



**DETERMINANTS OF SUSTAINABILITY OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROJECTS IN MACHAKOS COUNTY,
KENYA**

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Accepted: September 10, 2020

ABSTRACT

The study objective was to assess the determinants of sustainability of youth empowerment projects in Machakos County, Kenya; with the specific objectives of the study being to evaluate how project stakeholder engagement, project management skills, project funding and project scope management determines the sustainability of youth empowerment projects within Machakos County. The study was guided by stakeholder, skills, fund accounting, and control theories. A semi-structured self-administered questionnaire was used to collect primary data from project officers, managers and other key stakeholders within 73 youth empowerment programmes, which was boosted with secondary data sources. The data was analysed by qualitative and quantitative means using SPSS, with an OLS regression being done to ascertain the connection among the study variables. The study found that project management skills, stakeholders' engagement, project scope management, and project funding are strong determinants of project sustainability with the factors showing high correlation coefficients which were both positive and statistically significant. It was concluded that project management skills, stakeholders' engagement, project scope management, and project funding positively influences project sustainability. Improvements in these four spheres would lead to improvements in project sustainability. The study therefore recommended that future youth empowerment programmes should enhance their project sustainability by observing the four determinants, which is project management skills, stakeholders' engagement, project scope management, and project funding so as to improve on project performance and impact within the target beneficiaries. The study also suggested that organizations implementing youth empowerment programmes should invest more on researching the current trends in project management skills, stakeholders' engagement, project scope management, and project funding so as to realize effective and successful implementation of these practices within their organizations. The study suggested further research within more sectors in Kenya such as education, children welfare, wildlife and environmental conservation among others and within the region to confirm these findings in a different and wider context.

Key Words: Project Stakeholder Engagement, Project Management Skills, Project Funding, Project Scope Management

CITATION: Kasoli, K. M., & Mutiso, J. (2020). Determinants of sustainability of youth empowerment projects in Machakos County, Kenya. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 7(3), 112 – 132.

INTRODUCTION

While youth unemployment is a prevalent problem in the whole world, the state of affairs is even poorer in Kenya. This is the case because according to UNDP (2017), the youth constitutes to three out of every five unemployed Kenyans. To counter the high level of unemployment among the youth, governments have initiated quite a number of projects both at the County and national level in order to deal with this growing menace (Thairu, 2018). According to Martin (2018), the rate of youth unemployment continues to increase over the years and this not only result to despair but also disillusionment among the youth hence making them vulnerable to violence and criminal undertakings. Given this situation, it is therefore very crucial for every government to work towards reversing youth unemployment situation.

According to International Labor Organization (2017), in their Global employment trends for youth report, youth account for over 35% of the unemployed population globally. The unemployment rate marginally increased to 13.2% from 13% in 2017. In 2017, the projected total number of unemployed youth was 71.8 Million but in 2018 the number was expected to increase by 200,000 to reach 72 Million. Germany is one of the developed countries that has heavily capitalized in youth empowerment projects and has reaped big time. In less than a decade, Germany has invested more than \$ 1 billion in its youth initiatives so as to counter the level of unemployment. One of the key initiatives include football and VTCs. Germany vocational training system is work-based and highly productive with VTCs enrollment in 2017 reaching 1.3 million. According to Euler (2018), in 2017 youth unemployment rate plummeted to 6.4% compared with that of U.S. which stands at 9.5%, making Germany one of the high-yielding in global workforces. The Vocational training system supplies companies with highly skilled employees and provide a diversified and auspicious career options for youth, and fostering culture and society. Due to

these youth empowerment initiatives, Germany's GDP has also increased significantly (Euler, 2018).

According to Nnadozie (2018), unemployment of youth in Africa is a weightier hurdle than climate change. The total number rose from 28 Million in 2016 to 29 Million in 2017. According to ILO (2018), the estimated total number of youth in Africa is 226 Million, representing 20% of global youth population, and the number is projected to increase up to 42% by the year 2030. This then implies that the rate of youth unemployment may further increase if this menace isn't resolved. Nnadazie (2018), stresses that African countries lack a permanent solution to this problem.

In Kenya, numerous unemployment rate statistics released by different agencies cause public debate. According to UNDP annual report (2017), youth unemployment rate stands at 26.2%. The basic labor force report (2018), done by KNBS asserts that youth unemployment in Kenya is 11.4% for people aged between 15-34 years. The report further suggests that 86% of the unemployed population comprise of people younger than 35 years and that the 15-34 years' youth cohort represents 56% of the working population in Kenya. The unemployment rate is high due to lack of employable skills among the youth.

The Skills Gap analysis report by the government of Kenya in 2012 further indicates that the youth represents 75% of the total population and out of this only 39% get employed and the rest do not find their way into the job market. Majority of the unemployed youth live in the rural areas and due to scarce resources usually go to towns and cities to look for opportunities. Most of them usually end up in slum areas and are endangered to radicalization and recruitment into gangs (Oketch, 2017).

According to KNBS (2019), Machakos County has a total population of 1.4 Million people and out of that 34% (476,356) are youth aged 15 to 35. The KNBS report further asserts that only 27% of the residents of Machakos County have a secondary level of schooling and above. This therefore implies

that majority of the people in Machakos County lack employable skills and therefore experience a very big problem in securing a job. It is projected that 36% of the youth in Machakos County do not have jobs (KNBS, 2017). The unemployment level is very high in the rural areas due to reasons such as lack of education, lack of appropriate training, poverty and discriminatory development projects. These factors also affect the sustainability of youth empowerment projects. Other factors include mismanagement of funds and lack of enough funding.

The County government has also initiated various programs focusing on talent and sports development. The youth in Machakos County also engage in other non-agricultural activities such as carpentry, masonry and also working as boda boda operators. Despite the establishment of many youth empowerment projects, high youth unemployment rate still lingers due to some of the projects collapsing even before the end of their implementation period and some not able to meet their set objectives.

