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**MODERATING EFFECT OF PROJECT ENVIRONMENT ON THE RELATIONSHIP  
BETWEEN CONSTRAINED PROGRAMMING AND PROJECT OUTCOMES IN  
UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES IN KENYA.**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The aim of the study was to establish the moderating effect of project environment on the relationship between constrained programming and project outcomes in United Nations Agencies in Kenya.

**Methodology:** A cross sectional survey is a method that involves the analysis of data collected from a population, or a representative subset, at one specific point in time (Orodho, 2011). This design is used to gather data on more than one case at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative data in connection to the variables. The study picked data for projects and sought to investigate the concept trends and status of project outcomes at a particular period (2014-2018).

**Results:** The results indicated that the geographical environment affect project outcomes (4.565); Social Cultural environment inhibit project outcomes (3.875); Beliefs and traditions affect project outcomes (4.670); Political instability hinders success of project outcomes (3.734) and technological changes affect project outcomes (3.713). The findings revealed the moderating effect of project environment on the relationship between constrained programming and project outcomes in UN agencies in Kenya.

**Contribution to policy, practice and theory:** Humanitarian projects should realize that in the present project environment, constrained programming forms an important element of intangible assets of the UN agencies. These should be reconfigured to ensure that the projects seize opportunities, are proactive in the market place, make new product and process innovations.

**Keywords:** *Project Environment; Project Outcomes; Political Environment; Social Cultural Environment; Technological environment; Geographical environment.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Kenya's environmental sustainability challenges, which are further exacerbated by climate change, coupled with the need for renewable energies, require an integrated approach linking better management practices for natural resources (land, water and forest) with early warning capacities and resilience-building (Kweyu, 2013). In Turkana County, UNDP successfully piloted a comprehensive range of disaster risk management (DRM) support services to national institutions and vulnerable communities, with tangible results which confirm enhanced resilience of communities concerning food security, human development and sustainable livelihoods as part of newly found coping mechanisms to withstand cyclical floods and drought (Kweyu, 2013).

### 1.1 Research Hypothesis

The study tested the following hypotheses:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Project environment has no significant moderating influence on the relationship between constrained programming and project outcomes in United Nations Agencies in Kenya.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Foundation.

One of the main advocates of many-sided quality hypothesis is Stuart Kauffman in the 1950's. An intricate framework is characterized by Thompson (1967) as one in which numerous autonomous specialists collaborate with other in different (now and again unbounded) ways. Simon (1969) depicts an unpredictable framework as one of the huge number of parts which can communicate in a non-basic manner. Arthur, Durlauf and Lane (1997) express that fundamental start of intricacy hypothesis is that there is a shrouded request to the conduct (and development) of complex frameworks, regardless of whether that framework is a national economy, a biological community, an association, or a creation line.

The theory is based on classifying problems based on how difficult they are to solve. A problem is assigned to the P-problem (polynomial-time) class if the number of steps needed to solve it is bounded by some power of the problem's size. A problem is assigned to the NP-problem (nondeterministic polynomial-time) class if it permits a nondeterministic solution and the number of steps to verify the solution is bounded by some power of the problem's size (Svoboda, 2015). The class of P-problems is a subset of the class of NP-problems, but there also exist problems which are not NP. A prominent author in the field of complexity is Terry Williams who shares the view of other scholars on complexity but extends it by one additional dimension of time estimates.

In addition to the two components of complexity, vis-à-vis the number of factors and the interdependency of these factors, he introduces the third factor which is uncertainty. Since uncertainty adds to the complexity of a project, time estimates therefore can be viewed as a constituent dimension of project complexity that can be as a result of various (Svoboda, 2015). Kahane on the other hand puts a lot of emphasis on talking and listening to each other when solving tough problems when developing estimate costs. His approach to complexity is deeply rooted in a social environment. He distinguishes complexity in three ways.

