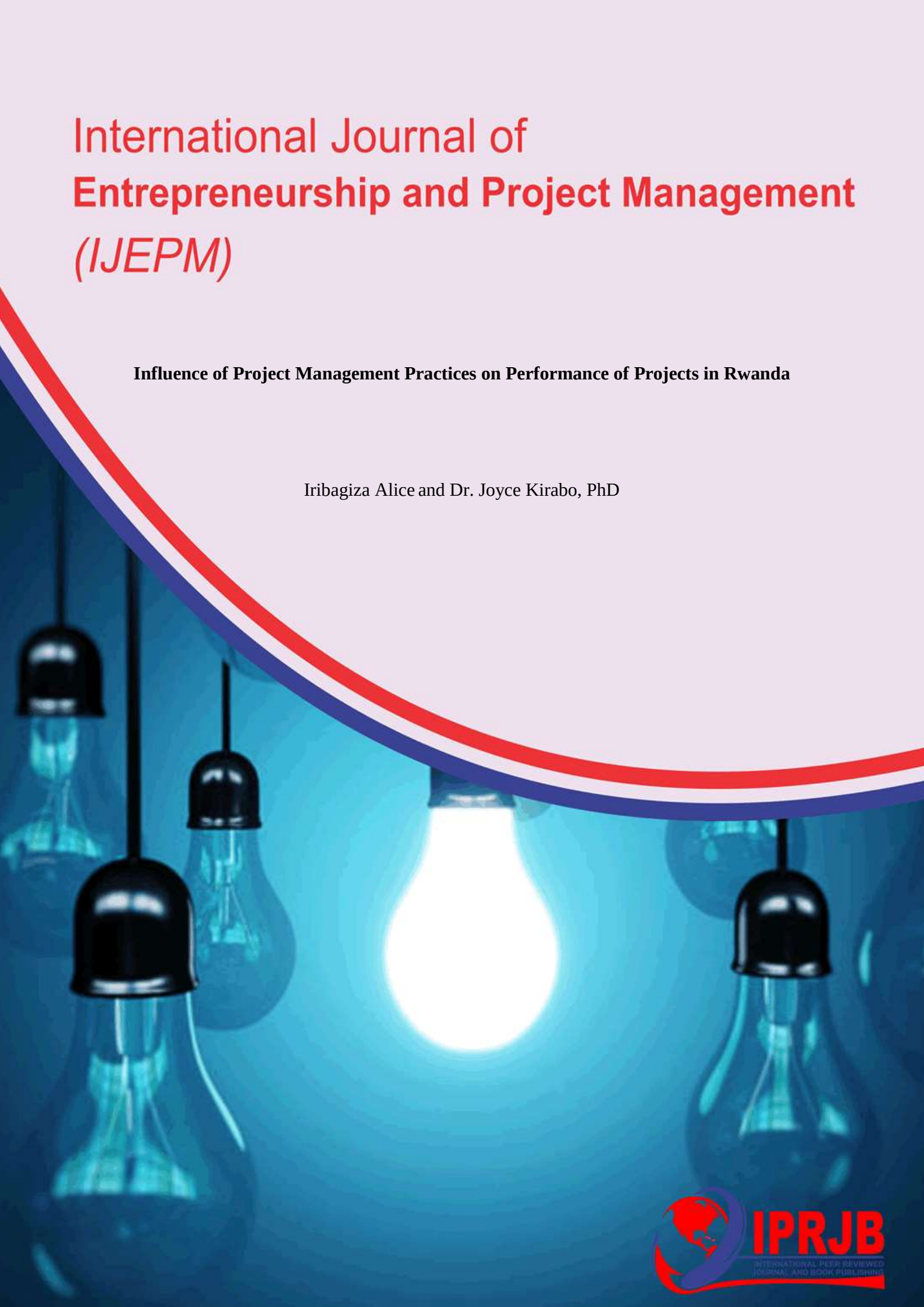
International Journal of
Entrepreneurship and Project Management
(IJEPM)

Influence of Project Management Practices on Performance of Projects in Rwanda

Iribagiza Alice and Dr. Joyce Kirabo, PhD



IPRJB
INTERNATIONAL PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL AND BOOK PUBLISHING

International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Project Management
ISSN 2518-2838(Online)
Vol.9, Issue 4, No.3. pp 36 - 54, 2024

www.iprjb.org

Influence of Project Management Practices on Performance of Projects in Rwanda

[1*]Iribagiza Alice
School of Business and Economics, Mount Kenya University, Rwanda
[2]Dr. Joyce Kirabo, PhD
School of Education, Mount Kigali University, Rwanda