Statement of the Problem

Regardless of the fact that the logic behind establishment of youth empowerment programmes is to endow young people with employment skills, there are still intensified worries regarding overall youth unemployment rate. Makanga (2016), asserts that even though a high number of youth empowerment programmes are being initiated nationally, youth unemployment still lingers. The main rationale why youth empowerment projects are initiated is to instill skills and to empower financially the youth who involuntarily drop out of secondary or primary school. However, majority of the youth do not get jobs (Thairu, 2018).

According to UNDP (2017), 26% of the youth in Kenya are unemployed. The high unemployment rate among the youth begs the question as to why majority of the youth are not getting wage or self-employed despite the presence of youth empowerment programmes across the Country. It is

evident that both developing and developed countries such as Germany, Malaysia, and Japan underscore on youth empowerment programmes. For instance, through youth empowerment, Germany's youth unemployment rate plummeted from 9% to 6.4% (Euler, 2018). Currently in Kenya, youth empowerment projects are being overseen by the Ministry of Youth Affairs at the County level. Their main aim is to ensure that youth empowerment programmes are used as vehicles toward which the youth attain financial ability and competitive skills for recompensing self and/or wage employment. This also helps in reducing the number of youth migrating from rural to urban areas to look for jobs (Oketch, 2017).

However, despite the important roles youth empowerment plays, and more so on unemployment, there is not much academic inquiry on the topic, neither is there studies seeking empirical evidence of the determinants of programme sustainability. Nonetheless, for these endeavors to succeed, the youth empowerment projects must be sustainable so as to ensure they meet their cardinal objective, which is to enhance employability of young people (Thairu, 2018). Therefore, the sustainability determinants of youth empowerment projects need to be looked at and how they impact reduction of unemployment rate among the youth. This study focuses on Machakos County because 36% of the youth are jobless (KNBS, 2017). Majority of youth in Machakos County also lack employable skills as only 27% of the residents have a secondary education level. This is an absurd state of affairs as Machakos County has 75 government and donor funded youth empowerment projects (County Project Directorate). Despite having a high number of youth empowerment projects 25% of them have stalled and 30% were never implemented (Auditor General Report, 2017).

Few studies have been done such as Mugure (2019), who looked at effectiveness of socio-economic projects on youth empowerment. Wohore (2016), also looked at youth empowerment

support services. However, these studies have failed to analyze the determinants of sustainability of youth empowerment projects. It is against this backdrop that the researcher sought to assess the determinants of sustainability for youth empowerment projects in Machakos County, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of the study was to assess the determinants of sustainability for youth empowerment projects in Machakos County, Kenya. The study was guided by the following specific objectives;

- To evaluate the level of influence project stakeholder engagement has on the sustainability of youth empowerment projects in Machakos County, Kenya;
- To investigate the effect of project management skills on the sustainability of youth empowerment projects in Machakos County, Kenya;
- To establish the extent to which project funding affects sustainability of youth empowerment projects in Machakos County, Kenya; and,
- To assess the effects of project scope management on the sustainability of youth empowerment projects in Machakos County, Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory was established by Ian Mitroff an organizational theorist in 1983 in his book stakeholders of the organizational mind. Edward Freeman in the same year also released an article by the name stakeholder theory. According to Rose (2018), a stakeholder refers to anyone involved and invested in or affected by an organization or project. Stakeholders include employees, customers, local communities, government, suppliers and many more. This implies that stakeholders can either be inside or outside the

project because they are usually very interested in the project and its progress. Mostly, stakeholders sponsor a project and are very concerned with the projects successful completion. Stakeholders usually have the ability to influence everyone in the project including the senior management, staff, customers, project leaders and many more.

This theory informs the study in establishing the correlation between stakeholder engagement and sustainability of youth empowerment projects. The major strength of this theory is that it appreciates the advantages of stakeholder involvement in needs and solutions identification regarding their problems. It is very applicable to this study as it clearly shows how stakeholder engagement results to greater project benefits however it does not clearly explain the level of stakeholder engagement that should be done to ensure project sustainability.

Skills Theory

The skills theory was established by Katz in 1955. The skills approach provides a structure for discerning leadership on an inherent level. There is a distinct difference between the skills theory and trait theory. According to Richardson (2018), the trait theory only focusses on inborn capabilities of a leader to lead whereas the skills approach concentrates on the skills that a leader can develop over a certain period of time. Another key difference between the two is that in skills theory it is believed that leaders can develop competencies whereas in trait theory it is believed that leaders were born to lead and were born with competencies required for effective leadership. The skills theory is very important in project administration because it underscores the necessity for project managers to possess the right leadership skills and the capability to help others execute their roles successfully thus leading to successful implementation of projects (Richardson, 2018).

This theory informs the study in establishing the correlation between possession of project management skills and sustainability of youth empowerment projects. The strength of this theory

is that it underscores the benefits that come along when the project team is fully equipped with skills although it is usually very weak in prognostic value as it fails to elucidate how a particular skillset can influence performance.

Fund Accounting Theory

In 1947, Economist William Joseph Vatter established the fund accounting theory. According to William Vatter, fund accounting refers to an accounting system that underscores on accountability rather than profitability (Moonitz, 2016). Coleman (2017), affirms that funding involves the provision of financial resources such as money or other values such as time or effort so as to finance a project and this is usually done by individuals, companies or organizations. On the other hand, Zeng (2017), asserts that a fund is an accounting entity which has a self-balancing set of accounts with the ability of documenting cash usage, related liabilities and cash balances for the specific activities being executed and all this is done as per the project or organizational regulations. The fund theory defines assets differently as compared to other accounting theories. The fund accounting theory refers to assets as commodities obtained in order to grant a multiplication to their service potentials.

