



**INFLUENCE OF STAKEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF LINDA MAMA HEALTH PROJECT
IN LURAMBI, KAKAMEGA COUNTY; KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

On the global scene, Project implementation of maternal health is a hard task that has ever been undertaken. Most of the projects end up half-way or even fail to satisfy the required level of wanted objectives. Project implementation involves various factors before it succeeds; it calls for a composite understanding of inputs among them; stakeholders involvement for successful implementation of maternal health projects. The purpose of this research study was to investigate the Influence Stakeholders' Involvement in the implementation of Linda Mama Health Project in Lurambi, Kakamega County, Kenya. This research problem employed descriptive research design. The target population of the study composed of health care workers of both private and public health facilities. Purposive sampling technique was applied on entire targeted population and examined since it is manageable. The study used closed and open-ended questionnaire as an instrument of primary data collection. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were focused on and the computation was done by use of SPSS version 21.0 to test the primary data that was collected to satisfy the objectives of study. Pilot study was conducted in Mumias West Sub-County County Government of Kakamega. Further a structural regression equation model was developed to test the relationships between the variables. ANOVA was performed to analyze the effects of various relationships at the variables level as well at item level. The result after the analysis was; Stakeholders' Involvement had significant influence on Implementation of Linda Mama maternal Health Project. The conclusion of the study embraced the use of Stakeholders' Involvement in implementation of maternal health projects since it improves performance on the implementation process. The study recommended for further study on influence of Stakeholders' Involvement on Implementation of maternal health projects in both private and public sector.

Key words; Stakeholder Involvement, Maternal Health, Maternal Health projects

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INTRODUCTION

Project implementation is the process of putting the project into action and ensuring that the project satisfies the set objectives. This often presents a very big challenge to project managers in order to attain the project specifications. It has been said that without proper implementation, no project can accomplish its objectives (Hrebiniak, 2005). Hence, it is important for firms and government to obtain an knowledge of the most important and major success factors to affecting project implementation (Kwak & Anbari, 2009). The understanding of these factors is important in the successful implementation of health projects. The viability of public government-funded projects is critical to ensuring effectiveness and efficiency of healthcare services by aligning needs and resources, integrating services across sectors, increased service quality and evidence-based practice, and improved accountability in health management systems (Hills, 2010).

In health, a project is acknowledged as an important way to bring forth health innovations, address new challenges or find solutions for challenges the normal practices do not solve. (European Union Health Programme, 2011). In order to provide and deliver appropriate medical health services, effective planning and management of health services is important. Unlike other industries, the success or failure of healthcare projects can mean the difference between life and death for clients mostly expectant women and young children. This is why project management in healthcare processes and structures is important as it enables healthcare projects to run more efficiently and effectively. The outcome of this is a more affordable and higher quality service to clients. In addition, implementing project management strategies and methods enables healthcare project managers to meet the requirements of the various stakeholders by improving financial processes, human resource management, budgeting and communication and

overall project planning. This leads to improved productivity project coordination (Hills, 2010).

Maternal health is the physical, emotional well-being of women of child bearing age in pregnancy, childbirth and after delivery. It also comprises the use of contraceptives, ANC and postnatal service which aims at decreasing women deaths (World Health Organization, 2013). A maternal death is globally considered as one of life's most tragic and regretful events. It is a painful outcome when a woman loses her life while in the act of creating life. Her death is a complete loss to the children, family and the community. It has been said that maternal mortality a key indicator of its population health, social and economic development indicators (Wilmoth *et al.*, 2012).