Article History

Received 9th September 2024

Received in Revised Form 12th October 2024

Accepted 11th November 2024

How to cite in APA format:

Iribagiza, A., & Kirabo, J. (2024). Influence of Project Management Practices on Performance of Projects in Rwanda. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Project Management*, *9*(4), 36–54. https://doi.org/10.47604/ijepm.3069

Abstract

Purpose: This research aimed to assess how project management aspects, specifically project risk control, planning, and monitoring and evaluation processes, impact the performance of USAID-sponsored projects in Rwanda. The study focused on the CORE project in Rubavu District, supported by USAID and the Rwanda Governance Board.

Methodology: A descriptive research design was employed, targeting 170 individuals involved in the CORE project. A sample size of 119 participants was determined using Yamane's simplified formula, with purposive and stratified sampling methods ensuring a representative selection. Data were collected using a combination of questionnaires and an interview guide, including both closed and open-ended questions. The reliability of the instruments was ensured through test-retest and input from a university supervisor. Internal consistency was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, with a reliability coefficient of 0.7 or above considered acceptable. Data were analyzed using SPSS software, and inferential analysis and multiple regression were employed to determine the significance of each variable.

Findings: The study achieved a 92.4% response rate, with a higher proportion of male (50.9%) and degree-holding participants (50.9%). Findings revealed that project risk management (Mean = 3.9108) had the greatest impact on project performance, followed by project planning (Mean = 3.9545) and monitoring and evaluation (Mean = 3.7369). These factors were found to significantly influence project success.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The research recommends strategies to strengthen adherence to effective monitoring and evaluation processes, particularly focusing on improving risk management and planning practices to enhance project performance in USAID-sponsored initiatives.

Keywords: *Project Management Practices, Project, Performance, Rwanda*

JEL Codes of Classification: *L23, M10, M12, L23, M11, M12, O15, O55*

©2024 by the Authors. This Article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

INTRODUCTION

USAID is among the international NGOs that have been involved in supporting economic activities in Sub-Saharan Africa and other regions that are developing. Like any other organization, USAID has to determine the extent to which the projects they implement are successfully done, hence making it necessary for them to have a proper way of measuring project performance. Project performance may be assessed from several points of view, depending on the expectations of donors, the target groups, and host governments.

The demand for managing and planning projects has gained an increased focus across the world in the recent past. Project management has continued to gain attention and has become the centre of research, policy, academic, and practicing project management (Project Management Institute, 2020). However, it is important to note that any project is bound to succeed because of the endogenous and exogenous variables, as Sebastian (2017) identified. Project failure, on the other hand, is a rampant problem with most projects.

Over the years, project management academics and policymakers have attempted to decipher why some projects are unsustainable while others are sustainable (Benegahutu, 2020). In another study carried out by Pierre (2022) on the various determinants that may influence the performance of a project, it was discovered that most distressed projects are a result of misalignment in the systems used to reward people and penalize them, absence of proper systems as well as communication breakdown between various stakeholders.

Project management is therefore viewed as strategic in that it harmonizes project performance with project objectives (Asare, 2021). Contractor organizations that work on short-term implementations conclude that project management entails the ability to regulate resources in a way that highlights limited expenses and time to provide satisfying performance and successful working associations with beneficiaries (Dyason, 2020). Project management has a life cycle similar to 'work breakdown structure,' where the tasks are defined, people, resources, and responsibilities are identified and assigned; objectives and milestones are established; reviewers and auditors are selected; and control, monitoring, and evaluation processes are defined (Pinto, 2019).

Project management remains one of the oldest accomplishments of humans and has drawn the efforts of designers, constructors, and builders (Owino, 2022). This is well illustrated by archaeological marvels such as the pyramids in Egypt and ancient cities. These early examples have been followed by modern concepts of project management that make it possible to implement projects optimally. However, there are only so many writings and records on the use of the techniques and methods adopted until the development of what is called today project management practices and tools in the mid-1950s (Njau, 2019). Since then, the concept has been embraced across the world, with people of different cultures and backgrounds accepting the idea. It meets the project objectives in size, scope, and industry to finish the project in the shortest time possible without involving many resources (Dyason, 2020).

