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# STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT AND PROJECT SUCCESS: A CASE OF MUKUNGWA II HYDRO POWER PLANT PROJECT, RWANDA

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## ABSTRACT

The general objective of this study is to assess the influence of stakeholders' engagement on the success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project. Specifically, the study examined the effects of stakeholder engagement in project planning on success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project, investigate the effect of stakeholder engagement in project implementation on success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project and analyze the effect of stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation on success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project. The study guided by Social Exchange Theory, Institutional Theory, and Diffusion of Innovations Theory. The research design used was descriptive and correlational. The research strategy explored the relationships between the variables identified. A target population of 197 individuals involved in Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project was covered, including project planners, implementers, beneficiaries, and regulatory authorities. Sample size of 132 was determined by the researcher using Slovin's formula. A simple random sampling approach ensured that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. Data collection method was questionnaires. Statistical Product and Service Solutions version 25 was utilized for data analysis throughout the research. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results indicate a highly significant F-statistic of 108.139 ($p = 0.000$). The F-statistic assesses the overall significance of the regression model, testing whether there is a significant difference between the model with predictors (Project Monitoring and Evaluation, Project Implementation, Project Planning) and success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project. In this case, the small p-value ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) associated with the F-statistic indicates that the predictors jointly have a significant effect on explaining the variance in dependent variable (success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project). These findings imply that stakeholder engagement plays a significant role in the success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project across planning, implementation, and monitoring phases. Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project need to organize regular workshops and forums to facilitate open discussions on planning objectives among stakeholders, ensuring everyone's voice is heard.

**Key words:** Stakeholders Management, Project Planning, Project Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation, Project Success

## I. INTRODUCTION

Previous research, such as that by Ngonge and Muchelule (2022) highlights that in Kenya, power plant projects often encounter resistance from local communities due to inadequate communication and participation. Also, the lack of stakeholder engagement in Kenya leads to project delays and increased tensions among stakeholders, undermining the potential benefits of these projects.

Han and Yang (2024) stated that stakeholder engagement in power plant projects often encounters numerous hurdles in China. These include inadequate communication with local communities, insufficient involvement of key stakeholders during the planning stages, and tensions arising from environmental and social impacts. Such challenges have led to project delays, increased costs, and even community resistance, which ultimately compromise the projects' success.

According to Kabera and Mutavu (2023) the examination of energy infrastructure projects shows that more than half of the audited projects received unfavorable assessments, suggesting inefficiencies caused by inadequate stakeholder engagement during monitoring and evaluation. Energy infrastructure success has been challenged despite significant investments and policies aimed at improving energy access and sustainability.

For example, the domestic biogas program, initiated to construct 100,000 biogas digesters, has struggled to meet its targets. Although the decentralization policy was introduced to enhance local engagement and increase production, many constructed biogas plants have underperformed (Ndahimana, 2023). Reports indicate that up to 10% of completed digesters produce no gas at all, while 25% of users express dissatisfaction with the volume of biogas generated. This under success can be attributed to inadequate local capacity for construction and maintenance, as well as a lack of community ownership and investment in the initiative (Ndahimana, 2023).

According to Hagumimana *et al.* (2021), the success of energy projects in Rwanda has gained significant attention as the nation focuses on sustainable energy solutions to meet growing demand. Hydropower projects in Rwanda face significant challenges that hinder energy success, including the underutilization of 333 potential sites and reliance on biomass, which constitutes 85% of total energy consumption. With energy demand rising at 6% annually and only 62% of the population currently having electricity access, there is a pressing supply-demand gap (Mbangukira, 2022). Environmental concerns further complicate project execution, often leading to community opposition. Engaging stakeholders can address these issues by building consensus, enhancing transparency, and fostering collaboration. This involvement promotes sustainable practices and empowers local communities, ultimately improving project outcomes and helping achieve the goal of 100% electrification by 2024 (Mbangukira, 2022).

This study examined how stakeholder engagement impacts the success of the Mukungwa II Hydropower Project. Insufficient involvement has led to project inefficiencies.

The general objective of this research was to assess the effects of stakeholders' engagement on the success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project.

The specific objectives of the study are:

i. To examine the effects of stakeholder engagement in project planning on the success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project.
ii. To investigate the effects of stakeholder engagement in project implementation on the success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project.
iii. To analyze the effects of stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation on the success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project.

The research hypotheses that guided this study are the following;

**Ho1:** There is no significant effect of stakeholder engagement in project planning on the success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project.

**H02:** There is no significant effect of stakeholder engagement in project implementation on the success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project.

**H03:** There is no significant effect of stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation on the success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Theoretical review

This study is grounded in three theoretical frameworks: Social Exchange Theory, Institutional Theory, and Diffusion of innovations.