Regionally, sub-Saharan and South Asia countries contributed to about 86 per cent of all the global maternal deaths. Hence maternal mortality remains unacceptably high in the region. Also, regional and global maternal mortality trends mask large differences both within and between countries. Kenya, like most of African countries is estimated to have a high burden of maternal mortality rate (World Health Organization, 2012). The maternal mortality ratio and the neonatal mortality rate in Kenya have been estimated to be 362/100,000 live births and 22/1000 live births, respectively (KDHS, 2014). This is attributed to systematic issues such as lack of transport, long distances to health facilities, poorly equipped health facilities, low quality of care in health facilities and traditional and cultural practices in the community (Wubs, 2016). In a study on removing user fees for facility-based delivery services, quality health facility-based delivery services are a solution to preventable maternal and neonatal deaths (McKinnon, 2015). These could be influenced by economic barriers, national health system gaps, and political, social, environmental and religious factors. A study in Tanzania suggested that the distance to a health facility and quality of care were factors contributing to high maternal mortality (Hanson *et al.*, 2015).

In Kenya, maternal mortality differs significantly across different regions. According to 2009 census data, the highest proportion of maternal mortality was in North Eastern province (2,014 per 100,000 live births), This was then followed by Nyanza province (546 per 100,000 live births) while the lowest in the rank was Nairobi province (212 per 100,000 live births). The largest hindrance in bringing down maternal deaths in Kenya is in those counties with maternal deaths above the national average. These counties include Mandera county, which has the highest mortality, at 3,795 deaths per 100,000 live births, this is followed by Wajir county and Turkana county. These counties have maternal mortality ratios of 1,683 and 1,594 respectively. Also, coastal counties and Nyanza regions also have a higher maternal mortality ratio. (NCPD & UNFPA, 2013).

The sustainable development goals (SDGs), aims at decreasing the global maternal mortality to less than 70 deaths per 100,000 livebirths by the year 2030. It is envisioned that no individual country will surpass an MMR of 140 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births (World Health Organization, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Project implementation is a complicated task to undertake considering the requirement of harmonized attention from all concerned stakeholders. Projects dealing with providing health solutions to communities, experience challenges of initiating effective projects that have benefits to the recipients and the organization. Health project implementation presents a very big challenge to health project managers and to the ultimate end, the entire stakeholders. In the study by Reilly (2015) on project management practices in public sector, lack of project management practice may lead to an average of 30% of the public sector projects non-performance. An assessment done by PricewaterhouseCoopers on project management practices suggests that use of project management practices increases the likelihood of project success (Price water house Coopers, 2014).

Studies done earlier on project implementation mostly concentrated on general projects being implemented in different areas such as the building and construction sector, development projects; banking sector, education and manufacturing organizations, however, little research has been done on projects evolving around health. Successful project implementation and outcome is depicted as the sole responsibility of project managers who are the major operational stakeholders. There has been a considerable challenge among health managers in initiating viable health projects that sustainably, effectively and efficiently deliver anticipated outcomes and also meet community expectations (Sapienza, 1997). In addition, health projects have been reported to terminate early as well as delayed in the implementation due to various implementation challenges. Health projects are mainly faced with reduced and delayed funding and majorly the operational stakeholders to provide skilful technology to counter the project challenges. A study conducted by Nyaguthii and Oyugi (2013) found out a low community participation in the identification, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring, resulting in a need to improve on the same considering the communities were the major stakeholders at the receiving end.

In the study by Muriithi and Crawford (2013) on project management in Africa, public organizations in developing countries are still struggling to appreciate and practice project management concepts, thus making the organizations and public miss the benefit of delivering projects on time, on budget and within scope. Several studies on stakeholder involvement in projects have been done around project implementation in information technology, software development areas and in civil construction but few have attempted to analyse the factors influencing the implementation of public funded government projects especially health projects while considering and zeroing on stakeholder involvement as a reliable variable affecting the maternal health projects. The research gap arises from the reason that there is scarce

literature referencing studies in health projects implementation on consideration of stakeholders' involvement which is unique in nature. When stakeholders are effectively involved as a project management practice it could be assumed to significantly aid on the success of health projects (Alias, Zawawi, Yusof & Aris, 2014). This study seeks to establish the Influence of Stakeholders' involvement on successful implementation of Linda Mama health project in Lurambi, Kakamega County; Kenya.