Project performance may be improved by project instruments, including project architecture and blueprints, project definition, stakeholder mapping and identification, recruitment of a qualified team, and especially the inclusion of monitoring and evaluation processes. This promotes strategic management of performance and completion of the projects (Nalianya, 2021). Many academic articles have been written on project performance and monitoring and evaluation worldwide (Pinto, 2019). Even though project management is generally viewed from a tactical perspective, it is increasingly considered strategic.

Collaboration is valuable for receiving direct advantages while engaging the business executives. Some organizational factors that determine the project's performance include organizational climate, teamwork, integrity, commitment of the stakeholders, and project transparency (Owino, 2022). Even as practices are expected to be chosen to improve the likelihood of achieving varied project goals, the stakeholders must arrive at the best practices irrespective of the project being implemented (Project Management Institute, 2020).

Various projects carried out by organizations in Third World countries, specifically the ones in Sub-Saharan Africa, contribute immensely to developing the respective communities. Many NGOs with projects implemented in Africa are involved in the social, economic, and environmental fields of concern, including Health, Education, Microfinance, and the Environment, as noted below (Evelyn, 2021). In Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania alone, there are over 10,000 NGOs, and though the rate of project performance is generally high, 30-35% of these projects fail at the project formulation/planning state (Amollo, 2021). There is a focus on arranging the success factors and studying the relationships between these factors, whereas individual factors that affect the project's success are often neglected.

According to African Development Bank, It is also estimated that USD 93 billion is required to develop developers for over fifty African cities with a population of over one million; according general challenges that many African cities face include cost overruns, delays in construction, and red-tapism (KPMG, 2023). As the continent strives to meet set development objectives, many projects are not well controlled or are failing, and those that display low-performance levels deform the advancement of the overall development (Asare, 2021). A literature review of project management practices in Africa reveals the factors that lead to delays and cost excesses of construction projects in Nigeria (Frimpong, 2023). Several factors have been attributed to the poor external project management experience in many African countries, including corruption, poor governance, and generally low administrative capacities (Asare, 2021).

A survey carried out by Price Waterhouse Coopers indicated that about 50% of projects fail because of poor management of projects. The research revealed that the public sector was ranked at the lowest end of project management compared to the private sector (Price et al., 2021). Martin (2023) will corroborate these findings, revealing that for a project to expand and thrive, stakeholders must be able to implement clear strategies and ideas. Often, the criteria for evaluating the results of a project are concerned with cost, time, and quality parameters, which are the key factors of project success and failure (KPMG, 2023). Quality refers to the overall attributes that need to be incorporated into a product to meet specific needs and be suitable for specific use. The actual quality expectations must be well defined in design and contract profiles for appropriate and compliant quality performance. According to the literature, the project performance of small and medium enterprises is examined in terms of cost, time, quality, and profitability of returns on project investment.

The finality of a project is no longer just measured by the completion of the project but whether the completion was done within time, within the expected expenses, and to the right quality (Frimpong, 2023). Quite a few projects developed in Kenya are prone to one or several challenges like delays in project construction, increase in cost, human resource deficiency, and early abandonment. These have resulted in high delays and increasing costs of public projects for the East African countries, which has become an issue to researchers, clients, contractors,

project sponsors, and several project players. The general public is increasingly doubtful whether the government can provide value for taxpayers' money (Kaluai, 2020).

In Rwanda, the following has been observed: Few sectors still understand and implement project management practices for timely and efficient project completion. This involves fully endorsing and appropriately implementing all activities in the organization's log frame. Since the early 1990s, NGOs have been implementing various service delivery to vulnerable groups with support from various departments in the rights of children, education, sanitation, health, and water (Owino, 2022).

The primary funders of these projects include World Vision, the Red Cross, the European Union, USAID, the Ford Foundation, and various private donors, among others. These organizations integrate with different communities by mobilizing resources within environments that are often perceived as highly volatile to ensure their success. Many NGOs encounter significant challenges in strategic planning and the realization of their objectives (Amollo, 2021).

It currently works in more than 100 nations across the globe and promotes peace and stability through economic growth, agriculture, protection of human health, trade, provision of quality basic education, emergency humanitarian assistance, enhancement of democracy and prevention of conflicts in various developing countries (Office of the Auditor General, 2022).