#### 2.1.1 Social Exchange Theory

George Homans initially created Social Exchange Theory (SET) in the 1950s, drawing on behavioral psychology and sociology. The theory contends that social conduct is the consequence of an exchange process in which people seek to maximize benefits while minimizing costs in their interactions. The core principle of SET is the notion of reciprocity, which states that people interact with the expectation of obtaining advantages in exchange for what they contribute. This reciprocal dynamic has a significant impact on social behavior, impacting the establishment and maintenance of relationships across several situations (Muldoon *et al.*, 2024).

Homans' research paved the way for conceptualizing human connections as economic transactions, exposing how people assess relationships based on their perceived costs and advantages. For example, in the workplace, individuals may choose to remain or quit a job depending on their judgments of benefits such as money, job satisfaction, and prospects for growth vs the costs of job demand, stress, or a hostile work environment. Later academics, like as Peter Blau, expanded on SET by including the importance of social power and network structures, emphasizing that exchanges are impacted not just by individual encounters but also by larger social dynamics (Liu & Martens, 2023).

Social Exchange Theory has practical applications in domains like as business, psychology, and sociology. Organizations may use SET insights to improve employee relations by creating a cooperative atmosphere in which workers feel appreciated and acknowledged for their efforts. When people sense a fair exchange in their relationships, it fosters loyalty and drive. In contrast, perceived disparities may cause unhappiness, conflict, and employee attrition. Overall, Social Exchange Theory offers a framework for analyzing relationship dynamics, focusing on the economic factors that people evaluate throughout social interactions.

This theory highlighted the reciprocal relationships between stakeholders and project managers. By analyzing how stakeholders perceive the costs and benefits of their engagement, insights can be gained into fostering loyalty and commitment, ultimately enhancing project success in Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project.

#### 2.1.2 Institutional Theory

Institutional Theory gained popularity in the late 1970s and early 1980s, primarily via the writings of W. Richard Scott, Paul DiMaggio, and Walter Powell. This theory investigates how institutions (existing rules, norms, and practices) impact social behavior and influence organizational structures and activities. It contends that organizations are not isolated entities, but rather function within a larger institutional environment that influences their actions, legitimacy, and survival. According to the notion, although organizations strive for efficiency, they are also motivated by a need for legitimacy and conformance to societal standards (Anukam & Chidinma, 2024).

According to Merem *et al.* (2022), the concept of legitimacy is central to Institutional Theory, and it states that organizations adopt certain structures and procedures in order to be viewed as legitimate and acceptable in their settings. For example, in today's business environment, many firms use corporate social responsibility initiatives not just for profit, but also to line with society ideals and improve their brand. Failure to comply with established standards may result in a loss of legitimacy, even threatening an organization's survival. Furthermore, DiMaggio and Powell proposed the notion of isomorphism, which explains how organizations in comparable sectors tend to adopt identical practices over time owing to coercive, mimetic, and normative influences.

In practice, Institutional Theory stresses the need of comprehending the larger social and cultural framework in which organizations function. This helps to explain differences in organizational structure and behavior across

industries, including healthcare and education. Recognizing the impact of institutional factors allows firms to better navigate their surroundings and build strategies that correspond with society expectations while still delivering their goals. Finally, Institutional Theory emphasizes the interdependence of social norms and organizational behavior, providing useful insights into the complexity of organizational change and adaptation.

This theory examined the influence of existing norms and practices on stakeholder engagement within Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project. Understanding how institutional pressures shape stakeholder behaviors can inform strategies that align engagement efforts with societal expectations, thus promoting project legitimacy and improving overall success.

### 2.1.3 Diffusion of Innovations

Diffusion of innovations Everett Rogers initially formulated theory in 1962, and it explores how new ideas, practices, and technology spread within and across communities. The idea posits that the acceptance of innovations is impacted by a variety of variables, including the perceived characteristics of the invention, the social system in which it is introduced, and the communication channels used to distribute knowledge about it. Rogers recognized many critical aspects in the diffusion process, including the invention itself, communication channels, time, and the social structure, resulting in a framework for understanding how and why certain ideas get broadly embraced while others are rejected (Mbatha, 2024).

Rogers' theory is centered on the notion of the "diffusion curve," which displays the many groups of adopters depending on their readiness to accept innovations. These categories are innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Each group has a unique function in the diffusion process, with innovators often providing the first push for acceptance, whilst early adopters are critical for influencing later adopters via their social networks. The qualities of the innovation such as relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability have a substantial influence on the pace and scope of its spread, since these criteria may either encourage or impede adoption.

