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Determinants of Performance of Early Childhood Development Projects in Kisii County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aimed to explore the key factors that influence the success of Early Childhood Development (ECD) projects within Kisii County, Kenya. The study focused on four main objectives: to evaluate the impact of stakeholder involvement on the sustainability of ECD projects, to examine how the allocation of financial resources affects project outcomes, to assess the influence of conducting feasibility studies on project success, and to determine the effect of monitoring and evaluation practices on the long-term viability of County Government-supported ECD centers.

Methodology: The target population consisted of 246 individuals, including school headteachers, county officials, and PTA chairpersons. A sample of 149 participants was selected. Data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire, which was later coded and analyzed using SPSS software, with technical support from a data analyst. Statistical tools such as frequency distributions, means, and standard deviations were employed, and the chi-square test was applied to test the research hypotheses.

Findings: Results indicated that stakeholder participation plays a significant role in the effectiveness of ECD projects. This was supported by a chi-square value of 14.3, which exceeded the critical threshold of 9.488 at a 95% confidence level, leading to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Similarly, financial allocation was found to significantly influence project performance, as demonstrated by a chi-square value of 38.7. The study also found that feasibility assessments are vital to project success. This was confirmed by a chi-square result of 46.4, which surpassed the critical value. Additionally, monitoring and evaluation processes were shown to be critical for project sustainability, supported by a chi-square value of 35.1.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: Based on these findings, the study recommended further research in Kisii County and other regions to investigate additional variables, such as the role of political influences and policy frameworks on the implementation and performance of ECD programs.

Keywords: *Communication Skills, Donor-Funded Projects, Leadership Skills, Project Performance, Stakeholder Management*

Background of the Study

The importance of investing in human capital cannot be overstated when it comes to achieving economic growth and development worldwide. Kwenya (2019) emphasizes that education is a key driver of progress. UNESCO identifies education as a fundamental determinant of a country's socioeconomic development. According to Kaimenyi (2019), Early Childhood Education lays the groundwork for all children prior to starting primary school by preparing them for basic educational pathways, which enhances their independence and boosts their contributions to national growth. In Kenya, the Constitution (2010) affirms the right of every child to education, establishing it as a fundamental constitutional guarantee. However, despite government support, many areas within Kisii County still face limited access to ECD services.

Kisii County, located in southern Kenya, is predominantly rural but densely populated. It struggles with unique challenges in the delivery and effectiveness of ECD programs, including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and insufficient community involvement. While the county benefits from government and donor support, several factors undermine the sustainability of ECD initiatives, such as weak stakeholder engagement, lack of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and poor planning. This study aims to explore the various factors influencing the success of early childhood development programs in Kisii County, specifically examining stakeholder participation, financial allocation, monitoring and evaluation practices, and feasibility assessments.

Statement of the Problem

The enactment of Kenya's new constitution in 2010 led to the establishment of county governments, which were entrusted with several duties, including the implementation and oversight of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs (Republic of Kenya, 2017). Since 2013, county budgets have incorporated allocations for ECD initiatives. However, despite significant investments of public funds into these programs across various counties, reports from the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the Auditor General reveal that many of these projects have underperformed (World Bank, 2017; UNESCO, 2017; UNICEF, 2017). This situation calls for a comprehensive analysis to uncover the root causes behind the poor performance and limited sustainability of ECD projects, despite the substantial financial resources dedicated to them.

According to a UNICEF report on foundational education in East Africa, Kenya should benchmark its ECD practices against those of Tanzania and Rwanda, particularly in areas such as patriotism, identity, language development, social cohesion, governance, and sanitation (UNICEF, 2017). As one of East Africa's more developed nations, Kenya is expected to demonstrate superior outcomes in ECD programs compared to younger countries like Rwanda and Burundi. This expectation underscores the need for research that examines why such ambitious, resource-intensive projects sometimes fail to meet their goals.