USAID came to Rwanda for the first time in 1964 and since then, the American people through the agency have provided about 1.3 billion US Dollars in humanitarian assistance and other programs for strengthening healthcare, increase economic opportunities, education and promotion of good governance (Perez-Guzman, 2023). Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), US Department of Defence and US Peace Corps works hand in hand with USAID to provide foreign assistance to Rwanda. It operates under the Strategic Objective Agreement (SOAG) with the Rwandan Government under the US-Rwanda bilateral agreement having been in effect since 1962.

The programs undertaken cooperates with ministries, governmental departments, NGOs, private sector and the benefiting communities to improve the well-being of the Rwandan people through improved laws, increased income, job creation, improved services and better management of readily available resources (Manikuzwe, 2023).The projects are implemented via grants, contracts and cooperative engagements by over 80 local and international organizations such as UN agencies, private companies and non-governmental organizations (Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), 2018).

USAID assistance had been focusing on capacity building and laying of the foundations for the sustainable development. The have all along supported the Rwandan government in rebuilding the justice system, health system, physical infrastructure and agricultural research. On top of that, USAID supports the government in higher education and ICT (Information Communications Technology) by supplying computers and internet services, advanced training in public health, law, conflict management and agriculture to the University of Rwanda and other post-secondary school training institutions.

The USAID is currently focusing on implementing the objectives of the Rwandan Government as stated in the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy. The funding to Rwanda by USAID has steadily increased from nearly $48 million in 2014 to over $250 million in 2023 (Perez-Guzman, 2023). The bulk of the increased funding was because of the initiatives

by the then US President for HIV/AIDS (2004), Malaria (2017) and the display of the Millennium Challenge Corporation Threshold Program for Rwanda (2018). Health related projects have gotten the highest share of USAID's current assistance to Rwanda. Additionally, USAID supports programs for the promotion of good governance, economic growth and the education sector. Food assistance had been part of the USAID project but was phased out at the end of 2009 (Manikuzwe, 2023).

Problem Statement

Donor-funded projects aim to address socioeconomic issues affecting underprivileged groups globally. However, when these projects fail, they can have adverse effects on beneficiaries, as highlighted by the USAID (2023). Despite donor support, there is often a lack of effective project management, especially in developing countries like Rwanda. Criticisms of humanitarian programs often focus on their failure to address complex socioeconomic problems, leading to sustainability issues. Although adopting project management practices (PMP) has shown positive results, improvements are still necessary due to poor skills, tight budgets, long project durations, weak stakeholder engagement, and ineffective monitoring and evaluation frameworks (Kahi & Amah, 2019).

Many organizations struggle to adopt essential practices like qualitative indicator analysis, leading to project abandonment and higher costs due to insufficient information exchange. USAID projects in Rwanda, such as the Soma Umenye Project, face challenges related to stakeholder participation, budgets, time, and restrictive conditions. Literature shows that leadership and project best practices are crucial throughout the project lifecycle (Manikuzwe, 2023). However, inadequate training, insufficient funding, and donor interference negatively impact project performance. Despite research on project management practices in different sectors, there is limited research on USAID-funded projects in Rwanda outside the education sector. This study aims to fill this gap by assessing the impact of project management practices on the CORE project, funded by USAID in Rubavu District, Rwanda.

Literature Review

This section outlines the body of work from earlier researchers and scholars, encompassing a review of pertinent theories, the identification of existing research gaps that require attention, and a synthesis of the literature review.

Theoretical Review

Concepts of Projects

Project performance is commonly measured by time, cost, and beneficiary satisfaction, but many projects fail when these aspects are not adequately considered (Pierre, 2022). Projects that exceed their timeline or budget may still be seen as effective if managed well (Benegahutu T., 2020). Management support plays a vital role in ensuring the success of a project, as it facilitates proper planning, organization, and coordination (Baccarni, 2023). Without such support, project objectives are harder to achieve, leading to a lack of coordination and potential failure. Poor management practices, such as inadequate planning, risk management, and monitoring, are key contributors to project failure (Le-Hoai, 2023).