The Diffusion of Innovations Theory has practical implications in many disciplines, including public health, education, and technology. For example, public health campaigns often use this idea to promote new health habits, such as immunization programs or smoking cessation efforts, by addressing possible adoption hurdles and engaging important community members. Similarly, in the area of technology, knowing the diffusion process may guide marketing tactics and product development, allowing organizations to adjust their services and messages to successfully reach (Cruz, 2023).

This theory helped to analyse how innovative practices in stakeholder engagement can spread throughout Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project. By identifying factors that facilitate or hinder the adoption of new engagement strategies, the project can enhance communication and collaboration, leading to improved outcomes and stakeholder satisfaction.

## III. METHODOLOGY

The research design used was descriptive and correlational. The research strategy explored the relationships between the variables identified. A target population of 197 individuals involved in Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project was covered, including project planners, implementers, beneficiaries, and regulatory authorities. Sample size of 132 was determined by the researcher using Slovin's formula. A simple random sampling approach ensured that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. Data collection method was questionnaires. Statistical Product and Service Solutions version 25 was utilized for data analysis throughout the research.

## IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

The study shows that out of 132 questionnaires distributed, 114 were filled and returned, yielding a response rate of 86.4%. This high response rate is considered well above the acceptable threshold of 70%, indicating that the majority of respondents actively participated, enhancing the reliability of the data. The high rate indicates strong engagement and interest in the research topic, which increases the validity of the findings. Additionally, 8 questionnaires were returned incomplete, representing 6.0%, while 10 questionnaires were unreturned, constituting 7.6%. The low non-response rate minimizes response bias, further strengthening the overall analysis.

### 4.1 Inferential Statistics

The purpose of inferential statistics is to draw conclusions from a statistical sample. Correlation analysis, hypothesis testing, confidence intervals, and regression analysis are all examples of tools used in inferential statistics.

**Table 1: Correlation matrix**

| | | Project Planning | Project Implementation | Project Monitoring and Evaluation | Project Success |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Project Planning | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .520** | .523** | .755** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | 114 | 114 | 114 | 114 |
| Project Implementation | Pearson Correlation | .520** | 1 | .113 | .569** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | | .232 | .000 |
| | N | 114 | 114 | 114 | 114 |
| Project Monitoring and Evaluation | Pearson Correlation | .523** | .113 | 1 | .661** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .232 | | .000 |
| | N | 114 | 114 | 114 | 114 |
| Project Success | Pearson Correlation | .755** | .569** | .661** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | .000 | .000 | |
| | N | 114 | 114 | 114 | 114 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Field data, 2025

The correlation matrix in Table 1 presents strong positive relationships between each aspect of stakeholders' engagement (project planning, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation) and project performance. Specifically, stakeholders in project planning exhibit a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.755$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$), implying that increased involvement of stakeholders in project planning is linked with improved success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project. The findings are consistent with Ngonge and Muchelule (2022) explored the impact of stakeholder engagement on the effectiveness of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) projects in Embu County, Kenya. The findings revealed a moderate correlation between stakeholder participation in project identification and overall success ($r=0.349$, p-value=0.002), with a more pronounced association observed in project implementation ($r=0.612$, p-value=0.004). The study highlighted the necessity of aligning projects with community needs to enhance their effectiveness.

Similarly, stakeholders in project implementation demonstrate a moderate positive relationship ($r = 0.569$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$), signifying that enhanced stakeholder engagement in implementation is associated with higher levels of success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project. Stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation display a notably strong positive relationship ($r = 0.661$, $p=0.000 < 0.05$), indicating that greater involvement of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation corresponds to heightened success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project. The results are in complement with Ngwabije and Gitahi (2023) investigated the role of stakeholders in the success of the Inspire, Educate, and Empower (IEE) project in Rwanda. The findings indicated a strong correlation between stakeholder participation and project success, underscoring the significant influence of decision-making, project execution, and planning on overall success.

**Table 2: Model Summary**

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | .864[a] | .747 | .740 | .14576 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Project Monitoring and Evaluation, Project Implementation, Project Planning

Table 2 presents the Model Summary for the regression analysis. The R value of 0.864 indicates a strong positive correlation between the predictors (Project Monitoring and Evaluation, Project Implementation, Project Planning) and the dependent variable (success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project). The R Square value of 0.747 signifies that approximately 74.7% of the variability in success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project can be explained by the independent variables in the model.

The findings align well with Pinto and Teixeira (2023), the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Plant in Brazil demonstrates a complex approach to stakeholder engagement. The project involved extensive consultation with Indigenous communities and local residents, aiming to address their needs and concerns throughout the project lifecycle.