Coleman (2017), asserts that fund accountability is very key because it results to improved relations with funders and also enhances financial security. Fund accountability also lead to improved performance because all the activities are executed as per the set budget. In Kenya, if youth empowerment projects could execute their activities and purchase of commodities or payment of services in a transparent manner, they could be able to run for the planned implementation period and also achieve the set objectives. This would then make more youth to gain employable skills thus leading to low rates of unemployment among the youth. This theory greatly informed this study in helping to comprehend project funding and how factors such as source of funds, frequency of

funding and management of funds can influence project sustainability.

Control Theory

In the late 1960s Walter Reckless and Travis Hirschi came up with the control theory. Control theory puts emphasis on control mechanisms which should be foisted at all levels of an organization (Hirschi, 2017). According to Glad & Ljung (2018), there are different control mechanisms which organizations can use so as to ensure that the desired results are achieved. The control mechanisms include performance measurement mechanisms, organizational structure and behavioral controls such as organizational policies and norms. According to control theory, the results achieved must be in line with the goals and objectives of the overall organization.

Jagacinski and Flach (2018), asserts that a project or organization can use any type of a control system or even a combination of the control systems. Selection of the control system can be done influenced by either policies, structure, administrative information or norms of the project or organization. Control theory plays a very crucial role in performance management through output evaluation which assists in maintaining consistency with established parameters. This theory greatly informs this study in establishing the correlation between project control systems and sustainability of projects. This is because in project management, a control system can be very beneficial in terms of time management, budget control and scope management. A control system helps to identify any deviations which can then be managed in time thus enhancing sustainability of projects.

Pressure-State-Response Model

The Pressure State Response (PSR) model is perhaps the most commonly used indicator framework (MfE, 2002). It was originally developed for environmental statistics in Canada, prior to the wider adoption of the concept of Sustainable Development (Pinter et al, 2017). PSR was adopted by the OECD in 1991 for use in environmental

indicator reports, and has since been modified and developed in various ways to better account for

other aspects of sustainability. The PSR model is presented as per Figure 1.

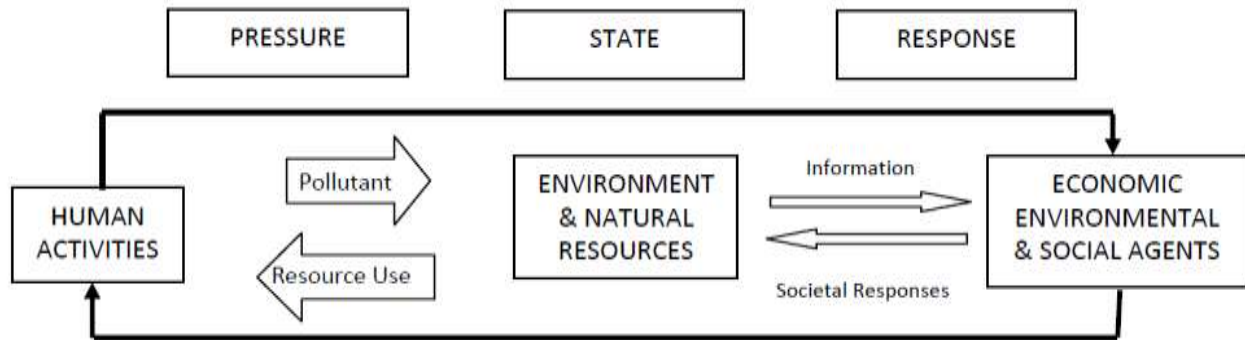


Figure 1: Pressure-State-Response Model of Project Sustainability

The PSR model has been simplified to a five-step process (five indicator types) by (Pinter et al, 2017) as to include: human activity or natural stressor - there could be one of two types of stress: human activity such as economic, population or industrial stress; or natural events such as earthquakes, floods or droughts; pressure (or driving force) - there are various pressures that can be imposed on the environment – for example pollution of air, water, and land; release of hazardous wastes; loss of vegetation and biodiversity; and loss of soil (the

term driving force allows for non-human stressors as well such as natural events); state (or quality or condition) -this refers to the state or condition of the environment (economic, social, natural), as measured by indicators; socio-economic impact - this change in environmental quality or state has an impact on social, cultural and economic values of humans; and, policy response - government agencies and the private sector can respond to changes in environmental quality by implementing policy or taking other actions (Segnestam, 2019).