Studies, such as those by Carvalho (2020), show that effective risk control positively influences project performance, particularly in complex projects. A study on project managers and risk managers found that their involvement significantly impacted project outcomes (Harindintwali, 2022). Pinto (2019) also highlighted that project performance is influenced by both extrinsic

factors, like satisfaction and effectiveness, and intrinsic ones, like time and budget. These factors can be managed proactively by understanding and addressing customer requirements early in the project to align them with the project's goals.

Project Management Tactics

Project execution focuses on managing tasks to deliver defined outputs within set timeframes and budgets. Benegahutu T. (2020) emphasizes that top management is responsible for coordinating resources and efforts to meet these objectives. Effective project management practices involve overseeing daily operations, including planning, risk management, and administrative activities to ensure the project stays on track in terms of time, cost, and quality (Rwanda et al., 2018). Challenges such as poor planning, insufficient staffing, lack of top management support, and inadequate funding release can hinder project performance (Asare, 2021). Additionally, project management practices, including planning, implementation, and communication, are considered endogenous factors, while external influences like the political climate are exogenous factors (Grisham, 2020).

To achieve successful project performance, various phases, including coordination, monitoring, and control, must be managed effectively. Project planning plays a critical role in aligning resources, people, and timelines to enhance project outcomes (Benegahutu T., 2020). Risk management is also crucial, as it involves identifying potential risks and implementing preventive measures (Smith, 2020). Tools like market benchmarking and scenario analysis help assess risks, while continuous monitoring and evaluation ensure the project progresses according to plan and meets its goals (Dyason, 2020). Effective project performance relies on ongoing evaluation and control to address issues promptly and achieve desired outcomes.

Concept of USAID Projects

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is a U.S. government agency that provides foreign assistance to promote peace and stability through economic growth, agriculture, healthcare, trade, education, and governance in over 100 countries worldwide (Office of the Auditor General, 2022). USAID has been active in Rwanda since 1964, contributing approximately 1.3 billion USD in humanitarian aid and development programs focused on strengthening healthcare, economic opportunities, education, and governance (Perez-Guzman, 2023). In collaboration with partners like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Defense, USAID works under the U.S.-Rwanda bilateral agreement to support national development efforts (Manikuzwe, 2023).

USAID's programs in Rwanda, which align with the country's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, aim to improve laws, increase income, create jobs, enhance services, and optimize resource management. Through grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements, USAID partners with over 80 local and international organizations to implement projects that address critical sectors such as justice, health, agriculture, and ICT (Rwanda Governance Board, 2018). Financial support has grown significantly, rising from $48 million in 2014 to more than $250 million by 2023, with a focus on health-related initiatives, including HIV/AIDS, malaria, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation Threshold Program (Perez-Guzman, 2023).

Projects Performance

Project performance is primarily assessed through cost, time, and quality key components that ensure projects meet their intended goals (KPMG, 2023). Quality refers to the characteristics

required to fulfill project specifications and purpose, while time and cost must align with the outlined objectives to gauge success. Effective project performance enables organizations to maximize profitability, mitigate competitive pressures, and capitalize on opportunities arising from risks (Shrenash, 2023). It is evaluated by achieving set goals, managing planning, time, cost, and stakeholder satisfaction, with critical project management techniques such as monitoring, evaluation, and risk management driving success (Kaluai, 2020; Frimpong, 2023).

However, poor project performance often leads to wasted resources and unmet objectives, a concern raised by international organizations (Chandra, 2022). For example, KPMG (2023) found that 25% of projects in India faced delays due to inadequate planning and a lack of modern technology. Delays in infrastructure projects were often linked to insufficient qualified personnel and equipment. In contrast, some road projects in South Africa were successfully completed by foreign firms, while local companies struggled to meet deadlines and budgets (Kaluai, 2020; Owino, 2022). For organizations like USAID, project performance in sectors like agriculture, healthcare, and malaria control in Rwanda is measured by timely completion, adherence to budgets, and the overall satisfaction of beneficiaries (Pierre, 2022).

Government Policy on Projects

Governments worldwide are increasingly focusing on the performance of NGOs, recognizing their role in advancing economic development through project initiatives aimed at improving the lives of underserved populations (Idoro, 2022). As organizations increasingly rely on projects to meet their business objectives, effective project management becomes essential, especially in industries with stringent regulations where government policies often drive project initiation. For example, deregulation in power markets and climate change policies have spurred initiatives such as renewable energy projects, often led by international organizations like USAID (Fitria A. F., 2022). While some studies examine the influence of government policies on project performance from an economic perspective, assuming stakeholders are rational actors, NGOs often perceive government policies, particularly in energy and environmental sectors, as a mix of risks and opportunities. To navigate these complexities, organizations must understand and manage these policies' risks and rewards, aligning project strategies with broader organizational goals. A strategic management approach is crucial to bridge the gap between government policies and project performance, ensuring that projects not only align with the country's regulatory environment but also leverage opportunities for growth and sustainability.