Much of the existing research on ECD program effectiveness in Kenya has concentrated on counties other than Kisii, indicating a research gap that warrants attention. For example, Wamuyu (2015) conducted a study in Lari, Kiambu County, and found that the success of ECD initiatives over five years was hindered by challenges including weak policies, inadequate planning, and resource constraints. Similarly, research by Wambui (2015) in Imenti emphasized the importance of coordinated efforts to address inconsistencies in ECD project outcomes across Kenya. This study, therefore, focuses on exploring the factors that determine the performance of ECD projects in Kisii County, aiming to shed light on these ongoing issues.

General Objective

The main objective of this study is to examine the determinants of performance of ECD projects in Kisii County, Kenya.

Specific Objectives

- i. To determine the influence of project monitoring and evaluation on performance of ECD projects in Kisii County, Kenya.
- ii. To examine the influence of project funds allocation on performance of ECD projects in Kisii County, Kenya.
- iii. To establish the influence of project stakeholders' participation on performance of ECD projects in Kisii County, Kenya.
- iv. To assess the influence of project feasibility study on performance of ECD projects in Kisii County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stakeholders' Participation and the sustainability of Early Childhood Development Projects

In a study conducted by Muthoni (2015) on project performance within educational institutions, the importance of stakeholder engagement for project success was strongly emphasized. The research involved 99 respondents, equally divided among Board of Governors (BOG) chairpersons, school heads, and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) chairpersons. Findings revealed that the active involvement of stakeholders greatly enhances the effective and efficient delivery of educational programs. The study identified key stakeholders to include teachers, students, school management, the board of management, government agencies like the Ministry of Education, and members of the local community such as parents, guardians, and local leaders.

Similarly, a 2015 World Bank report on Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Bolivia highlighted the pivotal role of various stakeholders in driving the success of these programs since 2010. The Bolivian government has taken steps to engage communities in school-related activities, addressing not just funding matters but also promoting awareness about the upkeep of school facilities and encouraging parental participation in school management.

UNESCO (2015) further supports the view that stakeholder participation is critical to the success of education projects globally. In the context of ECD, stakeholders encompass funding organizations, local communities, parents, educators, and school leadership, each fulfilling specific responsibilities that collectively improve project performance. For example, local communities often provide land and both skilled and unskilled labor necessary for the development of ECD centers. Donor organizations such as NGOs, religious groups, and development partners play a key role in raising and allocating funds, monitoring their usage, offering technical support, and occasionally advising on the funding duration for these projects (UNESCO, 2017).

The participation of principal stakeholders like financiers, teachers, school administrators, and parents is vital for the success of ECD projects (Ndani & Kimani, 2015). This study underscores the essential contribution of institutions that finance and guide the establishment of critical ECD infrastructure nationwide. Ong'uti (2014) concurs, noting that the involvement of stakeholders, especially teachers and parents, is fundamental to the effectiveness of many ECD initiatives.

Projects Funds Allocation and performance of Early Childhood Development Projects

According to project planning and management experts, a project is defined as a temporary effort aimed at achieving specific goals within limits of time, workforce, and budget (PMI, 2008; World Bank, 2017). This definition emphasizes that adequate financial support is essential for a project to meet its intended objectives. Global Action (2017) reports that the education sector in Haiti faced severe disruption after the 2010/2011 earthquake, which destroyed many classrooms and educational infrastructure. To address this, government leaders, including the president, were encouraged to seek partnerships with organizations such as the IMF, World Bank, USAID, and Relief International to obtain funding for the reconstruction of educational facilities.

Ngirerea and Nyakwara (2018) point out that the success of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs in various countries heavily depends on the availability of financial resources allocated to infrastructure, teacher salaries, project management, land acquisition, capital goods, and training initiatives. The World Bank (2015) further stresses the necessity of funding for hiring skilled personnel, recruiting enough qualified teachers, providing adequate teaching materials, and ensuring learning environments are suitable to enhance project outcomes.

Muthoni (2015) conducted a study in Nyeri County focusing on factors affecting project performance in schools. Data collected from school administrators, Boards of Governors, and Parent-Teacher Association members was analyzed using SPSS version 20.0. The results showed that the competencies of school leaders, stakeholder involvement, funding availability, and procurement processes play significant roles in the successful completion of school development projects. Despite formal project management knowledge, school leaders reported facing difficulties in executing project tasks, suggesting that financial resources, though critical, are only one among several influencing factors.

