are effective to enhance project performance. This is shown by a mean of 3.712 (std. dv = 1.005). The respondents also agreed that communication culture influences performance of agricultural projects. This is shown by a mean of 3.710 (std. dv = 0.608). With a mean of 3.673 (std. dv = 0.983), the respondents agreed that they are satisfied with the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation communication advocacy.

Table 1: M&E Communication Advocacy and Performance of Agricultural Projects

	Mean	Std.	
		Deviation	
Monitoring and evaluation communication advocacy influences project performance	3.968	0.636	
continuous communication is ensured to facilitate performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County	3.830	0.972	
The channels used for communication are effective to enhance project performance	3.712	1.005	
Communication culture influences performance of agricultural projects	3.710	0.608	
Am satisfied with the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation communication advocacy	3.673	0.983	
Aggregate	3.718	0.873	

M&E Financial Capacity and Performance of Agricultural Projects

The second specific objective of the study was to determine the influence of M&E financial capacity on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. The results were as presented in Table 2. From the results, the respondents agreed that monitoring and evaluation financial capacity influences project performance. This is supported by a mean of 3.818 (std. dv = 1.064). In addition, as shown by a mean of 3.779 (std. dv = 0.858), the respondents agreed that provision of monitoring and evaluation funds facilitate performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County. Further, the respondents agreed that adequate funds are allocated for monitoring and evaluation of agricultural projects. This is shown by a mean of 3.755 (std. dv = 0.902). With a mean of 3.688 (std. dv = 0.910), the respondents agreed that they are satisfied with the adequacy level of funds allocated for monitoring and evaluation of agricultural projects. The respondents also agreed that monitoring and evaluation funds are released on time to facilitate project monitoring. This is shown by a mean of 3.681 (std. dv = 0.862).

Table 2: M&E Financial Capacity and Performance of Agricultural Projects

Me	an	Std.
	D	eviation
Monitoring and evaluation financial capacity influences project 3.8 performance	18 1.00	64
Provision of monitoring and evaluation funds facilitate performance of 3.7′ agricultural projects in Nyamira County	79 0.83	58
Adequate funds are allocated for monitoring and evaluation of 3.75 agricultural projects	55 0.90	02
Am satisfied with the adequacy level of funds allocated for monitoring 3.68 and evaluation of agricultural projects	88 0.9	10
Monitoring and evaluation funds are released on time to facilitate 3.68 project monitoring	81 0.80	62
Aggregate 3.7	22	0.841

Performance of Agricultural Projects

The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements relating to performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. The results were as presented in Table 3. From the results, the respondents agreed that performance of agricultural projects has been improving over their years. This is supported by a mean of 3.915 (std. dv = 0.776). In addition, as shown by a mean of 3.858 (std. dv = 0.636), the respondents agreed that agricultural projects are completed within the specified time. Further, the respondents agreed that agricultural projects are completed within the specified budget. This is shown by a mean of 3.710 (std. dv = 0.972). The respondents also agreed that agricultural projects achieve the set objectives. This is shown by a mean of 3.612 (std. dv = 1.005). With a mean of 3.552 (std. dv = 0.608), the respondents agreed that they are satisfied with the performance level of agricultural projects.

Table 3: Performance of Agricultural Projects

	Mean	Std.
		Deviation
Performance of agricultural projects has been improving over their	3.915	0.776
years		
Agricultural projects are completed within the specified time	3.858	0.636
Agricultural projects are completed within the specified budget	3.710	0.972
Agricultural projects achieve the set objectives	3.612	1.005
Am satisfied with the performance level of agricultural projects	3.552	0.608
Aggregate	3.754	0.786

Inferential Statistics

Correlation Analysis

From the results, there was a very strong relationship between M&E communication advocacy and performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya (r = 0.811, p value =0.000). The relationship was significant since the p value 0.000 was less than 0.05 (significant level). The findings are in line with the findings of Cervone (2017) who indicated that there is a very strong relationship between M&E communication advocacy and project performance.

Moreover, there was a very strong relationship between M&E financial capacity and the performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya (r = 0.830, p value =0.001). The relationship was significant since the p value 0.001 was less than 0.05 (significant level). The findings are in line with the findings of Tache (2018) who indicated that there is a very strong relationship between M&E financial capacity and project performance.

Table 4: Correlation Coefficients

		Project Performance	M&E communication advocacy	M&E financial capacity
	Pearson	1	-	
Project	Correlation			
Performance	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	196		
	Pearson	.811**	1	
M&E communication	Correlation			
advocacy	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	196	196	
	Pearson	.830**	.297	1
M&E financial capacity	Correlation			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.060	
	N	196	196	196

Regression Analysis

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 relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable was 0.851. This implied that 85.1% of the variation in the dependent variable (performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County,

Kenya) could be explained by independent variables (M&E communication advocacy, M&E financial capacity, M&E human capacity and M&E frameworks).

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.923 ^a	.851	.853	.10482

The ANOVA was used to determine whether the model was a good fit for the data. F calculated was 356.7 while the F critical was 2.419. The p value was 0.002. Since the F-calculated was greater than the F-critical and the p value 0.002 was less than 0.05, the model was considered as a good fit for the data. Therefore, the model can be used to predict the influence of M&E communication advocacy, M&E financial capacity, M&E human capacity and M&E frameworks on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya.

Table 6: Analysis of Variance

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	\mathbf{F}	Sig.
1 Regression	102.028	4	25.507	356.7	.002 ^b
Residual	13.668	191	.0715		
Total	115.695	195			

The regression model was as follows:

 $Y = 0.342 + 0.397X_1 + 0.387X_2 + \epsilon$

According to the results, M&E communication advocacy has a significant effect on Performance of agricultural projects β_1 =0.397, 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 findings are in line with the findings of Cervone (2017) who indicated that there is a very strong relationship between M&E communication advocacy and project performance.

The results also revealed that M&E financial capacity has a significant effect on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya, $\beta 1=0.387$, p value= 0.001). The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.001 was less than the significant level of 0.05. The findings are in line with the findings of Tache (2018) who indicated that there is a very strong relationship between M&E financial capacity and project performance.

Conclusions

The study concludes that M&E communication advocacy has a significant effect on Performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. Findings revealed that continuous communication, communication channels and communication culture influence performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya.

In addition, the study concludes that M&E financial capacity has a significant effect on Performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. Findings revealed that provision of M&E fund, M&E adequate and support funds influence performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya.

Recommendations

The study found that M&E communication advocacy has a significant effect on Performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. This study therefore recommends that

nyamira county government should ensure effective flow of monitoring and evaluation information to all stakeholders to enhance project performance.

Further, the study found that M&E financial capacity has a significant effect on Performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. This study therefore recommends that Nyamira county government should ensure adequate budget is allocated for monitoring and evaluation to ensure agricultural projects are implemented effectively.

Suggestions for Further Studies

This study focused on assessing the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. Having been limited to agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other projects in Kenya. The study therefore suggests further studies on the relationship between monitoring and evaluation practices and performance of other projects in Kenya.

Further, the study found that the independent variables (M&E communication advocacy, M&E financial capacity, M&E human capacity and M&E frameworks) could only explain 86.1% of performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya. This study therefore suggests research on other factors affecting performance of agricultural projects in Nyamira County, Kenya.

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