Empirical Review

The empirical review of this study was based the basis of the study objectives as outlined below.

Project Risk Management and Performance of Projects

Kaluai (2020) explored the role of risk management in the performance of international development projects in Nairobi, finding that the effectiveness of risk response strategies—avoidance, reduction, transfer, and acceptance—significantly impacted project outcomes. Gitau (2021) examined risk management in construction projects in Rwanda, noting that only a small percentage of projects involved consultants in the planning phase. Similarly, Kisaka (2019) analyzed risk management in Nairobi's investment firms, demonstrating that risk identification tools such as SWOT analysis and audits influenced firm performance. These studies highlight the importance of risk management in project performance but focus on

different sectors and contexts. The current research aims to examine the specific role of risk management in the performance of USAID-funded projects in Rwanda, adding a critical perspective on development projects in the region.

Additionally, studies such as those by Pierre (2022) and Aduma (2019) have identified key factors for project success, such as management support, planning, and training, but have largely overlooked the impact of risk management on outcomes. Maghanga (2020) confirmed that effective risk management practices, including avoidance and retention, significantly influence project performance in manufacturing sectors. However, these findings were specific to Nairobi's manufacturing context, while the present study seeks to evaluate how risk management practices affect the performance of USAID-sponsored projects in Rwanda, particularly in the context of international development. This research aims to fill the gap in understanding the influence of risk management on project performance in Rwanda's development sector.

Project Planning and Performance of Projects

Project planning plays a crucial role in ensuring the success of projects by facilitating critical decisions that improve the likelihood of achieving time, cost, and quality goals (Kariega, 2020). It is an ongoing process throughout the project lifecycle, from initial planning to completion, addressing project objectives, methods, timelines, and budgets (Idoro, 2022). Effective planning, which includes stakeholder management, risk evaluation, and benefits management, is vital for project success. A lack of planning or stakeholder involvement, unclear roles, and poor communication can lead to failure (PMBOK, 2023). Studies have shown that well-defined planning leads to better resource management, realistic schedules, and alignment with stakeholder expectations, which ultimately contributes to project success (Ika, 2023).

Further research emphasizes that involving stakeholders early in the planning phase enhances project performance and design (Asare, 2021). Effective project planning results in clear deadlines, accurate resource forecasting, and improved communication with stakeholders (Baccarni, 2023). Leadership styles and team-based planning have been shown to positively impact project performance, especially in terms of time, cost, and quality (Yang, 2021). Despite extensive theoretical work on project planning, empirical evidence on its application in internationally funded projects in Rwanda, particularly by USAID, remains limited. This gap highlights the need for further research into how project planning can improve the effectiveness of USAID-funded projects in Rwanda.

Government Policy on Project Performance

Governments all over the world are currently drawing attention to the performance of Non-Governmental Organization projects. This is because of the bid to support economic development through NGO-initiated projects to advance the lives of the majority of the people concerned (Idoro, 2022). The pressing need to explore how government policies affect project performance from a strategic management viewpoint stem from the existing knowledge gap regarding the connection between these policies and project outcomes. Organizations have increasingly relied on projects to achieve their business objectives, making effective project management crucial (Fitria A. F., 2022).

In a highly regulated industry, the projects are started by the government by use of policies. For instance, power market deregulation in some countries has brought opportunities for the development of power generation projects for the business sector. Additionally, there are

policies initiated by governments on climate change that motivate international organizations like USAID to develop renewable energy projects (Fitria A. F., 2022). Some studies have been conducted to see the influence of government policies on the performance of projects. Therefore, these studies are done in the perspective of economics which assume that all stakeholders are rational actors who gain economic benefits from the supportive government policies through opportunity exploitation.