Similarly, Muyoka (2017) confirmed the critical role of funding and capital in the effective delivery of programs. His study, which involved quality assurance officers, school principals, and school board chairs, found that funds allocated for school infrastructure, teacher remuneration, administration, and hiring specialists have a substantial impact on the implementation of ECD initiatives managed by county governments. Ndani and Kimani (2015) also found in their study of 78 schools in Thika that the source, allocation, duration, and conditions of funding greatly affect the success of education projects.

Feasibility Study and the performance of the Early Childhood Development Projects

Tim (2018) provided an in-depth explanation of effective feasibility studies, emphasizing their importance for project success in the 21st century. He identified six core elements common to all feasibility studies. These include: defining the Project Scope, which outlines the specific problem or opportunity addressed by the project; conducting a Current Analysis to assess the existing systems or processes, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses; specifying the project Requirements based on its objectives; proposing an Approach that details the recommended solution, after evaluating and comparing multiple alternatives; and finally, performing an Assessment to determine the cost-effectiveness of the chosen solution, including an estimate of the total project costs and comparison with other options.

According to the World Bank (2014), Lesotho is among the world's poorest countries, partly due to an education system that is poorly structured and inefficient. This inefficiency results from inadequate planning and the absence of thorough evaluations of feasible strategies for education program implementation. UNESCO (2015) further reported that insufficient feasibility studies contributed to a 23% failure rate in Early Childhood Development (ECD) projects funded in Lesotho in 2014.

In a related study, Jackie (2018) highlighted the benefits of conducting feasibility studies before initiating or continuing projects. Her research in East Africa, particularly relevant to Ethiopia, showed that feasibility studies help ensure effective project delivery by guiding decisions on whether to proceed, modify, or abandon a project idea. They also assist project teams in maintaining focus and clarity, provide a comprehensive overview of the project, and recommend suitable communication methods, whether top-down or bottom-up.

Monitoring and Evaluation and performance of Early Childhood Development Projects

According to UNICEF (2015), addressing any deficiencies found during monitoring is essential for the successful completion of planned activities. Monitoring is the ongoing process of collecting and analyzing performance data to track progress by comparing actual outcomes against intended goals, allowing for necessary adjustments to be made. This process is internally managed by personnel responsible for ensuring adherence to performance standards, demonstrating effective management practices.

Evaluating the quality of learning environments forms a vital part of the licensing procedures for early childhood development (ECD) programs worldwide. Such evaluations comply with standards established by organizations such as USAID, UNESCO, and UNICEF, which advocate for children's educational rights. Vitiello and Kool (2010) emphasize that a comprehensive ECD monitoring system should integrate multiple aspects, including education, health, social protection, and the socio-economic conditions of both public and private programs within a nation. This integrated approach is crucial for ensuring universal access to quality early childhood development. Monitoring serves as both a support mechanism and supervisory tool for the implementation and strategic management of ECD policies and programs, particularly in developing countries where robust monitoring systems are indispensable.

Extensive research has explored evaluation and the integration of monitoring and evaluation, illustrating their impact on project performance. UNESCO (2017) defines evaluation as a systematic appraisal of an activity's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and overall performance. It involves a thorough investigation of projects, programs, or policies to assess their outcomes in relation to predetermined objectives. Evaluations may occur during project execution—such as at the midpoint—or post-completion, sometimes several years later, to determine lasting effects.

Mavyala (2015) highlights the critical role of monitoring and evaluation in improving the success of educational projects. The study analyzed various assessment indicators connected to monitoring and revealed that effective monitoring and evaluation systems encompass formative, ongoing, and summative assessments. The prevailing evidence shows that monitoring and evaluation have a significant influence on project success.