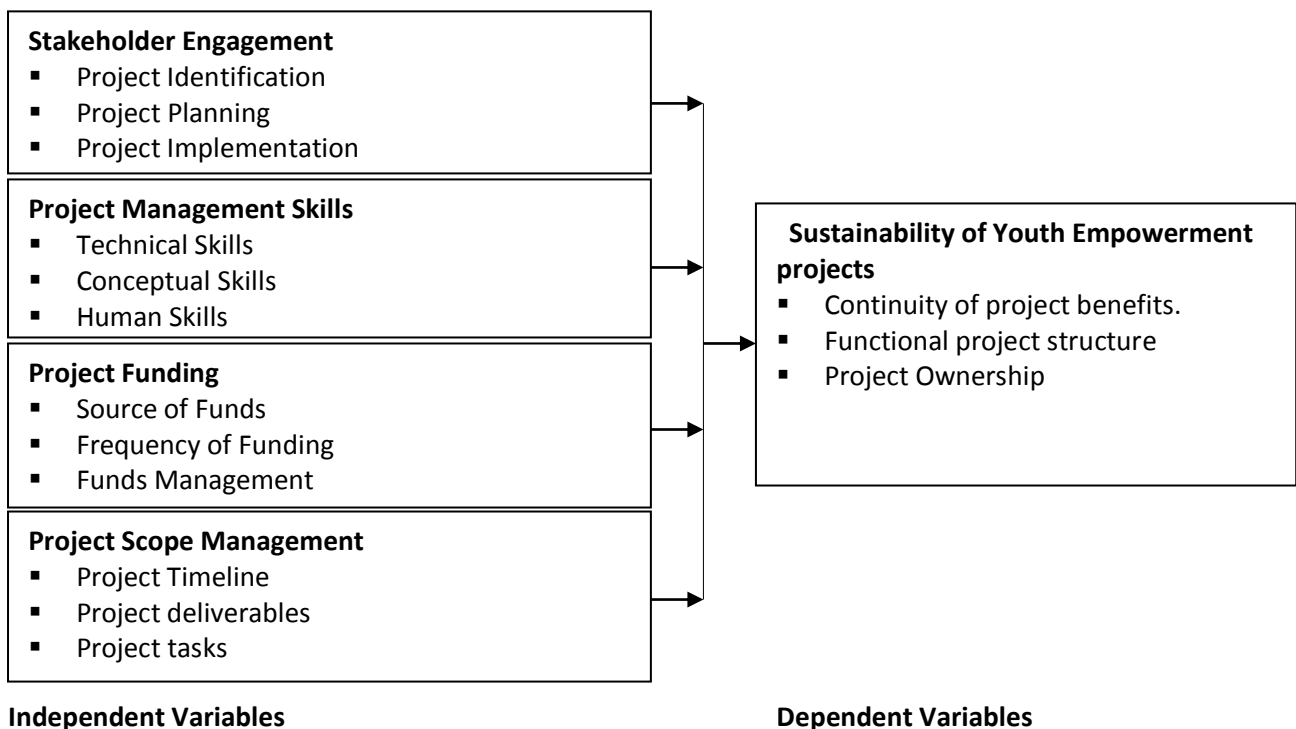


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Empirical Review

Stakeholder engagement is a key factor that can impact sustainability of youth empowerment projects. A number of studies have point out that engaging stakeholders has a positive effect on the implementation of projects. Eric (2016), through his study asserts that stakeholder involvement greatly determines whether a project is sustainable or not. According to Eskerod et al., (2016), lack of managing stakeholder's expectations can cause serious problems such as disagreements and lack of resources which in turn can lead to project closure. Eskerod further reiterates that stakeholder engagement should be done throughout the entire project life cycle.

Bourne (2016), puts emphasis on the need of having proper communication between the project leadership and all the stakeholders. The study also highlights that stakeholder communication should be exercised through meetings and regular reporting. Through this, the project management can be able to know the stakeholder's personal agendas, perceptions, requirements, concerns and expectations which can impact on the outcome of the project. Mok, Shen and Yang (2019), looked at the value of stakeholder engagement and management in the construction industry, where he argued that in construction, it is crucial to have a supporting apparatus that not only assists in collaboration between parties but also ensure effective communication. It is also important to ensure that both contractors and project managers work closely together to manage stakeholders.

Project management skills also determines whether a project is sustainable or not. According to Kearns et al., (2016), problem solving skills is the ability to not only anticipate problems but also to provide solutions to those problems and to come up with mitigation strategies A study done by Manazar (2017), indicates that project managers should have some soft leadership skills for them to properly manage a project, which comprises good communication skills, coordination skills, interpersonal skills, and problem solving skills.

Northouse (2018), asserts that it is imperative for project managers to have interpersonal skills because it enables them to be able to motivate other staff. It also enables them to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of their team members thus being able to capitalize on them. This in turn enhances the success of the project. Brierre (2015), puts weight on the necessity for project managers to possess coordination skills. Coordination skills refers to the ability of the project manager to deal with issues outside and inside the organization and developing cordial relationship with fellow team members. This enables the staff to work as a team to achieve set objective.

Numerous studies have revealed that sustainability of youth empowerment projects is greatly influenced by the level of financial management. Some studies done in India have underscored on the need for project managers/leaders to make other members understand financial records. To avoid skirmishes, distrust and misunderstandings it is also crucial to elucidate the financial records to the members who are less educated. The managers also need to manage the funds well by accounting for every single coin and not misappropriating funds. If this issues are not well taken care of, the sustainability of projects is at stake (Swilling, 2016).

According to Berechman (2018), all stakeholders should be part of every financial decision making process so as to enhance the success of the project. Coleman (2017), asserts that the determinants of project sustainability are both internal and external factors. He puts emphasis on adequate financing, excellent financial management and proper project planning as the key aspects that determine project sustainability. According to the European Regional Development Fund report (2015), lack of prudent financial management results to failure of many projects due to embezzlement of funds. It is therefore crucial to have a sound project financial management which helps prevent friction with the project donor or stakeholders. This can work well by coming up with a well-structured set of rules and transparent reporting which should be planned for

even before the project begins. The financial management should supply the correct information to the donor and stakeholders when needed (Coleman, 2017).

According to Kerzner (2017), project scope management plays a key role by ensuring all the planned project work is completed within the specified period of time and budget. A study done by Richardson (2018), indicated that poor project scope definition and management largely affects performance of construction projects. The study is in consonance with Heldman's affirmation that poor project scope management causes project delays and rework thus resulting to poor quality products (Heldman, 2018).

Project scope should be well defined and managed regardless of the project size. Kerzner (2017), asserts that project scope management is very key has it influences other project aspects such as cost, time and quality and this in turn strongly influences the performance of the project. For projects to avoid delays and cost overruns it is also vital for them to determine what scope to outsource. This should only apply if the project management feels they can't be able to do the job within the specified period of time and also if they lack the knowledge or expertise of doing it.

Martens & Carvalho (2016), did a summary of literatures and established that project sustainability is very key as it ensures project's impact continues far into the future. This implies that ensuring sustainability of youth empowerment projects may result in more youths gaining new wage/self-employment. Martens and Carvalho (2016), further asserts that there is need for a good leadership to be in place in order for sustainability to be achieved. Effective and visionary leaders should plan for project sustainability and work closely with the community and various stakeholders towards achieving it.