Non-Governmental Organizations do not see government policies in reality as opportunities and take benefits from those policies. Some of these policies such as energy and environmental policies have two opposing aspects – risk and expected return that are considered by the entrepreneurial organizations. Therefore, it is very crucial for the organizations to understand government policies of the host country and how to manage risks when they have significant influence on their activities (Kariega, 2020). Strategic management perspective could be used to bridge the link between government policies and performance of the project. It is important for organizations to align the front end of projects with the overall strategy of their organization.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed both descriptive research methodology, as the participants shared their views on how project management practices impact USAID-funded projects in Rwanda. The descriptive research design provides a complete picture of events, conditions, and occurrences between individuals and others (Houser, 2018). This approach is used since it provides a detailed scenario description while approach bias in data collection is eliminated (Bell, 2022). As a result, the study did not demand participants to change any variables; therefore, this kind of descriptive research design was preferred. Besides, this study fell under the secondary case study in that it examined the USAID-sponsored projects implemented in Rwanda and thus was a descriptive type of case study.

Target Population

The target population represents the full group of interest for the study, as defined by the study's objectives and from which the sample was drawn (Ghauri, 2020). For this study, the target population consisted of 170 individuals, including project managers, coordinators, quality control officers, and government officials from Rwanda Governance board and selected beneficiaries from the communities. These participants were from CORE project which was sponsored by USAID in Rubavu District, Rwanda (USAID, 2023). The census technique was used to identify the population of all the respondents involved in the CORE Project.

Sample Design

The sample design process involves selecting individuals or organizations from a target population for study, ensuring that the sample is representative of the broader population (Bell, 2022). In this research, a stratified random sampling method was employed to achieve this representation. Each subgroup was chosen in proportion to its size in the total population, ensuring comprehensive coverage of all relevant parameters. Stratified random sampling is particularly effective for populations with diverse characteristics, making it an ideal approach for this study (Ghauri, 2020). To determine the sample size, the study used Yamane's Simplified Formula. The strata consisted of different officials and beneficiaries involved in the CORE project funded by USAID in Rubavu District, Rwanda.

Data Collection Methods

Data Collection Instruments

This study utilized both primary and secondary sources of information. Primary data was gathered using questionnaires and interviews, whereas secondary data was sourced from journals, books, and other relevant literature. They are also liked for the quick and more accurate data through put they produce, free from several errors as opposed to secondary data (Cooper, 2018). The researcher, whom a research assistant aided, administered the questionnaires. Questionnaires also conceal convenient information from a large population that can be obtained quickly and with the lowest expenses. This approach did not threaten the study's validity to any extent and analyzed results more efficiently when using SPSS (Cooper, 2018). The questionnaires included closed-ended questions with a 5-point Likert Scale. This allowed for direct comparisons between responses and limit the variation. This design ensured that the questions adopted reflect the desired variables to enable the respondents give quantitative information.

Data Collection Procedures

Questionnaires appropriate to the information required were used to collect data in the study. Some factors that were considered include the period of time at one's disposal and study objectives, among others. The researcher administered the questionnaires with the help of the research assistant and collects them after ensuring the respondents have enough time to think of their answers. Specific instructions were made regarding the type of information that needed to be retrieved to keep results meaningful and relevant.

Pilot Study

The questionnaires were piloted with 12 participants from the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), representing 10% of the total sample size, to assess the clarity and relevance of the questions. The pilot study aimed to ensure the instrument effectively addressed the research objectives, with modifications made to the questions and instructions based on participant feedback. Instrument validity was assessed by consulting the university supervisor and the pilot participants, ensuring the questions accurately measured the intended information. To verify validity, Bartlett's Test for Sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test were applied, with satisfactory factor loadings greater than 0.50 and extraction of factors with values over 1 (Holloway, 2023).

The reliability of the instrument was evaluated using three strategies: prior research literature, retesting, and internal consistency methods. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, where a coefficient of 0.7 or higher indicates a reliable tool (Kothari, 2022). The pilot testing and validation process confirmed that the instrument was both valid and reliable, ensuring accurate data collection for the study.

Data Analysis and Procedures

According to Tashakkori, (2020) processing of data is the act of manipulating gathered data to create relevant information. This involves the editing, coding, classification, and tabulation of the gathered data using scientific procedures. Excel was used to organize and code the data before being uploaded to SPSS for analysis. Data analysis, according to Kothari (2022), is the process of carefully examining data across variables in order to uncover relevant information that would be used as a resource and as a basis for decision-making.