It should be noted that complexity-based factors related to project dynamic are often abound. This is due to the difficulties in well understanding the nature of dynamic in construction project in order to identify relative complex factors. In other words, planning for a dynamic system is difficult due to changes in environment and circumstances. It is even more difficult to estimate when considering dependent on environmental conditions and other unknowns (Wasilkowska, 2012).

There is an ongoing research in this regard and more details need to be revealed and findings explored. Project management systems are considered dynamic systems, similar to those in nature, which means they change over time and are hard to predict. This increasingly fast-paced system is creating a complexity explosion, which is affecting the way project managers need to govern. Although they are changing, there is usually an underlying predictability that can be identified (Williams, Ousman & Brown, 2016).

Humanitarian projects occasionally demand for more additional resources as there is an ever changing structure thus affecting the cost estimates of the project (Wasikowska, 2012). This theory is relevant to this study because it provides a clear structural framework to enable achievement of project outcomes.

### **Empirical Review**

A study by Morgan and Hunt (2012) reveals that the environment of a project is described as “the pattern of all the external conditions and influences that affect its life and development of the project” For the analysis for the macro-environment Maxwell and Parker (2011) suggest the PESTEL framework, which is used to categorize environmental influences into six main types: political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal. Political factors include government stability, taxation policy, foreign trade regulations and social welfare policies. Economic factors are business cycles, GNP trends, interest rates, money supply, inflation, unemployment and disposable income (IASC, 2012).

A study by Herfkens (2016) asserts that Technological factors comprise of government spending on research, government and industry focus and technological effort, new discoveries/humanitarian, Gregg and Ana (2016) notes that Governments impose laws to protect the home industry from cut- throat global competition They impose different kinds of tariffs, enter into agreements and sign treaties to protect indigenous industry and promote local trade. When governments feel that the home industry is affected because of dumping, under Article VI of GATT, they can impose heavy anti-dumping duties.

In a study Seybold (2016) reveals that Greater efforts were also put into improving accountability and performance of action. Significantly, the system-wide evaluation of the international response to the genocide in Rwanda. Seybold (2016) provided impetus and momentum for a number of initiatives aimed at increasing the quality and accountability of aid and improving learning. These included the Sphere Project, ALNAP, the Ombudsman project, the Accountability Project, and People in Aid. Of these initiatives, ALNAP has focused on improving evaluation quality and utilization as a key objective.

More recently, a study on UN Reform and the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) initiative focused on changing the architecture of assistance in order to improve accountability and predictability of aid. It is important to recognize that the above humanitarians within the

international system took place against a backdrop of fundamental change in the management of national and international public sector organizations (UN, 2013).

A central element of this reform was the shift from an input–output management model towards a greater emphasis on results. A culture of setting targets, measuring performance and assessing achievements in quantifiable terms permeated through to the international system. Results based management is now a dominant approach to assessing performance and impact (UNDAF, 2017). Though aid is crucial in addressing the immediate needs of affected populations, it is of temporal importance. Activities that constitute good practice in the midst of an emergency may be irrelevant once recovery is well underway, and vice versa (Kopinak, 2013). In the early stages of a disaster, national structures are often overwhelmed and the immediate needs of those suffering must be provided for. In the later stages of a disaster, more attention can be paid to working with communities to establish natural resource and watershed management plans that can build longterm resilience.

Politicians in developing countries realize that disasters generate massive flows of aid from abroad. On principle, this aid is untied and disbursed only according to need, allowing countries that are least prepared for a disaster event to receive very high levels of relief. The promise of aid distorts incentives for politicians in these countries to invest in disaster risk reduction measures, despite their potential to save lives and protect physical assets. This phenomenon; the “Samaritan’s dilemma”, as demonstrated by Kamau and Sinigallia (2013) shows that the anticipation of foreign aid can result in a higher death toll from natural disasters.

