

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING ON THE PERFORMANCE OF ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN BUNGOMA COUNTY, KENYA

^{1*} **Erwin Baridi Majani**
erwinmajani@yahoo.com

^{2**} **Anaya Senelwa**
wsenelwa@jkuat.ac.ke

^{1,2} *Jomo Kenyatta University Of Science and Technology, Kenya*

Abstract: *This paper examines the influence of stakeholder engagement on the performance of road construction projects in Bungoma County, Kenya. The study aims to establish if policy objectives have been achieved in relation to road construction project performance in the County. It was focused on 115 respondents who comprised the study's unit of observation. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 22) was then used to conduct descriptive and inferential analysis. The independent variable, Stakeholder Involvement in Decision Making, had positive correlation of $r = 0.787$ with the dependent variable, Project Performance. The descriptive statistical analysis showed that all the examined aspects of the variable received the endorsement of the majority of the respondents. Moreover, the descriptive analysis of Project Performance showed that the respondents strongly endorsed all the examination aspects.*

Keywords: *stakeholder involvement, stakeholder engagement, road construction*

1. Introduction and Background

Best and Yalezo (2022) found that there are several challenges experienced in stakeholder engagement in public works in South Africa including the deficiencies in diversity and inclusion in the stakeholder recruitment process; poor communication with stakeholder; inadequate policy guidance on stakeholder engagement; poor management oversight; and limited of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of projects. Aghimien, Aigbavboa, and Thwala (2019) studied the management of construction stakeholder in South Africa and established that the most common stakeholder management strategies included engagement, monitoring and prioritization of stakeholder; however, stakeholder engagement was let down by poor stakeholder identification which led to poor consideration of the needs of project stakeholder.

Developed nations like USA, Denmark, and China have managed to incorporate stakeholder management in implementing public projects characterised by stakeholder participation which has contributed a lot to the success development projects owing to better collaboration and improved governance in project execution (Waris, Khan, Abideen, Sorooshian & Ullah, 2022). The implementation of marine spatial planning projects in Bangladesh has been handicapped by stakeholder engagement challenges owing to the lack of policies and guidelines on how to involve stakeholder; this notwithstanding, there are existing success stories in the region which can serve as critical reference material for future stakeholder engagement initiatives (Mannan, Nilsson, Johansson & Schofield, 2020). Fegeha and Aibunu (2016) discovered that poor scoping of projects in Saudi Arabia was partly as a result of poor stakeholder engagement on project initiation which eventually affected

the quality of the output since the decision to proceed with a project is normally made during the pre-planning phase of a project after evaluation by the project manager.

Rowlinson and Cheung (2018) found that honest feedback within projects in Hong Kong and Australia is very important in enhancing relationship management thereby leading to improved attainment of project outcomes. Balakrishnan and Johar (2022) examined the role of stakeholder in managing government research and development funding in Malaysia and posited that the lack of exhaustive consultations by the government with key stakeholder led to a poor development defence Research and Development (R&D) policy that curtailed the achievement of higher levels of defence industrial innovation as well as the discouragement of stakeholder' commitments to defence funding.

Nyabera (2015) identified that stakeholder involvement is important for ensuring that organizations deliver on their objectives and stay accountable to interested parties and that projects that involved stakeholder during project implementation had a better rate of success and performed better. A recommendation was done by the study that prevalent policies related to compassion sponsorship program be revised to increase participation of stakeholder in project implementation and make them more effective. Mburu (2018) found out that cost and time overruns were common in execution of public projects in Kenya owing to inadequate communication, unskilled project managers, poor planning, procurement delays, poor infrastructure, deficient methods of tendering, unsuitable environment, limited definition of projects, among many other factors. Delays eventually affected the countries' development and impacted a lot on project stakeholder including the communities that need to benefit from the projects.

Kariuki, Wario and Odhiambo (2018) came up with strategies that could be used to manage stakeholder in Kenya which included the hold strategy and the offensive strategy. The hold strategy did not provide an opportunity for stakeholder to be engaged fully and tried to retain the status quo. In offensive strategy the stakeholder' engagement was considered an important aspect of the project since stakeholder were allowed to provide feedback on the project. Stakeholder in hold strategy have minimal impact on the project but should be monitored for any changes in view. Wamugu and Ogollah (2017) determined that the participation of stakeholders, particularly in initiation activities such as screening and selection in County Development Funded (CDF) projects, had a positive association with project performance.