Mavi and Standing (2018), asserts that some of the critical success factors of project sustainability include having partnerships and collaborations with

other programs and government agencies. It is important for projects to establish connections with other projects during the early stages and to strengthen it throughout the entire project life cycle. One should ensure strong partnerships by engaging with those affected by your project, those interested in the objectives of your project and those that can contribute crucial resources and support. Swilling (2016), affirms that collaboration and partnerships can assist in sustaining the efforts of a program in a very big way. According to Mavi & Standing (2018), insists that employing marketing skills and efficient communication to notify others about your program successes and goals can help create a base of support that can sustain your program.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey design to evaluate the determinants of sustainability of youth empowerment projects. The researcher targeted 75 youth empowerment projects. This study collected primary data by use of a structured questionnaire. Seven youth empowerment projects were subjected to a pilot study and the results were used to enhance the data collection tools in the overall study findings. After the data collection process, a rigorous check was done to ensure data completeness. The data was then carefully coded and entered using SPSS for analysis. A regression analysis was done to measure the variable's level of significance. A ranking of the variables on how it greatly affects the dependent variables was also done. The multiple regression model for this study was as below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon$$

Where: Y = sustainability of youth empowerment projects (dependent variable);

β_0 = constant coefficient of intercept

X_1 = Stakeholder Engagement (independent variable)

X_2 = Project management skills (independent variable)

X_3 = Project Funding (independent variable)

X_4 = Project Scope Management (independent variable)
 $\beta_1... \beta_4$ = regression coefficient of four variables
 ϵ = Error term.

FINDINGS

Descriptive Outcomes

The study collected data that was able to highlight the state of various determinants of project sustainability within youth empowerment projects to inform the state of project sustainability, as well as the practices adopted in regard to stakeholder engagement, project management skills, project funding and project scope; all of which could help identify the determinants of project sustainability in youth empowerment programmes at Machakos County. Analyzing this data by use of descriptive statistics where frequencies, percentages, mean values, and standard deviation helped in highlighting the state of these assessed constructs. The outcomes of this descriptive analysis as undertaken in the study are presented in this section.

Stakeholders Engagement Practices in Youth Empowerment Programmes

A look at the state of stakeholder engagement within the studied youth empowerment programmes was undertaken with a view of bringing out the ratings of the various stakeholder engagement factors. The study required respondents to rate their level of application of stakeholder engagement practices on a five point Likert scale where 1 presents 'very small level', 2

presents 'small level'; 3 presents 'moderate level', 4 presents 'great level' and 5 presents 'very great level'.

The study revealed that general look at the youth empowerment projects revealed that they rated their application of various stakeholder engagement practices at a moderate level (mean 3.488), though a slight majority of projects apply the practices at high (29.3%) and very high (21.6%) levels. This therefore shows that the youth employment projects do apply stakeholder engagements with 'stakeholders' involvement in formulating annual project sustainability plans' (mean 3.712) being the most applied practice, followed by 'beneficiaries' involvement in needs and solutions identification regarding their problems' (mean 3.507). The other stakeholder engagement practices include: 'all stakeholders fully understand project implementation guidelines and during project commissioning the stakeholders are given all the guiding principles' (mean 3.438); 'stakeholders are involved in project identification, selection, planning and implementation' (mean 3.397); and, the lowest rating was reported as 'the project applies a participatory approach to ensure cost sharing of project activities' (mean 3.384). All these outcomes showed that though majority of the youth empowerment projects applied the stakeholder management practices to a great extent, a significant proportion seldom applied these strategies. The outcomes were presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Application of stakeholder engagement practices in youth empowerment

Stakeholders' Engagement	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev.
Beneficiaries are involved in needs and solutions identification regarding their problems	73	2.7%	21.9%	26.0%	20.5%	28.8%	3.507	1.203
The project management involves stakeholders in formulating annual project sustainability plans	73		13.7%	15.1%	57.5%	13.7%	3.712	0.874
All stakeholders fully understand project implementation guidelines and during project commissioning the stakeholders are given all the	73	5.5%	5.5%	38.4%	41.1%	9.6%	3.438	0.943

guiding principles

Stakeholders are involved in project identification, selection, planning and implementation.

The project applies a participatory approach to ensure cost sharing of project activities

Average	73	3.8%	17.8%	28.2%	29.3%	21.6%	3.488	1.095
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Level of Project Management Skills in Youth Empowerment Programmes

The study further looked at the state of project management skills within the youth empowerment programmes where the ratings of the various project management skills were enquired. The respondents were required to rate their level of application of various project management skills on a five point Likert scale where 1 presents 'very small level', 2 presents 'small level'; 3 presents 'moderate level', 4 presents 'great level' and 5 presents 'very great level'. The outcomes of this undertaking are presented in Table 2. The survey found that in general, project management skills are observed to a moderate level (mean 3.463) among the studied youth empowerment projects, with majority of the projects rating their project management skills as being at 'great level' – 4, by 36.5% of the respondents, while the respondents that gave a 'very great level' – 5 rating, being 16.0%; 'moderate level' – 3 rating, 28.3%; 'small level' – 2 rating were

16.2%; and those with 'very small level' - 1 rating were 4.5%.

The average ratings were observed to be very close to each other for the specific project management skills with the most common project management skill was the one regarding 'project resources being managed appropriately' (mean 3.699), with the next highly rated skills being 'ensuring transparency in project procurement processes' (mean 3.493), 'possession of skills for auditing and budgeting' (mean 3.425); 'project team possesses conceptual, human and technical skills' (mean 3.397); 'the project team possess sufficient project management skills' (mean 3.384); and, 'the project stakeholders were contented with management skills of the project staff' (mean 3.384). These ratings indicated that project management skills were neither low, nor exceptionally high except for a small proportion of the youth empowerment programmes.