Objective of the Study

The study investigated the influence of stakeholders' involvement on implementation of Linda Mama health project in Lurambi, Kakamega County; Kenya. The study was guided by the following null hypothesis:

- H₁. Stakeholders' involvement has no significant influence on implementation of Linda Mama Health Project in Kakamega County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theory was advanced by Freeman (1980) and it shows a stakeholder as a person, group of people or an individual (supplier, shareholder, employee, customer or directors) with specific interest in a given firm. This theory maintains that a stakeholder can distress or be affected by the activities of the organization. The stakeholder theory proposes that any organization should accord much importance to the stakeholder, since without whom the organization would fail or stop to exist (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

Community members are stakeholders in community projects and it is important to include

them in projects activity from the beginning. Stakeholder's theory maintains that every person or group participating in the activities of a firm or organization, do so to obtain benefits, and that the precedence of the interest of all legitimate stakeholders is not self-evident (Donaldson, and Preston, 1995). The theory's main purpose is to create equilibrium.

Empowerment Theory

This theory proposes that for active implementation of health care projects there is need for a collaborative empowerment process that integrates; collaborative planning, governing, community action, capacity building and community led change (Fawcett, *et al.*, 1995). Fawcett, *et al.*, (1995) a proponent of the empowerment theory in the provision of health care concluded that, there is a corresponding influence that directs partnerships among different stakeholders in health care sector. Perkins and Zimmerman (1995), discussed that collaborative empowerment is a process that involves civil society organizations and other organizations to bring about collective institutional change that focusses on community concerns including health care provision (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

In embracing this theory, this study contends that collaborative partnerships are essential for effective implementation of maternal health care projects (Butterfoss, Goodman & Wandersman, 1993). It relates to study variable of how human resources distribution and stakeholder involvement positively influence the implementation process of maternal health care projects.

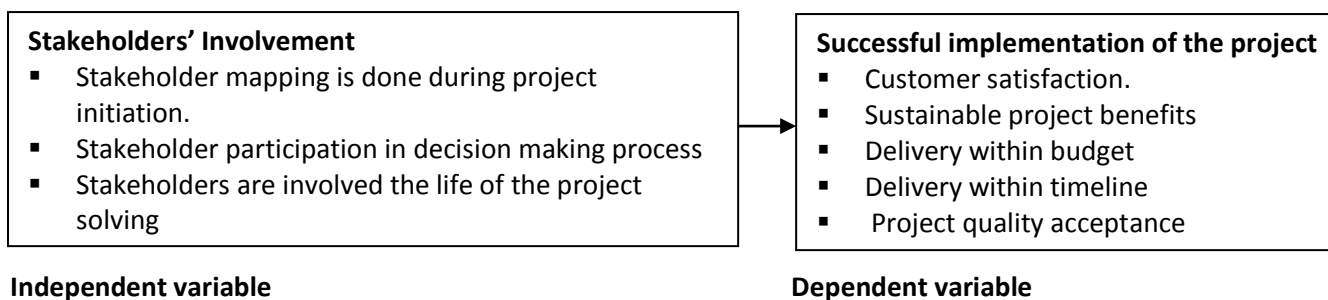


Figure 1: Conceptual framework (Source: Author)

METHODOLOGY

This research employed a descriptive survey research design in an effort to investigate the factors that determine effective maternal health project implementation. The study population consisted of all the Maternal and child health (MCH) care providers in Lurambi Sub County in Kakamega County. According to the Sub-County health management, Lurambi Sub- County had forty-four registered health facilities.

Purposive sampling was used to recruit the study participants. The inclusion criteria for the study was that one had to be a health service provider (nurses, doctors,) or a facility administrator (facility in-charges and hospital administrators) who had served in Lurambi Sub County in Kakamega County for at least two years or more. The sample size for this study was eighty-two respondents, in reference to purposive sampling for a health service provider (nurses, doctors,) or facility administrator (facility in-charges and hospital administrators) at facility implementing Linda Mama.