According to Gillman (2016), the number of activities in projects varies from several to thousands. Certain solutions for small problems can be completely useless with bigger problems. A large number of tools are applied in the realization of success of any project outcome and techniques are developed that enabled representation of projects in a way that would be understandable to everyone involved.

Methods of network planning are based on graphic presentation of activities schedule within the project and their mutual dependencies. Such logical structure enables detailed analysis of realization duration of specific activities and the project as a whole. Besides the abovementioned elements, the fact that large quantities of resources are used contributes to the great complexity. Since the available resources for the realization are most often limited, it is necessary to plan them in an appropriate way. Planning project activities regarding the necessary resources includes determining certain types of resources and deadlines when the specific resources are needed. Resources in the concept of project management include various materials, parts, workforce, equipment and financial assets (GHP, 2017).

National Policy on Disaster Management, Kenya (2013) provides that during the implementation of the complex projects, all planned activities and resources must be taken into account. In general, it is necessary to assign the resources to the activities, but to also avoid simultaneous engagement of resources for multiple activities. In order to solve these problems, various techniques and methods are used. Constraints exist in every segment of humanitarian programming. Problems

such as scheduling and allocations are typical examples of constraints, where the basic concept of constrained programming can be applied.

Forcier (2014) posit that project management is a complex decision making process involving the rigid project deadline and budget. The traditional approach to project management is to consider projects as being independent of each other. However, in a multi-project environment the vast majority of projects share resources with other projects and thus the major issue is to find a way of handling resource scarcity according to the overall strategic direction of the programme.

The external project environment concerns the economic, political, technological, social, and ecological issues. In turn, the internal environment includes the project risk factors such as schedule, cost, design, and organizational structure. Uncertainty can be defined in several ways. Essentially, it is lack of information, which may or may not be obtainable. Uncertainty is also linked with risk, based on the distinction between aleatory and epistemic uncertainty in the following couplet: uncertainty is immeasurable risk; risk is measurable uncertainty (Njanja & Pellisier 2011).

Seybold (2016) possits that engineers, designers and contractors view risk from the technological perspective, whereas lenders and developers tend to view it from the economic and financial side. According to Project Management Body of Knowledge, project risk is defined as an uncertain event or condition that, if it occurs, has a positive or a negative effect on a project objective.

Project risk planning utilizes the CPM (Critical Path Method) and PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) for project scheduling, helping managers to guarantee the in time and on budget completion of the project. The hypothesis made in CPM is that activity durations are deterministic and none is rarely satisfied in real life where tasks are often uncertain and variable. The inherent uncertainty and imprecision in project scheduling has motivated the proposal of several fuzzy set theory based extensions of activity network scheduling techniques (Streets et al., 2016).

Williams, Ousman and Brown, (2016) defined external environmental factors as those factors affecting the project outcomes, which are mostly beyond the control of the management team. These factors include political, economic and social factors (Reindorp & Wiles, 2011). Political factors concern political stability and government intervention in providing both incentives and enabling environments for public housing humanitarian.

Government has an important role to play in ensuring the success of public housing in terms of infrastructure humanitarian, provision of a favourable legal framework, and guarantees to developers. Seybold (2016) argues that failure on the capability of government will affect the success of sector humanitarian. Economic factors constitute the economic environment that influences the flow of funds and affordability in financing. These include a stable macroeconomic environment, availability of credit facilities, low interest rates and long repayment periods (Stumpfenhorst & Oliver, 2011).