Table 2: Observation of project management skills in youth empowerment programmes

Project Management Skills	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev.
The project team possess sufficient project mngt skills	73	1.4%	27.4%	30.1%	13.7%	27.4%	3.384	1.198
The project stakeholders are content with management skills of the project staff	73	6.8%	2.7%	42.5%	41.1%	6.8%	3.384	0.922
The project team possesses conceptual, human and technical skills	73		28.8%	30.1%	13.7%	27.4%	3.397	1.175
Project resources are managed appropriately	73		15.1%	13.7%	57.5%	13.7%	3.699	0.893
Project managers possess skills for auditing and budgeting	73	2.7%	8.2%	39.7%	42.5%	6.8%	3.425	0.848
The project manager makes sure that there is transparency in the procurement processes	73	6.8%	15.1%	13.7%	50.7%	13.7%	3.493	1.12
Total	73	4.5%	16.2%	28.3%	36.5%	16.0%	3.463	1.026

Level of Project Funding within Youth Empowerment Programmes

A look at the level of project funding activities within the youth empowerment programmes revealed the ratings of the various project funding indicators, as highlighted in the outcomes presented in Table 3. The respondents were required to rate their level of application of various project management skills on a five point Likert scale where 1 presents 'very small level', 2 presents 'small level'; 3 presents 'moderate level', 4 presents 'great level' and 5 presents 'very great level'. It was observed that majority of the studied youth empowerment programmes rated their funding status at 4 'great level' (35.9%), with another significant proportion rating their funding status as being 5 'very great level' (21.1%). It was further observed that only 20.9% of the respondents rated their funding status as being either 1 'very small level' or 2 'small level', with the rest of the respondents rating their funding as 3 'moderate level' (24.1%). The average rating of funding within

the YEPs in the study area was found to be 3.562, an indication that the overall rating for funding among the studied YEPs lay between the 'moderate' (3) and 'great' (4) levels.

A look at the various factors informing of funding status within the studied projects revealed that the highest rated indicator was 'funds are received on a reliable frequency hence high chances for sustainability' (mean 4.00), followed by 'the project has adequate financial mechanisms to control project funds' (mean 3.712); 'stakeholders participate in resource allocation meetings for projects activities' (mean 3.397); 'there are adequate financing mechanisms in your project' (mean 3.370); and, 'the beneficiary community commits resources to boost project continuity after closure' (mean 3.329). These ratings indicate that except one that was rated on average at the 'great' level, the other indicators of funding are mostly rated at the 'moderate' level of observation or application among the studied YEPs.

Table 3: Funding status in youth empowerment programmes

Project Funding	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation
There are adequate financing mechanisms in your project	73	2.7%	26.0%	30.1%	13.7%	27.4%	3.37	1.219
Stakeholders participate in	73		28.8%	30.1%	13.7%	27.4%	3.397	1.175
The beneficiary community commits resources to boost project continuity after closure	73	8.2%	6.8%	37.0%	39.7%	8.2%	3.329	1.015
Funds are received on a reliable frequency hence high chances for sustainability	73	4.1%	4.1%	8.2%	54.8%	28.8%	4	0.9574
The project has adequate financial mechanisms to control project funds	73		13.7%	15.1%	57.5%	13.7%	3.712	0.874
Average	73	5.0%	15.9%	24.1%	35.9%	21.1%	3.562	1.048

Project Scope Management Practices in Youth Empowerment Projects

The study further looked at the level of application of various project scope management practices within the studied YEPs, where the ratings of the various scope management practices were assessed

and the outcomes of this undertaking were as presented in Table 4. The respondents were required to rate their level of application of various scope management practices on a five point Likert scale where 1 presents 'very small level', 2 presents

'small level'; 3 presents 'moderate level', 4 presents 'great level' and 5 presents 'very great level'.

The study found that the highest rated scope management practice within the studied YEPs, was 'project scope is well defined and the project has a well-defined scope management plan' (mean 3.945), with the rest of the scope indicators being observed to have very closely related scores, such as 'periodic scope changes made are well managed' (mean 3.480); 'there is efficient annual scope validation' (mean 3.438); 'the project deliverables are achieved within the specified period of time'

(mean 3.384); and 'there are periodic reports generated and shared on the status of the project scope' (mean 3.945). The overall look at the scope management practices revealed an average rating of 3.512 indicating that the studied YEPs reported their scope management practices to lie between 'moderate' (3) and 'great' (4) levels, with the proportion of those YEPs that rated their scope management practices at 'great level' being the highest at 37.5% followed by those who rated their scope management at 'moderate level' being 28.2% of the studied YEPs.

Table 4: Project Scope Management Practices in Youth Empowerment Programmes

Project Scope	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation
Project scope is well defined and the project has a well-defined scope management plan	73	4.1%	6.8%	6.8%	54.8%	27.4%	3.945	0.998
There is efficient annual scope validation	73		28.8%	27.4%	15.1%	28.8%	3.438	1.19
There are periodic reports generated and shared on the status of the project scope	73	5.5%	8.2%	43.8%	34.2%	8.2%	3.315	0.941
Periodic scope changes made are well managed	73	6.8%	9.6%	26.0%	43.8%	13.7%	3.48	1.069
The project deliverables are achieved within the specified period of time	73	2.7%	12.3%	37.0%	39.7%	8.2%	3.384	0.907
Average	73	4.8%	13.2%	28.2%	37.5%	17.3%	3.512	1.021

The State of Project Sustainability in Youth Empowerment Programmes

To understand and inform the study dependent variable, the study looked at the state of project sustainability within the studied YEPs, where the ratings of the various sustainability indicators were assessed and outcomes of this undertaking were presented in Table 5. Respondents were required to rate the state of various sustainability indicators on a five point Likert scale highlighting level of agreement with various statements representing indicators, with 1 for 'strongly disagree', 2 presents 'disagree'; 3 presents 'neutral', 4 presents 'agree' and 5 presents 'strongly agree'.