Data was collected using a questionnaire. The research instrument was developed to contain questions that are aligned towards achievement of objectives of the study. The questionnaire comprised of both closed and some open-ended questions. Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires and where it allowed face to face interviews in some cases for clarity.

The research questionnaires were administered randomly to 10% of the research respondents for pilot testing. Thus, pilot testing was conducted with

a sample of 9 respondents in Mumias West Sub-County, County Government of Kakamega

The quantitative data collected was analyzed by Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 24) where descriptive statistics was computed to help in describing and interpreting data in line with study objectives. For variable relationships, correlation and regression analysis was also examined. Analyzed data was presented by use of tables and in prose form. The Analytical model for the study took form of: $Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$

Where;

Y= Implementation of maternal Health project

α = Constant Term

β = Beta Coefficient –This measures how many standard deviations a dependent variable was change, per standard deviation increase in the independent variable.

X_1 = Stakeholders Involvement

ϵ = Error term

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Response rate indicated the total number of questionnaires that were filled and returned with complete responses against the number distributed by the researcher. For this study, the researcher disseminated 88 self-administered questionnaires to maternal and child health and maternity nurses in addition to healthcare managers in hospitals in Lurambi Sub-County in Kakamega County. Seventy eight completed questionnaires were successfully returned by the respondents. Hence a response rate of 89% was attained. According to Mugenda (2003), a response rate of above 50% is appropriate to carry out statistical reporting and a response rate

of over 70% is excellent. Thus, it was concluded that responses rate for the study was good for data analysis and interpretation of the study findings.

In the study, reliability was guaranteed through a piloted questionnaire that was subjected to a sample of nine respondents, who were not included in the study. The nine respondents were selected

from a different area other than Lurambi Sub County. From the study findings stakeholders' Involvement was as indicated in the table above. The average Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the study was above 0.79 indicating that the instrument was reliable. According to Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), a Cronbach coefficient above 0.70 or higher is recommended.

Table 1: Stakeholders Involvement and project implementation

STAKEHOLDERS ENGAGEMENT AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	Mean	SD
Stakeholders influence decision making and problem-solving processes during project implementation for Linda Mama project	3.97	0.90
Strategies of engaging stakeholders should be well arranged at the planning stage to avoid conflicts	3.82	0.90
Stakeholders influence decision making and problem-solving processes during project implementation for Linda.	3.84	0.94
Strategies of engaging stakeholders should be well arranged at the planning stage to avoid conflicts.	3.93	0.86
Stakeholders' engagement help to improve reporting and health project performance.	3.82	0.83
Does stakeholder participation lead to the identification of relevant problems in the community?	3.93	0.95
Is stakeholder mapping always done during project initiation?	3.69	0.75
Grand Mean	3.85	

As shown in Table 1, the respondents most strongly indicated that stakeholders influence decision making and problem-solving processes during project implementation for Linda Mama project (M=3.97, SD=0.90) and overwhelmingly agreed that strategies of engaging stakeholders should be well arranged at the planning stage to avoid conflicts (M=3.82, SD=0.90). The respondents indicated that stakeholders influence decision making and problem-solving processes during project implementation (M=3.84, SD=0.94); Further, they also strongly agreed that project strategies of engaging stakeholders should be well arranged at the planning stage to avoid conflicts (M=3.93, SD=0.86). The respondents were also in agreement that stakeholders' engagement helps to improve reporting and health project performance (M=3.82, SD=0.83). In addition, the respondents strongly agreed that stakeholder participation lead to the identification of relevant problems in the community (M=3.93, SD=0.95). Finally, they also indicated that stakeholder mapping was always

done during project initiation (M=3.69, SD=0.75). The grand mean was 3.85 indicating general agreement that project stakeholder management affected successful completion of projects. The Cronbach's Alpha was 0.75 indicating reliability of the responses. From the regression analysis, the coefficient of stakeholders engagement was 0.007 which indicated that stakeholder management positively affected successful implementation of government maternal health projects, more so Linda Mama project in Kakamega County. The finding concurred with Chinyio and Olomolaiye (2010) which stated that stakeholders can affect an organization functioning, goals, development and even its survival. The findings also agreed with those of Wanjiru (2016) who assessed the factors influencing effective implementation of health projects: A Case of Amref Health Africa in Kenya and established that there was a very strong effect of stakeholders on the implementation and performance of health projects.