Theoretical Framework

The System Theory

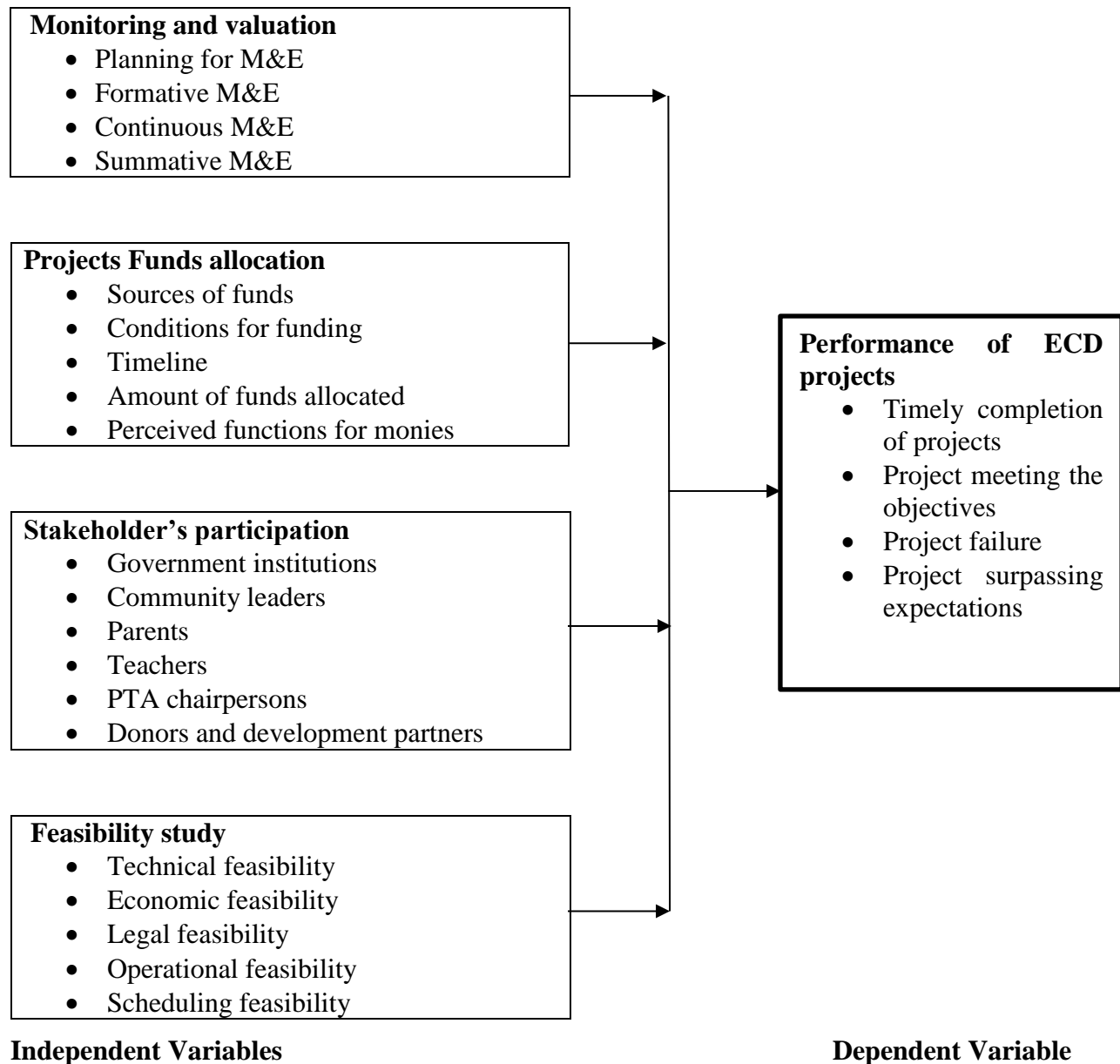
According to this theory, a system is made up of interconnected parts working in unison toward a single objective. The success of the entire system depends on the proper functioning of each component; if one part fails, the whole organizational process risks collapse. Viewing an organization as a project, it is composed of multiple elements that interact to secure the project's overall success. Throughout the project lifecycle, individuals from different departments carry out distinct roles that converge to maintain smooth and effective operations similar to the coordination within a fully functioning system. Essential components include not only personnel but also resources such as funding, leadership, stakeholders, and end users, all of whom consistently engage to deliver outcomes. Managing only the external environment without addressing these internal parts often leads to failure, as disconnects among project components undermine overall achievements.