An assessment of the status of various project sustainability indicators revealed that having

'continuity of project benefits even after project closure' (mean 3.507) – where majority of the respondents rated the indicator as 'agree' – 4 (43.8%) and significant others were rated as 'neutral' - 3 (27.4%). The respondents rated having 'project ownership by all the stakeholders' at a mean rating of 3.452 out of a possible maximum of 5 points, which is a relatively high rating, while the least rated sustainability status indicator was having 'a functional project structure' with an average rating of 3.397. At an overall level, project sustainability of YEPs revealed an average rating of 3.452, with majority of the respondents rating project sustainability at 4 (31.1%) and 3 (30.1%). The study therefore confirms that the status of project sustainability within the studied YEPs can be

said to be moderate, with only 49.8% of the respondents having a high rating of their project sustainability status.

Table 5: Project sustainability status in youth empowerment programmes

Project Sustainability	N	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Deviation
There is continuity of project benefits even after project closure	73	5.5%	9.6%	27.4%	43.8%	13.7%	3.507	1.029
There is a functional project structure	73	4.1%	12.3%	37.0%	32.9%	13.7%	3.397	1.01
There is project ownership by all the stakeholders	73		28.8%	26.0%	16.4%	28.8%	3.452	1.191
Average		4.8%	16.9%	30.1%	31.1%	18.7%	3.452	1.077

Inferential Outcomes

Correlation between Study Variables

The study assessed the relationship between the study variables, hence the need to undertake a correlation analysis. The correlation coefficients of the study variable were as presented below. The study observed that all the assessed relationships between the study variables were positive with statistically significant correlation coefficients at 95% confidence level. The relationship between project sustainability and stakeholder engagement (r 0.632; p 0.000), project management skills (r 0.593; p 0.000), project funding (r 0.745; p 0.000), and project scope management (r 0.855; p 0.000), is high with project scope management indicating the largest relationship with project sustainability, followed by project funding, stakeholder engagement, and the least coefficient was recorded for project management skills. This confirmed that the independent variables (stakeholder engagement, project management skills, project funding, and project scope management) have a

positive relationship with the dependent variable (project sustainability).

The study further looked at the correlation between pairs of the independent variables where it was found that there was high and statistically significant correlations between stakeholder engagement and project scope management (r 0.751); stakeholder engagement and project funding (r 0.703); stakeholder engagement and project management skills (r 0.743); project management skills and project funding (r 0.725); project management skills and project scope management (r 0.699); project scope management and project funding (r 0.740). These correlation relationships were found to be very high, though none of these qualify as indicators of autocorrelation problem since the correlation is lower than 0.80 which was the threshold offered by Saunders, *et al.* (2016) as the correlation coefficient beyond which autocorrelation problem should be flagged.

Table 6: Correlation statistics between key study variables

	Stakeholder Engagement	Project Management Skills	Project Funding	Project Scope Management	Project Sustainability
Stakeholder Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	73			

Project Management Skills	Pearson Correlation	.743**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	73	73			
Project Funding	Pearson Correlation	.703**	.725**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	73	73	73		
Project Scope Management	Pearson Correlation	.751**	.699**	.740**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		
	N	73	73	73	73	
Project Sustainability	Pearson Correlation	.632**	.593**	.745**	.855**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	73	73	73	73	73

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

Regression Analysis Outcomes

The regression model summary outcomes presented consisted of the correlation coefficient (R), the coefficient of determination (R^2), the adjusted coefficient of determination and the standard error estimate. The correlation coefficient for the regression model was observed to be very high at 0.866, which revealed presence of a link between the independent study variables and the independent variables. The coefficient of determination was observed to be significantly high ($R^2= 0.749$), which indicated that the four independent variables: stakeholder engagement, project management skills, project funding, and project scope management, are able to explain 74.9% of the variability in project sustainability. Therefore, quite a significant proportion of project sustainability is determined by the four sustainability determinants of stakeholder engagement, project management skills, project funding, and project scope management.

Further outcomes from OLS regression is the ANOVA showing the comparison between the residual and the regression sum of squares from the

mean square and the statistical significance of the regression model. The ANOVA analysis revealed that the relationship between project sustainability and stakeholder engagement, project management skills, project funding, and project scope management is statistically significant ($p<0.05$), at 95% confidence level, with the sum of squares and mean squares showing considerably different regression and residual values, hence confirming existence of a relationship between the two factors. This confirms that the regression model shows a statistically significant relationship between the dependent and the independent variables, with statistically significant ANOVA model leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis stated as: stakeholder engagement, project management skills, project funding, and project scope management have no influence on project sustainability (Reject H_0 when $p<0.05$).

Further regression analysis outcomes were offered in the regression model coefficients and their significance levels (Sig.). The output indicates the coefficient for each of the four sustainability determinants including stakeholder engagement,

project management skills, project funding, and project scope management as determinants of project sustainability. As presented, the study found that project sustainability is affected by various factors such as stakeholder engagement, project management skills, project funding, and project scope management, with the sustainability determinants indicating positive and statistically significant coefficients confirming that the coefficients are significantly different from zero. The statistically significant factors were 'stakeholder engagement' with a coefficient of 0.168 (p=0.021), 'project management skills' with a coefficient of 0.295 (p=0.012), 'project funding practices' with a coefficient of 0.580 (p=0.028), and 'project scope management' with a coefficient of 0.807 (p=0.000). However, the regression model constant – 0.165 (p=0.551) was found to have a

non-statistically significantly coefficient indicating that it is not significantly different from zero, an indication that they have negligible contribution in the model, and hence ought to be dropped from the regression model. Therefore, the regression model can be reconfigured as:

$$Y = 0.168 X_1 + 0.295 X_2 + 0.580 X_3 + 0.807 X_4 + \epsilon$$

$$PS = 0.168 SE + 0.295 PMS + 0.580 PF + 0.807 PSM + \epsilon;$$

(Where PS/X₁ is Project Sustainability, PMS/X₂ is Project Management Skills, PF/X₃ is Project Funding; and PSM/X₄ is Project Scope Management)

The regression analysis therefore revealed that the four factors which includes stakeholder engagement, project management skills, project funding, and project scope management have a direct and significant effect on project sustainability of youth empowerment programmes.