Chinyavu (2016) ascertained that involving stakeholder in the planning phase adversely affected how projects that were funded by donors performed in Kwale County. However, stakeholder involvement at initiation and project identification were found to have influenced the project in a positive manner. Maina (2016) showed that the participation of stakeholder in project identification correlated positively with project performance of automobile emission control. The study concluded that involving stakeholder in project initiation impacted the project outcome.

Mandala (2018) determined that road construction projects in Siaya County, Kenya had ensured adequate involvement of stakeholder in the identification of projects, project initiation processes, communication planning, and various aspects of project implementation. However, there were a number of deficiencies in the stakeholder' involvement in the modification of project plans, establishment of tracking systems, assignment and allocation of resources, and the updating of project schedules. Omondi and Kinoti (2020) affirmed that the project management teams of road construction projects in Kenya had embraced stakeholder participation by focusing on the inclusion of stakeholder inputs in the assessment, analysis, and selection of feasible, rational, and beneficial road projects for area residents. This had ensured a high level of stakeholder buy-in on the

decisions pertaining the implementation of the projects which, in turn, made the projects more sustainable since the community members took up the maintenance of the same in the long-term.

2. Stakeholder Involvement in Decision Making

According to Schoemaker and Russo (2014) decision making entails the arrival by individuals, groups or organisations at conclusions on likely courses of action to be taken pertaining to a given issue at hand given the established objectives and resource availability. Njogu (2016) determined that one of the ways in which stakeholder are empowered through their involvement in projects is by getting their opinions and perspectives incorporated into the implementation of the projects by way of contributions in decision making.

The first indicator of stakeholder involvement in decision making is the degree of exhaustiveness of feedback. Stakeholder feedback refers to measured remarks, comments, reactions, criticisms, or recommendations relating to their evaluation of project performance that is used as a yardstick of how well the project performed according to the stakeholder (Balch & Koedel, 2014). The exhaustiveness of stakeholder feedback is enabled through more participatory models of stakeholder engagement where all stakeholder are encouraged to provide their feedback whether negative or positive on any matter related to the project and all the feedback is considered on its own merit by the project management team for incorporation in any ongoing or future projects (Goethel, Lucey, Berger, Gaichas, Karp, Lynch, Walter III, Deroba, Miller & Wilberg, 2019).

The second indicator of stakeholder involvement in decision making is the level of inclusion in information sharing. Savolainen (2017) defined information sharing as the process whereby those in the know, willingly transmit information to those that are not aware in pursuit of the attainment of a common goal in an organisational setting. Li, Lee, Jin and Chong (2022) affirmed that given the complexity of many projects, through the participation of stakeholder from a wide spectrum of technical competencies, critical information can be shared on various aspects of the implementation of the project through established stakeholder engagement platforms.

The third indicator of stakeholder involvement in decision making is the extent of informed consultation. Consultation is the act by an individual, group or organisation of seeking the opinion or view of another individual, group or organisation on a given subject matter. Informed consent, by extension, refers to the formal process through which information is provided by an individual, group or organisation to another individual, group or organisation on the particulars of a given issue or subject matter so as to empower the latter to make a decision free of ambiguity or coercion (Machado, Lopex-Matta, Campo, Escobar & Weitzner, 2017).

3. Statement of the problem

Balate (2022) posited a number of road construction projects in Kenya were constrained from attaining their objectives due to deficiencies in the training of their staff in stakeholder analysis and participation which led to poor stakeholder engagement and limited involvement of key stakeholders in these projects. Beldine and Gachengo (2022) found that the performance of road construction projects in Siaya County, Kenya was hampered by the limited involvement of stakeholders in planning of resources, recruitment of adequate personnel, the development of project budgets, and budgeting discussions in budget monitoring committees. Mageto, Kitheka and Ogolla (2021) determined that there were failures in the integration of stakeholder identification in road construction projects that led to misaligned priorities between the project management team and the community stakeholders. This study will be addressing a several deficiencies in the knowledge base. Firstly, several studies in Bungoma County have been conducted on aspects other than stakeholder

engagement such as Micah and Luketero (2017), and Wekesa and Pedo (2021). Thus, the findings from such studies are completely different from the anticipated findings from this study. Secondly, a number of studies have focused on other dependent variables rather than project performance such as Khaemba and Sang (2020), and Gitaka and Natecho (2018). The study explored specific correlation between stakeholder engagement and road construction projects in Bungoma County, Kenya.