Education Production Function

The educational production function, as formulated by Coleman (1996) and Psacharopoulos and Wood (1985), served as the theoretical foundation for this study. According to this concept, the allocation of educational resources in certain proportions leads to desirable outcomes. The quality of these inputs, along with how effectively they are integrated, determines the results achieved. The main components involved in the education process include students, teachers, financial resources, and instructional materials. Measures such as exam performance, retention rates, enrollment figures, participation, and competitive rankings are commonly used to assess internal efficiency. This framework allows for a detailed evaluation of the cost-effectiveness of educational investments. Since substantial funds are required for items like teacher compensation, learning materials, and school infrastructure, efficient utilization of resources is critical to maximize output. By linking resources, stakeholders, and assessment criteria, this theory is particularly relevant for investigating the sustainable implementation of Early Childhood Development projects.

Conceptual Framework

Swanson (2013) defines a conceptual framework as a model that represents the connections between variables as perceived by the researcher. This study focused on investigating the factors affecting the performance of Early Childhood Development (ECD) projects in Kisii County, Kenya. The study's independent variables are monitoring and evaluation, allocation of project funds, participation of stakeholders, and feasibility studies, while the dependent variable is the determinants of ECD project performance.

*Figure 1: Conceptual Framework***RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research employed a cross-sectional design. The study encompassed all primary school heads and PTA chairpersons in Kisii County, as well as 22 county government employees involved in the management and performance of Early Childhood Development (ECD) projects since the transfer of responsibilities to the county five years ago. The study population comprised 246 individuals, including 112 head teachers, 112 PTA chairpersons, and 22 county staff members. To determine the sample size, the study applied the Yamane formula, which was introduced in 1967. Accordingly, the sample size for the study was set at 149 respondents. The sampling approach

involved stratified sampling, using a 0.6 proportion to select participants within each subgroup. This resulted in the selection of 67 PTA members, 67 school administrators, and 15 county employees for the study. To collect primary data from the field, the researcher used a meticulously developed questionnaire.

The collected questionnaires were checked for completeness and relevance, with this verification process supported by four experienced research assistants. Once confirmed, the data was organized and formatted for entry into SPSS software for further analysis. Descriptive statistics were carried out in collaboration with a statistics expert, and the outcomes were displayed using frequency tables, means, standard deviations, and other statistical indicators. To test the hypotheses, the chi-square test was employed. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to analyze the quantitative data. The Pearson correlation coefficient (Pearson R) was used to assess the strength and direction of the linear relationships between variables. Multiple regression analysis was also performed to determine how the independent variables influence the dependent variable. This analytical method aims to identify whether a combination of independent variables can predict the dependent variable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2018). The findings from the regression analysis were presented in tabular form, with the regression model

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

Stakeholders' Participation and their Influence on Early Childhood Development Projects performance

Respondents were asked to give their degree of support of various indicators of stakeholders' engagement and their influence on the performance of ECD projects in the county. Results were indicated in table 1 below

Table 1: Stakeholders' Participation and their Influence on Early Childhood Development Projects performance

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
ECD projects in the county have been engaging the various stakeholders effectively	4.003	0.891
Various government institutions play major roles in ECD projects performance once engaged through various ways	3.912	1.091
Community leaders play a role in the performance of various ECD projects in the county	3.721	0.679
Parents play a role in the performance of the ECD projects in the county	3.991	0.928
PTA body plays a significant role in the performance of ECD projects in the county	4.141	0.782
Donors and development partners play a role in the performance of ECD projects in the county	4.482	1.271

The majority of respondents endorsed the notion that ECD initiatives in the county have effectively engaged various stakeholders, as evidenced by a mean score of 4.003 and a standard deviation of 0.891. A mean score of 3.912 indicated that the majority of respondents endorsed the notion that multiple government entities significantly influence the execution of ECD initiatives when involved through diverse methods. The majority of respondents endorsed the notion that: Parents (mean of 3.991); the PTA body (mean of 4.141); and donors and development partners (mean of 4.482) contribute to the efficacy of ECD project implementation in the county.