**Table 3: ANOVA**

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Regression | 6.892 | 3 | 2.297 | 108.139 | .000[b] |
| | Residual | 2.337 | 110 | .021 | | |
| | Total | 9.229 | 113 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Project Success
b. Predictors: (Constant), Project Monitoring and Evaluation, Project Implementation, Project Planning
Source: Field data, 2025

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results in Table 3 indicate a highly significant F-statistic of 108.139 (p = 0.000). The F-statistic assesses the overall significance of the regression model, testing whether there is a significant difference between the model with predictors (Project Monitoring and Evaluation, Project Implementation, Project Planning) and success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project. In this case, the small p-value (p = 0.000 < 0.05) associated with the F-statistic indicates that the predictors jointly have a significant effect on explaining the variance in dependent variable (success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project).

The findings are supported by Limani *et al.* (2024), stakeholder engagement represents a strategic endeavor to actively communicate with all entities interested in a project, ensuring that their viewpoints are heard and their needs are addressed. The process starts with identifying key stakeholders and continues with ongoing involvement and communication throughout the project's duration.

Table 4: Coefficients

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
| 1 | (Constant) | .064 | .247 | | .259 | .796 |
| | Project Planning | .321 | .061 | .350 | 5.222 | .000 |
| | Project Implementation | .269 | .046 | .337 | 5.859 | .000 |
| | Project Monitoring and Evaluation | .402 | .053 | .440 | 7.630 | .000 |

a. Dependent Variable Project Implementation: Project Success
Source: Field data, 2025

The model used in the study took the form below:

$Y= \beta_0+\beta_1X_1+ \beta_2X_2+ \beta_3X_3 +ę$
Therefore, Project Performance = 0.064 + 0.321 (Project Planning) + 0.269 (Project Implementation) + 0.402 (Project Monitoring and Evaluation).
Table 4, the coefficients offer valuable insights into the relationships between the predictors (Project Monitoring and Evaluation, Project Implementation, Project Planning) and the dependent variable (success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project). The significant p-values for all predictors underscore their individual influence on success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project, reaffirming their significance in this context. The constant term (α) is 0.064, indicating the expected value of success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project when all predictor variables are zero.
The unstandardized coefficients (B) reveal how success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project changes for every unit shift in the respective predictor while keeping other variables constant. Project Planning show a coefficient of 0.321, signifying that a one-unit increase in Project Planning corresponds to a 0.321 increase in success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project.
Project Implementation exhibit a coefficient of 0.269, indicating that a one-unit increase in stakeholders' engagement in project Implementation leads to a 0.269 increase in success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project. This demonstrates the unique contribution of stakeholder involvement in ensuring success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project.

Stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation show a coefficient of 0.402, indicating that a one-unit increase in stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation results in a 0.402 increase in project perform success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project. This highlights the critical role of continuous oversight and evaluation in success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project.

The significant p-values across all predictors ($p = .000 < 0.05$) highlight their statistical importance in success of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project.

The results were not far for Habineza and Kengere (2022) stakeholder engagement was crucial for enhancing household welfare in biogas projects in Huye District, Rwanda. Involving local communities, government, NGOs, and private sectors fostered collaboration, knowledge sharing, and resource allocation. This engagement led to improved living standards, increased income-generating activities, and greater livelihood diversification, contributing to sustainable development in the region.

## V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

The results affirm that effective stakeholder engagement in project planning is a vital component of Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project's success. The high level of agreement among respondents underscores the importance of clear communication and collaborative goal-setting in achieving project objectives. By involving stakeholders in planning activities, the project team was able to build a strategic framework that responded to the expectations of both technical experts and community members. This increased the legitimacy of the project and ensured that it was contextually appropriate, reducing delays and promoting long-term community support.

Stakeholder involvement during the implementation phase is critical for project success, as indicated by strong positive responses. The ability of stakeholders to contribute their insights and concerns significantly enhances the project's execution, suggesting that their roles must continue to be emphasized throughout this phase. Through ongoing dialogue and responsiveness to feedback, the project maintained flexibility in addressing challenges. This adaptability, supported by engaged stakeholders, allowed for improved coordination, timely resource mobilization, and conflict resolution, which are all necessary ingredients for successful project delivery.

The findings show that stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation creates a reinforced framework for success in Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project. Effective communication and feedback mechanisms create an environment conducive to ongoing improvement and responsiveness to stakeholders' needs. When stakeholders participate in evaluating progress and outcomes, they contribute to a transparent process that drives accountability. Their engagement also helps shape future interventions based on lessons learned, making the project more adaptive and aligned with evolving stakeholder expectations.

### 5.2 Recommendations

Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project should develop a formal stakeholder engagement framework that defines roles and responsibilities to enhance participation during the planning stage.

Mukungwa II Hydropower Plant Project need to organize regular workshops and forums to facilitate open discussions on planning objectives among stakeholders, ensuring everyone's voice is heard.

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