Social factors have been concerned with the issues of the cultural aspect, health consideration and the general life style of beneficiaries. Reindorp and Wiles (2011) identified a stable political system, favourable economic system, adequate financial market, predictable currency exchange risk, low interest rate, long-term debt financing, a favourable legal framework and government

support, as critical to the success of PPP projects. Reindorp and Wiles (2011) identified good governance, a favourable legal framework, governmental involvement through the provision of guarantees, available financial market, political support, a sound economic policy and a stable macro-economic environment as critical factors to the success of PPP construction projects.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

A cross sectional survey is a method that involves the analysis of data collected from a population, or a representative subset, at one specific point in time (Orodho, 2011). This design is used to gather data on more than one case at a single point in time in order to collect a body of quantitative data in connection to the variables. The study picked data for projects and sought to investigate the concept trends and status of project outcomes at a particular period (2014-2018). These designs were successfully used in similar studies by [Kirimi and Njeru (2018), Muma, Nzulwa and Ombui (2018), Muchelule, Iravo, Noor and Odhiambo (2018) and Hassan, Gathenya and Iravo (2018)].

### 4.0 RESULTS

The study respondents included Project managers (total=233) in charge of realization of the fourteen project outcomes as shown in Table 1, within the UN Agencies' thematic areas. This study used a census since the population was less than 400. To determine the sample size, the study factored in sampling adequacy which ensured a sufficient size was selected. The study selected all the 233 respondents for the study since this is a small number (David et al., 2010).

**Table 1: Response Rates**

Project Managers	Cluster/Leader	Population	Percentage
Health	WHO	26	11.1588
Food Security	WFP/FAO	24	10.30043
Logistics	WFP	22	9.44206
Nutrition	UNICEF	19	8.01717
Early recovery	UNDP	25	10.72961
Education	UNICEF	20	8.583691
Protection	UNHCR	23	9.871245
Shelter	UNHCR	13	5.5794.1588
WASH	UNHCR	23	9.871245
Camp Mgt	UNHCR	10	4.2918
Emergency Tel.	UNHCR	6	2.5751
HIV/AIDS	UNAIDS	13	5.5794
Environment	UNEP	9	3.862
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2: Influence of Project Environment on Project Outcomes**

Statement	Mean	Std
Geographical environment affect project outcomes	4.565	.764
Micro economics inhibit project outcomes	3.875	.665
Beliefs and traditions affect project outcomes	4.670	.553
Communities determine the success project outcomes	3.215	.643
Political instability hinders success of project outcomes	3.702	.532
Project outcomes are directly linked to legal environment	3.734	.421
Technological changes affect project outcomes	3.713	.657
	<b>3.924</b>	<b>0.605</b>

The study sought to assess the influence of project environment on project outcomes. The study findings in Table 2 indicate that the respondents indicated to a great extent that the geographical environment affect project outcomes (4.565); Social Cultural environment inhibit project outcomes (3.875); Beliefs and traditions affect project outcomes (4.670); Communities determine the success project outcomes (3.215); Political instability hinders success of project outcomes (3.734). Project outcomes are directly linked to legal environment (3.734); Technological changes affect project outcomes (3.713).

### Regression Results.

The summary of regression model  $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_5 X_5 + E$  result is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Model Summary**

Model Summary	
<b>R</b>	.798
<b>R Square</b>	.636
<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	.7536
<b>Sig</b>	0.000

The value of R and  $R^2$  are of 0.798 and 0.636 respectively. The R value of 0.798 represents the correlation between project environment and the Project outcomes. The  $R^2$  which indicates the moderating power of the independent variables is .636. This means that about 76% of the variation between the independent variables and Project outcomes is explained by the moderating variable.

The  $R^2$  value as revealed by the result is high which means about 76% of the variation in the independent variables and project outcomes is unexplained by the model, denoting a strong relationship between the moderating variable and independent variables and project outcomes. The standard error of the estimate is 1.213, which explains how representative the sample is likely to be of the population. The findings concur with those of Alphonso et. al (2016) who found that project environment includes relationships with customers and the government and refers to humanitarian and maintenance of important relationships such as those with customers and suppliers of goods and services, as well as the degree of partner satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Inferences can therefore be made that project environment is very important in UN agencies. Compared to large organizations UN agencies are closer to their customers, and, therefore, are able to capture information on customers and market as their source of expertise and know-how. Therefore UN agencies are mostly customer-focused and aware of their competitors' actions.