Regression Analysis

Table 2: Regression Analysis

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	8.582	1.291		6.647	.000
Stakeholders Involvement and project Implementation	.233	.063	.131	3.698	0.017

It was deduced from the findings in Table 2 that Stakeholders' Involvement ($\beta = 0.233$, $\rho = 0.017$ considering that $0.000 < 0.05$) was influential on Implementation of maternal health project. This indicated that the dependent variable, that is, the Implementation of maternal health project would change by a corresponding number of standard deviations when the respective independent variables change by one standard deviation. The study therefore established that Stakeholders' involvement influences Implementation of the project.

Hypothesis Testing

H₁: The first null hypothesis for the study was that stakeholders have no influence on the implementation of Linda Mama health project in

Kakamega County. The hypothesis was tested using regression analysis. The criteria for rejecting the null the hypothesis was based on the p value of the regression analysis. If the p value is less than the specified level of significance (usually 0.05) then the null hypothesis is rejected. The results of the regression analysis in table 2, the calculated p-value was equal 0.017, which was less than the level of significance 0.05 hence the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that there exists a significant relationship between stakeholders' involvement and successful implementation of Linda Mama project in Kakamega County ($p=0.017 < 0.05$) since the value of significance (p-value) was less than 5%. Therefore, the study failed to accept H₁.

Table 3: Summary of the Study Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis	Comments
H ₀₁ . Stakeholders have no influence on the implementation of Linda Mama health project in Kakamega County.	Rejected

Discussion of the Findings

The study revealed that stakeholders' involvement has a great effect on the successful implementation of government maternal health projects. The study agreed with similar findings that were observed in Chinyio and Olomolaiye (2010) who asserted that stakeholders broadly affect an organization functioning, goals and even survival. The findings also concurred with Olander (2004) who states that stakeholders are important in the successful completion of a project because their refusal to continuously support the vision or objectives of the project leads to its failure. The study further agreed with the findings that stakeholder engagement is a

foundation that supports organization broader sustainability efforts to set strategic goals, implement action plans, and assess its performance (Beierle, 2012)

CONCLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that stakeholders influenced decision making and problem-solving processes during project implementation for Linda Mama project. The study revealed that strategies of engaging stakeholders should be well arranged at the planning stage to avoid conflicts during project implementation. The study established that stakeholders influence decision making and

problem-solving processes during project implementation. The study revealed that stakeholders' engagement helps to improve reporting and health project performance and implementation. The study also established that stakeholders mapping is always done during project initiation. Also, the study further found that stakeholders participation lead to the identification of relevant problems in the community.

The findings of this study confirmed that the conceptual framework discussed above and in summary the study concluded that stakeholder involvement has an influence on successful implementation of government maternal health projects

The study recommended that stakeholder's engagement and participation should be enhanced at all levels of health project implementation. This would encourage the implementation of project management since there will be little struggle from stakeholders and aid in user acceptance. This in turn will minimize the chances of health project failure, reduce project isolation and ensure project ownership by all stakeholders. The study also

recommended that during implementation of maternal health projects, the county government of Kakamega should ensure collaboration with all the stakeholders in the implementation of the health project and also, they should ensure that the main problem is selected among other community problems during the project initiation process. In addition, the study highly recommended that NHIF management and the county government of Kakamega should budget and on timely basis provide of funds for Linda Mama project implementation. This will help eliminate the potential of discontinuing the project for lack of resources and funds. Also, there is need to ensure there is facility autonomy and independent oversight in utilization of the funds.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the conclusions and findings of the study, further research should be conducted to investigate other determinant of successful implementation of government maternal health projects. Also, the study recommended future scholars to expand the scope in understanding determinants of successful implementation of government maternal health projects in other counties in the country.

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