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing on Stakeholders' Participation Influence on Early Childhood Development Projects performance

Average scores

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
<i>O (observed)</i>	11	15	16	30	28
<i>E (expected)</i>	20	20	20	20	20

Calculated chi-square values

o	e	(o-e)=d	(d)²	(d)²/e
11	20	-9	81	4.05
15	20	-5	25	1.25
16	20	-4	16	0.8
28	20	8	64	3.2
30	20	10	100	5.0
				$\sum (d)^2/e = 14.3$

Tested hypotheses at 0.05 confidence level:

H1: Stakeholders engagement influences the performance of County Government Early Childhood Development centers' projects in Kisi County.

H0: Stakeholders engagement doesn't influence the sustainability of County Government Early Childhood Development centers' projects in Kisii County.

$\chi^2_c = 14.3 > \chi^2 = 9.488$ at 4 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of confidence.

$\alpha > 0.05$

Given that the computed chi-square value of 14.3 exceeds the crucial chi-square value at the 0.05 significance level, we accept the alternative hypothesis. Consequently, stakeholder participation affects the performance of early childhood development programs in Kisii County's government.

Projects Funds Allocation and the performance of the Early Childhood Development Projects

Respondents were asked to give their degree of support of various indicators of funds allocation and their influence on the performance of ECD projects in the county. Results were indicated in table 3 below

Table 3: Projects Funds Allocation and the performance of the Early Childhood Development Projects performance

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
Projects Funds allocation for ECD projects affects their performance in this county	4.532	0.991
Sources of project funds influence the performance of ECD projects significantly	4.012	1.911
Conditions for projects funding determine the performance of ECD projects	4.021	0.979
Timelines for projects funding influences the performance of ECD projects in Kisii county	4.081	0.928
Amount of projects funds allocated influence the rates of ECD projects performance	4.101	0.782
Perceived functions for the money allocated by various development managers influences the direction and rates of ECD projects performance	3.82	0.971

A significant majority of respondents supported the claim that the allocation of funds for ECD projects affects their success in the county (mean=4.532 and standard deviation=0.991). A higher proportion of respondents indicated that the sources of project funding significantly affect the performance of Early Childhood Development (ECD) projects (mean=4.012), and that the criteria for project funding dictate the performance of ECD projects (mean=4.021, standard deviation=0.979). The majority of respondents agreed that the following elements affect the trajectory and performance metrics of ECD projects: funding timelines (4.081), allocated fund amounts (4.101), and the perceived functions of the given funds by different development managers (3.82).

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing on Projects Funds' Allocation Influence on Early Childhood Development Projects*Average scores*

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
<i>O (observed)</i>	8	13	10	40	29
<i>E (expected)</i>	20	20	20	20	20

Calculated chi-square values

<i>o</i>	<i>e</i>	$(o-e)=d$	$(d)^2$	$(d)^2/e$
8	20	-12	144	7.2
13	20	-7	49	2.45
10	20	-10	100	5
40	20	20	400	20
29	20	9	81	4.05
				$\sum (d)^2/e = 38.7$

Stating tested hypotheses

H1: Project Funds allocation influences sustainability of County Government Early Childhood Development centers' project in Kisii County: H0: Funds allocation influences performance of County Government Early Childhood Development centers' project in Kisii County.

$\chi^2_c = 38.7 > \chi^2 = 9.488$ at 4 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of confidence.

$\propto 0.05$

Since the calculated chi-square value of 38.7 is greater than the critical chi-square value at 0.05 level of confidence, we accept the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, Funds allocation influences sustainability of County Government Early Childhood Development centers' project in Kisii County.