4. Study Objectives

The main objective of this paper was to examine the influence of stakeholder engagement on the performance of road construction projects in Kenya with a specific objective to determine the influence of stakeholder involvement in decision making on the performance of road construction projects in Bungoma County.

5. Scope of the study

The study was conducted in Bungoma County since the researcher is familiar with the county. Bungoma is one of the few counties that have developed a public participation policy approved in 2020. The policy was driven by the need to ensure the nature and extent of public participation contemplated by the Constitution and devolution laws is achieved. Since adoption of the policy in 2020 no study has been conducted in Bungoma County to assess progress towards achievement of the policy objectives. The study aims to establish if policy objectives been achieved in relation to road construction projects in Bungoma. It was focused on 115 respondents involved in 20 road construction projects carried out by the Bungoma County Government.

6. Research Methodology

The study's target population was 20 road construction projects carried out by the Bungoma County Government which comprised the unit of analysis. More specifically, the study involved 115 respondents who comprised the study's unit of observation. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version 22) was then be used to conduct descriptive and inferential analysis. The presentation of the results was then captured through the use of graphs and tables.

7. Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistical findings of stakeholder involvement in decision making are revealed in Table 1. The findings demonstrated that 70.3% agreed or strongly agreed that the stakeholder provided objective criticisms of managerial decisions. The mean of 3.5495 further supported the positive inclination of the respondents and affirmed Musyoka (2018). Additionally, 62.7% of those that responded agreed or strongly agreed that projects stakeholder were involved in the stakeholder monitoring and control. The statement's mean was 3.6154 illustrated the positive impression by the majority of the respondents. This corroborated Atamba (2016).

Further 90.1% either agreed or strongly agreed that government officials and donors were involved in the projects through the sharing of information. This strong endorsement was supported by a mean of 4.2088 which affirmed Osman (2017). 90.1% of those that responded agreed or strongly agreed that stakeholder participation provided the means through which stakeholder with diverse interests and capacity could share information. This pointed out that the majority of the respondents confirmed the statement and this was backed up by the mean of 4.2418. This tallied with Njue *et al.*, (2021).

98.9% of those that responded agreed or strongly agreed that community members had a moderate level of education which enabled them in making informed decisions. This statement's high mean score of 4.3736

reinforced the very high level of affirmation and tallied with Muniu *et al.*, (2017). 74.7% of those who responded agreed or strongly agreed that there was only a moderate level of consultation in road construction project by the project management teams of community members. The statement’s mean was 3.8352 demonstrating the acquiescence of the majority of those who responded. This confirmed Balate (2022). All the responses had standard deviations that were between 0.55072 and 1.21810 indicating that there was little variation between each response and the mean response.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Stakeholder Involvement in Decision Making

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
The stakeholder provided objective criticisms of managerial decisions.	1.1%	28.6%	0.0%	54.9%	15.4%	3.5495	1.09812
Projects stakeholder were involved in the stakeholder monitoring and control.	1.1%	28.6%	7.6%	33.0%	29.7%	3.6154	1.21810
Government officials and donors were involved in the projects through the sharing of information.	1.1%	8.8%	0.0%	48.4%	41.7%	4.2088	.91307
Stakeholder participation provided the means through which stakeholder with diverse interests and capacity could share information.	0.0%	1.1%	8.8%	54.9%	35.2%	4.2418	.65559
Community members had a moderate level of education which enabled them in making informed decisions.	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	59.3%	39.6%	4.3736	.55072
There was only a moderate level of consultation in road construction project by the project management teams of community members.	2.2%	1.1%	22.0%	60.4%	14.3%	3.8352	.76396