**Table 4: ANOVA results**

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30.655	1	30.655	23.6371	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	260.674	201	1.2969		
	Total	291.330	202			

As indicated in Table 4, the results of ANOVA test reveal that project environment have significant effect on project outcomes in UN agencies. Since the P value is actual 0.000 which is less than 5% level of significance. Table 5 shows the summary of regression coefficients.

**Table 5: Regression Coefficient**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	3.027	.151	20.112	.000
	Constrained Programming	.163	.034	.324	.000

This is depicted by linear regression model  $Y=B_0+B_5X_5+E$  where  $X_5$  is the constrained programming the P value was 0.000 implying that the model  $Y=B_0+B_5X_5+E$  was significant. This reveals the project environment has a significant and positive influence on project outcome ( $\beta = 0.163$ ,  $p= 0.0001$ ).

Table 6 shows the regression coefficients after moderation.

**Table 6: After moderation results**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
2	(Constant)	3.001	.151	19.874	.000
	Constrained Programming (PE)	.25656	.004	.324	.021

The regression results after moderation revealed that constrained programming had a positive and significant effect on project outcome after being moderated by project environment. The regression coefficient increased from 0.163 to 0.25656 and t statistics increased from 4.715 to 6.414. The moderation effect was significant at 0.021 which is less than the critical value of 0.05. **Discussion**

The findings concur with those of Parker et al., (2018) who postulates that constrained programming to be key factors for project success and important levers for value creation. Their core competence as invisible assets rather than visible assets. Parker et. al (2018) revealed that constrained programming is becoming a crucial factor for a projects long-term sustainability and performance that identify their core competence as invisible assets rather than visible assets.

The results indicated that P value = 0.000 which is less than 5%. This shows that the overall model is significant. It further implies that project strengthening, structural policy framework, project team deployment and promotion of private sector engagement have a significant effect on the project outcomes in UN agencies in Kenya.

The study findings corroborates with literature review by Morgan and Hunt (2012) reveals that the environment of a project is described as “the pattern of all the external conditions and influences that affect its life and development of the project” For the analysis for the macroenvironment Maxwell and Parker (2011) suggest the PESTEL framework, which is used to categorize environmental influences into six main types: political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal. The results (3.924) indicated that project environment influenced project outcomes to a moderate extent.

### **Hypothesis Results.**

H<sub>a5</sub> Project environment had a positive moderating influence on project outcomes within United Nations’ Agencies in Kenya. The results showed that project environment had a significant positive influence on the dependent variable (project outcomes UN agencies). This was revealed by a t value of 6.414 which is greater than 2 and a p value of 0.021 which is less than 0.05 at 95% level of significance.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

The study sought to establish the moderating effect of project environment on the relationship between constrained programming and project outcomes in UN Agencies in Kenya. The study found out that project environment as a moderator influenced the project outcomes in UN agencies in Kenya.

According to the findings, the components of project environment; institutional environment, time provisions, stakeholder demands/expectations and resources significantly positively influenced the project outcomes in UN agencies in Kenya. This indicates that project environment as a moderator which entails political environment, social cultural environment, technological environment and geographical environment is an important element of constrained programming that had a positive and significant influence on the project outcomes in UN agencies in Kenya.

Based on the findings, the study concluded that institutional environment, time provisions, stakeholder demands/expectations and resources had to be considered when programming for humanitarian projects. The regression coefficients of the study showed that institutional environment, time provisions, stakeholder demands/expectations and resources had a significant positive influence on project outcomes. This implied that increasing levels of project environment

could increase the moderating effect on the relationship between constrained programming and project outcomes in United Nations Agencies in Kenya.

## 5.2 Recommendations

Specifically, the study recommends that humanitarian projects should realize that in the present project environment, constrained programming forms an important element of intangible assets of the UN agencies. These should be reconfigured to ensure that the projects seize opportunities, are proactive in the market place, make new product and process innovations.

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