Feasibility Study and the performance of the Early Childhood Development Projects

Respondents were asked to give their degree of support of various indicators of feasibility study and their influence on the performance of ECD projects in the county. Results were indicated in table 5 below.

Table 5: Feasibility Study and Early Childhood Development Projects performance

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
Feasibility study influences ECD projects performance	4.342	1.091
Technical feasibility influences ECD projects performance	3.938	0.941
Economic feasibility influences ECD projects performance	3.859	1.001
Legal feasibility influences ECD projects performance	3.592	0.761
Operational feasibility influences ECD projects performance significantly	4.319	0.912
Scheduling feasibility dictates the direction the ECD projects take in terms of completion in the county	4.472	0.782

Table 5 indicates that most respondents agree that the feasibility study influences the performance of ECD projects in the county, as demonstrated by a mean score of 4.342. The majority of respondents agreed that technical feasibility had a mean score of 3.938, while economic feasibility had a mean score of 3.859.

Table 6: Hypothesis Testing on Feasibility Study's Influence Early Childhood Development Projects*Average scores*

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
<i>O (observed)</i>	7	10	15	45	23
<i>E (expected)</i>	20	20	20	20	20

Calculated chi-square values

o	e	(o-e)=d	(d)²	(d)²/e
7	20	-13	169	8.45
10	20	-10	100	5
15	20	-5	25	1.25
45	20	25	625	31.25
23	20	3	9	0.45
				$\sum (d)^2/e = 46.4$

Stating the tested hypotheses:

H1: Feasibility study influences performance of County Government Early Childhood Development centers' projects in Kisii County.

H0: Feasibility study doesn't influence performance of County Government Early Childhood Development centers' projects in Kisii County.

$\chi^2_c = 46.4 > \chi^2 = 9.488$ at 4 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of confidence.

$\alpha = 0.05$

At the 0.05 level of confidence, the computed chi-square value of 46.4 is higher than the critical chi-square value, hence the researcher accepts the alternative hypothesis. The feasibility research impacts the performance of early childhood development center projects within the County Government of Kisii County.

Monitoring and Evaluation's Influence on Early Childhood Development Projects performance

Respondents were asked to give their degree of support of various indicators of monitoring and evaluation, and their influence on the performance of Early Childhood Development projects in the county. Results were indicated in table 7 below

Table 7: Monitoring and Evaluation's Influence on Early Childhood Development Projects performance

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev
ECD projects in this county are determined by the rates of Monitoring and Evaluation	4.434	1.000
Planning for M&E influences the performance of ECD projects significantly	4.221	0.841
Formative M&E influences county ECD projects performance	3.651	1.981
Continuous M&E influences county ECD projects performance	4.561	1.761
Summative M&E is very significant in county ECD projects performance	3.535	0.612

The majority of respondents endorsed the notion that the efficacy of ECD projects in the county is contingent upon the rates of monitoring and evaluation, as evidenced by a mean score of 4.434. The majority of respondents endorsed the following assertions: Planning for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) significantly impacts the performance of early childhood development (ECD) projects, as evidenced by a mean score of 4.221; formative M&E affects the performance of county ECD projects, reflected by a mean score of 3.651; continuous M&E influences county ECD project performance, indicated by a mean score of 4.561; and summative M&E is highly significant for county ECD project performance, as shown by a mean score of 3.53

Table 8: Hypothesis Testing on Monitoring and Evaluation's Influence on Early Childhood Development Projects performance*Average scores*

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
<i>O (observed)</i>	14	6	15	35	40
<i>E (expected)</i>	20	20	20	20	20

Calculated chi-square values

<i>o</i>	<i>e</i>	$(o-e)=d$	$(d)^2$	$(d)^2/e$
14	20	-6	36	1.8
6	20	-14	196	0.8
15	20	-5	25	1.25
35	20	15	225	11.25
40	20	20	400	20
				$\sum (d)^2/e = 35.1$

Tested hypotheses

H1: Monitoring and evaluation influences performance of County Government Early Childhood Development centers' project in Kisii County.