Table 2 demonstrates the findings of the descriptive statistics of qualitative question 1 on stakeholder involvement. When asked: “Briefly describe how stakeholders’ involvement in decision making has improved the performance of road construction projects in the County”, 25% felt that it was because the opinions of stakeholders have been considered; 16.7% felt that it was through stakeholder involvement in project identification; 25% felt that it was through greater stakeholder ownership of projects; 16.7% felt that it has led to better project planning; and 16.7% felt that it was through the participation of stakeholders in risk management.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Qualitative Question 1

“Briefly describe how stakeholders’ involvement in decision making has improved the performance of road construction projects in the County”

Quoted Response	Frequency
“The opinions of stakeholders have been considered”.	25.0%
“Through stakeholder involvement in project identification.”	16.7%
“Through greater stakeholder ownership of projects”.	25.0%
“It has led to better project planning”.	16.7%
“Through the participation of stakeholders in risk management”.	16.7%

Table 3 demonstrates the findings of the descriptive statistics of qualitative question 2 on stakeholder involvement. When asked, “briefly explain two challenges that the County Government has encountered in ensuring stakeholder involvement in decision making in implementation of road construction projects in the county”, 25% of the respondents felt that the two challenges were communication with stakeholders and competing priorities; 33.3% felt that they were resource constraints and competing priorities; 25% felt that they were knowing when to incorporate stakeholder input and resource constraints; 8.3% felt that they were difficulty in involving all the key stakeholders and communication challenges; and 8.3% felt that they were incorporating all stakeholder input and communication challenges.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Qualitative Question 2

“Briefly explain two challenges that the County Government has encountered in ensuring stakeholder involvement in decision making in implementation of road construction projects in the county”

Quoted Response	Frequency
“Communication with stakeholders; competing priorities”	25.0%
“Resource constraints; competing priorities”	33.3%
“Knowing when to incorporate stakeholder input; resource constraints”	25.0%
“Difficulty in involving all the key stakeholders; communication challenges”	8.3%
“Incorporating all stakeholder input; communication challenges”	8.3%

Project Performance

Table 4 presents the findings of the descriptive statistics of project performance. 98.9% of those that responded agreed or strongly agreed that the entire scope of the road construction projects should be considered in the assessment of the resource requirements to minimize cost overruns. The mean of 4.3187 reflected that most of those that responded affirmed it and echoed Omolo (2015). 69.2% of those that responded agreed or strongly agreed that scope definition involved in public private partnership (PPP) projects is time consuming. The mean of 3.6044 showed that most of those that responded confirmed it. This was aligned with Waruhia and Muchelule (2019).

63.8% of those that responded agreed or strongly agreed that the County had failed to adequately utilise benchmarking as a means of enhancing the quality of the road construction projects. The statement’s mean of

3.9121 indicated that the majority of those that responded were positive inclined towards it which was consistent with Said (2017). 97.8% of those that responded agreed or strongly agreed that poor construction materials in the County’s building and construction projects had hampered the quality of some structures. The mean score of 4.2527 indicated that those that responded affirmed it, which tallied with Ndumia (2015).

97.8% of those that responded agreed or strongly agreed that the majority of projects in the County had experienced challenges in meeting the predetermined timelines for completion. The mean of 4.4835 reinforced the positive inclination by those that responded which echoed Mue (2015). 90.1% of those that responded agreed or strongly agreed that contractors bidding the lowest price are picked without considering their expertise thereby resulting in lack of timely project completion. The mean of 4.1319 indicated that most of those that responded endorsed the statement and affirmed Kisavi (2019). The standard deviations for all the responses had values that were between 0.52901 and 1.00972 indicating that there was little variation between each response and the mean response.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Project Performance