Table 7: Regression model summary statistics

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.866 ^a	0.749	0.735	0.44556

a. Predictors: (Constant), Project Scope, Project Skills, Stakeholder Engagement, Project Funding

Table 8: ANOVA Outcomes

ANOVA Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	40.36	4	10.09	50.826	.000 ^b
	Residual	13.5	68	0.199		
	Total	53.86	72			

a. Dependent Variable: Project Sustainability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Project Scope, Project Management Skills, Stakeholder Engagement, Project Funding

Table 9: Regression model coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.165	0.276		0.6	0.551
	Stakeholder Engagement	0.168	0.13	0.183	2.292	0.021
	Project Management Skills	0.295	0.183	0.277	2.612	0.012
	Project Funding	0.58	0.258	0.577	2.244	0.028
	Project Scope Management	0.807	0.139	0.701	5.824	0

a. Dependent Variable: Project Sustainability

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Faced with dwindling prospects of project sustainability within youth empowerment

programmes and poor research backing in this area, this study sought to undertake an empirical assessment of the determinants of project

sustainability within YEPs in a bid to fill this research gap. The study was anchored upon the propositions of stakeholder theory, skills theory, fund accounting theory, and control theory, which helped in the conceptualization of the broad concept of project sustainability which was operationalized into stakeholder's engagement, project management skills, project funding and project scope management.

The study concluded that the youth empowerment programmes employ the various determinants of project sustainability in their projects such as stakeholder's engagement, project management skills, project funding and project scope management, albeit at a moderate level, which aligned with the level of project sustainability observed among the studied projects, also at moderate level. The four factors were employed within the YEPs at nearly similar ratings, highest rated factor being project funding (mean 3.562), followed by project scope management (mean 3.512), stakeholders engagement (mean 3.488), and the least was project management skills (mean 3.463). A close rating for the state of project sustainability within the projects was realized with a mean rating of 3.452 in a 5 point Likert scale.

The study further found that the four factors have a great link with project sustainability, all being observed to show high correlation coefficients, which can be ranked from highest to lowest as project scope management, project funding, stakeholder engagement, and the lowest link was observed to be for project management skills. All the four factors were confirmed to have an effect on project sustainability, with the factors being able to explain a very high proportion (74.9%) of the variabilities in project sustainability. The study therefore concluded that the four factors are determinants of project sustainability within YEPs. The four factors including stakeholders' engagement, project management skills, project funding, and project scope management were confirmed to have positive and statistically significant influence on project sustainability;

confirming that improvements in either of the four factors would lead to improvements in project sustainability. The study concluded that stakeholders' engagement, project management skills, project funding, and project scope management influences project sustainability, and therefore can be considered as part of the determinants of project sustainability in YEPs.

The study recommended that more practical application research needs to be done to assess the extent to which the consideration of these factors can be effective in fostering project sustainability, so as to guide future YEPs on ways they could apply these factors to maximize programme sustainability, hence realizing the solution of the low level of project sustainability observed among the YEPs in Kenya.

The study observed that project stakeholder management and especially engagement strategies offer enormous space for creative, interesting and effective solutions which appear limited only by the cost, time and other constraints under which projects operate. Both projects and their stakeholders can benefit immensely from well-chosen stakeholder management and engagement strategies and this is not only ethically desirable but, if pursued by projects systematically, wholeheartedly and professionally, and is sustained over time, can bring about attainment of the best possible overall situation namely, a 'win-win' situation – for both of them. The study recommended that stakeholder engagement offers tremendous practical significance for projects which undoubtedly could benefit improved sustainability levels in future.

The role of the project manager in the realization of sustainability requires adequate competencies. The study found that the concept of project management competencies is vital to the project management profession, as well-developed standards for project management competencies are available from two of the world's leading professional organizations. The study concluded that projects rely upon project management

competencies in implementing project sustainability measures in organizations. The study recommended that the observed project management competence gap needs to be remedied, by providing guidance for the addition of new competencies to the standards of project management competencies needed in the role of implementing sustainability initiatives. Our analyses, recommends further development of project management competencies for improved project sustainability.

The study found that the level of project funding is a key debilitating factor for project sustainability of the YEPs. The study therefore recommended that project managers and other high level stakeholders within the YEPs should look at improving the level of project funding, increasingly improving the application of project funding as they have potential of improving project sustainability as well as project performance. The study recommends that organizations should invest more on research of current funding trends in while implementing continuous financial management skill development and infrastructure that support this key aspect of project implementation so as to ensure effective and successful implementation of the youth empowerment projects in a more sustainable manner.

This study revealed that there is a significant impact of project scope management practices on project sustainability, with aspects such as project timeline, deliverables and tasks coming out as key areas of consideration. The study confirmed that enhancing application of project scope management practices can significantly impact project sustainability by enhancing continuity of project benefits, functional project structure, and project ownership. The study

recommended that social development organizations should therefore make it mandatory for scope management practices to be employed in the implementation of all youth empowerment projects.

Suggestions for Further Studies

This study was undertaken targeting the youth empowerment programmes within the geographical scope of Machakos County. The study therefore suggests further study testing the relationships captured in this study within a sample of diverse project management organizations – such as those managing projects within agricultural sectors, education sector, children welfare or environmental management, as well as within varying geographical set-ups or contexts in order to further understand these outcomes within a different situation and confirm these findings.

The study also noted some observations by some of the past researchers indicating possible existence of some more determinants, an issue that was confirmed by the model coefficient of determination indicating that the model can explain 74.9% of the variabilities in programme sustainability, hinting at the possibilities of presence of other determinants. The study therefore observed the need to assess the moderating and intervening variables in this model, which will not only enhance the conceptual rigor, but also enhance understanding of the relationship. The study suggested that future researchers should create a more expanded model integrating mediating and moderating factors to further guide empirical work in less studied contexts, so as to establish more determinants of project sustainability and eventually help in improving performance and impact.

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