H0: Monitoring and evaluation influences performance of County Government Early Childhood Development centers' project in Kisii County.

$\chi^2_{c=35.1} > \chi^2$	= 9.488 at 4 degrees of freedom and 0.05 level of confidence.
	0.05

α

Given that the computed chi-square value of 35.1 exceeds the crucial chi-square value at the 0.05 significance level, we accept the alternative hypothesis. Consequently, H4: Monitoring and evaluation impact the performance of County Government Early Childhood Development projects in Kisii County.

Performance of Early Childhood Development Projects

In this section, participants were asked to provide their views on various statements related to the independent variables stakeholder involvement, allocation of project funds, feasibility studies, and monitoring and evaluation and how these factors affect the performance of ECD projects in Kisii County. The results are presented in Table 9 below.

Table 9: Performance of Early Childhood Development Projects

Description	Mean	Std dev
The interaction of stakeholders' engagement, projects funds allocation, feasibility study and monitoring & evaluation has led to timely completion of ECD projects in the county	4.39	1.01
Stakeholders' engagement, projects funds allocation, feasibility study and monitoring & evaluation is associated with the ability of various ECD projects meeting their objectives	4.29	1.11
ECD projects failure in the county is associated with stakeholders' engagement, projects funds allocation, feasibility study and monitoring & evaluation	3.41	0.98
Stakeholders' engagement, projects funds allocation, feasibility study and monitoring & evaluation have led to projects surpassing the expectations in the county	4.02	0.76

The majority of respondents indicated that stakeholder involvement, allocation of project funds, feasibility assessments, and monitoring and evaluation collectively contributed to the on-time completion of Early Childhood Development (ECD) projects in the county, with an average rating of 4.39. These elements were also seen as key factors enabling ECD projects to successfully meet their targets (average score of 4.29) and even exceed expectations within the county (average score of 4.02). On the other hand, respondents largely disagreed that the failure of ECD projects in the county was linked to stakeholder participation, fund allocation, feasibility studies, or monitoring and evaluation, as evidenced by a lower average score of 3.41

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The success of Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs implemented by the county government in Kenya is heavily influenced by the participation of various stakeholders. These stakeholders include government agencies, community leaders, parents, teachers, PTA chairpersons, as well as donors and development partners. Their roles vary from providing labor and financial support to contributing additional resources like land. The effectiveness of ECD efforts in Kisii County is also impacted by how resources are allocated by different government bodies and agencies. Fund allocation in these projects not only refers to monetary support but also encompasses the funding sources, allocation criteria, schedules, designated amounts, and the intended purposes for the funds.

This study emphasizes the critical role of feasibility studies in the successful implementation of ECD projects. Such studies offer valuable benefits by helping project implementers decide whether

to continue, adjust, or discontinue their plans; by ensuring they remain focused and clear on project goals; by giving a comprehensive understanding of the project as a whole; and by recommending the most effective communication approach, whether it be top-down or another method. Feasibility studies also have the potential to identify innovative alternatives, new opportunities, and solutions that may have been overlooked.

Moreover, the findings reveal that monitoring and evaluation significantly affect the performance of ECD programs. Key factors that contribute to this influence include the planning phase of monitoring and evaluation, formative monitoring and evaluation processes, continuous monitoring and evaluation, and summative monitoring and evaluation activities.

Recommendations

The researcher suggests that project implementers and initiators of the ECD programs put in place systems that ensure stakeholder participation at all stages of the project to improve its performance. It is important for stakeholders to be engaged throughout the entire project lifecycle, including during the handover phase, to secure their ownership of the initiatives. Continuous efforts by project managers and stakeholders to increase funding for activities that enhance overall project outcomes in the county are essential. Prior to implementing any project, comprehensive feasibility studies should be conducted within the county, making use of all necessary tools and involving relevant experts. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation should be treated as critical components for sustaining the projects, ensuring that every step of these processes is thoroughly executed without any oversight.

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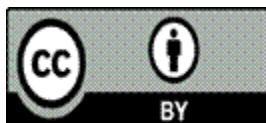
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