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
The entire scope of the road construction projects should be considered in the assessment of the resource requirements to minimise cost overruns.	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	64.8%	34.1%	4.3187	0.53498
Scope definition involved in public private partnership (PPP) projects is time consuming.	1.1%	20.9%	8.8%	54.9%	14.3%	3.6044	1.00972
The County had failed to adequately utilise benchmarking as a means of enhancing the quality of the road construction projects	1.1%	1.1%	34.0%	33.0%	30.8%	3.9121	.89005
Poor construction materials in the County’s building and construction projects had hampered the quality of some structures	1.1%	0.0%	1.1%	69.2%	28.6%	4.2527	.52901
The majority of projects in the County had experienced challenges in meeting the predetermined timelines for completion.	0.0%	1.1%	1.1%	46.2%	51.6%	4.4835	.58429
Contractors bidding the lowest price are picked without considering their expertise thereby resulting in lack of timely project completion.	1.1%	8.8%	0.0%	56.0%	34.1%	4.1319	.88454

Table 5 demonstrated the findings of the descriptive statistics of qualitative question 9 on project performance. When asked: “briefly describe how the County Government has improved the performance of road construction projects in the County”, 33.3% of the respondents felt that it was by allocating more resources towards road construction; 8.3% felt that it was by recruiting qualified personnel; 16.7% felt that it was by improving stakeholder engagement; 16.7% felt that it improved training of project management team; and 25% felt that it was by complying with quality standards.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Qualitative Question 3

“Briefly describe how the County Government has improved the performance of road construction projects in the County”

Quoted Response	Frequency
By allocating more resources towards road construction	33.3%
By recruiting qualified personnel	8.3%
By improving stakeholder engagement	16.7%
Improved training of project management team	16.7%
By complying with quality standards	25.0%

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics of qualitative question 10 on project performance. When asked: “briefly explain two challenges that the County Government has encountered in enhancing performance of road construction projects in the County”, 8.3% of the respondents felt that the two challenges were time and cost overruns and lack of adherence to quality standards; 33.3% felt that they were delayed payments of contractors and political interference; 41.7% felt that they were time and cost overruns and poor project management skills; 8.3% felt that they were poor planning and time and cost overruns; and 8.3% felt that they were inadequate budget allocation for M & E and poor project management.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics of Qualitative Question 4

“Briefly explain two challenges that the County Government has encountered in enhancing performance of road construction projects in the County”

Quoted Response	Frequency
Time and cost overruns; lack of adherence to quality standards	8.3%
Delayed payments of contractors; political interference	33.3%
Time and cost overruns; poor project management skills	41.7%
Poor planning; time and cost overruns	8.3%
Inadequate budget allocation for M&E; poor project management	8.3%

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficient analysis seeks to determine the extent to which two or more variables have a linear association (Benesty, Chen, Huang & Cohen, 2009). Table 7 has captured the Pearson correlation coefficients of this study. The independent variable, Stakeholder Involvement in Decision Making, had positive correlation of $r = 0.787$ with the dependent variable, Project Performance. Thus, a change in Stakeholder Involvement in Decision Making by one unit will lead to a matching change of 0.787 in the dependent variable.

Further, p-values for all the independent variable was less than 0.05 reflecting that the association between it and the dependent variable was a statistically significant one. This tallied with Dahiru (2008) who determined that in instances where there are confidence intervals of 95%, p-values are supposed to be less than 0.05 so that the perceived differences between groups are unlikely to be down to chance and, as therefore, significant from a statistical standpoint.

Table 7: Pearson Correlation Coefficients

		SIDM	Perf
SIDM	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	91	
Perf	Pearson Correlation	.787**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	91	91

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

Key: SIDM – Stakeholder Involvement in Decision Making and Perf - Performance

8. Summary of Findings

The descriptive statistical analysis of Stakeholder Involvement in Decision Making showed that all the examined aspects of the variable received the endorsement of the majority of the respondents. However, the three most popular aspects included: community members had a moderate level of education which enabled them in making informed decisions; Government officials and donors were involved in the projects through the sharing of information; and stakeholder participation provided the means through which stakeholder with diverse interests and capacity could share information.

The descriptive statistical analysis of Project Performance showed that the respondents strongly endorsed all the examined aspects of the variable. This notwithstanding, the three most supported aspects were: the entire scope of the road construction projects should be considered in the assessment of the resource requirements to minimise cost overruns; poor construction materials in the County’s building and construction projects had hampered the quality of some structures; and the majority of projects in the County had experienced challenges in meeting the predetermined timelines for completion.

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