International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Project Management
ISSN 2518-2838(Online)
Vol.9, Issue 4, No.3. pp 36 - 54, 2024
www.iprjb.org

Multiple Correlation Analysis

Data presentation was done through descriptive statistics applied for data diagnostics including standards deviations and percentages. The prediction of dependent variable values was carried out through multiple regression analysis. The effectiveness of this approach was assessed by calculating the coefficient of determination, R squared, and comparing it with actual data points through prediction estimates. The model was deemed a good fit if R squared equals 1. Additionally, the F-test within the ANOVA framework was employed to assess the model's suitability. The t-test verified the validity of the regression coefficients by ensuring that all independent variables significantly influence the dependent variable. The regression analysis utilized the following equation:

$Y=\beta_0+\beta_1X_1+\beta_2X_2+\beta_3X_3+\beta_4X_4+\epsilon$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + Y=$\beta_0+\beta_1X_1+\beta_2X_2+\beta_3X_3+\beta_4X_4+\epsilon$

In this model:

- YYY represents project performance
- β_0\beta_0β_0 is the intercept
- β_1\beta_1β_1 denotes the coefficient for project risk management
- β_2\beta_2β_2 denotes the coefficient for project planning
- β_3\beta_3β_3 denotes the coefficient for the project monitoring and evaluation process
- ϵ\epsilon$\epsilon$ represents the error term
- • XXX represents the influence of project management practices on the outcomes of CORE project funded by USAID in Rubavu District, Rwanda.

Specifically:

- X_1X_1X_1 represents project risk management
- X_2X_2X_2 represents project planning
- X_3X_3X_3 represents the project monitoring and evaluation process

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following findings are organized by each research objective, with results presented in the corresponding sections.

Project Risk Management Practice and Project Performance

The study examined the influence of risk management on the performance of the CORE project sponsored by USAID in Rubavu District, Northern Province, Rwanda. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements regarding the impact of risk management on project performance in the district. *Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale where 5 was strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree and 1= strongly disagree. Table 1 illustrates the findings.*

Table 1: Project Risk Management Practice and Project Performance

Project Risk Management Practice and Project Performance	Mean	Std. Dev
The absence of established frameworks for risk management structures to mitigate response has resulted in performance.	4.2345	0.70634
Insufficient risk management control has resulted in the unsuccessful completion of the project.	4.1346	0.81511
Project management tools significantly contributes to project performance	3.9000	0.70591
It is essential for project managers to perform risk assessments throughout the entire project cycle.	3.8333	0.90510
The project managers of the current project have given risk management the attention it deserves during the project implementation	3.8167	0.59636
Implementing a project risk management strategy helps in eliminating time wastage.	3.8005	0.68396
There is risk determination in the CORE project	3.8000	0.79356
There is risk disclosure throughout the project cycle	3.7667	0.73167
Overall mean score	**3.9108**	

From the findings on this study, majority of the respondents agreed that CORE project sponsored by USAID in Rubavu district that risk management was utilized as a project management practice for enhancing project performance with a mean score of 3.9108. Specifically, the respective means were as follows; frameworks for risk management structures that mitigate response has resulted to project performance (Mean=4.2345), Insufficient risk management control has resulted in the unsuccessful completion of the project (Mean=4.1346), Project management tools significantly contributes to project performance (Mean=3.9000), It is essential for project managers to perform risk assessments throughout the entire project cycle (Mean=3.8333), The project managers of the current project have given risk management the attention it deserves during the project implementation (Mean= 3.8167), Implementing a project risk management strategy helps in eliminating time wastage (Mean=3.8005), There is risk determination in the CORE project (Mean=3.8000) and lastly there is risk disclosure throughout the project cycle (Mean=3.7667).

The findings indicate that risk management plays a very crucial role for enhancing the performance of CORE project in Rubavu district. There are critical components that risk management mitigate with a bearing on the performance of projects. Risk management frameworks that are well structured guarantees the identification and mitigation of risks while achieving the targeted performance. Inadequate risk management threatens timely implementation of projects and compromise performance of projects.

The findings of this study are in consistence with Aduma, (2019) whereby the absense of risk assessment and control measurements, time and costs of the project can have a positive effect on the project prediction.

Project Planning and Performance of Projects

The study determined the influence of project planning on performance of projects in CORE project sponsored by USAID in Rubavu district, Rwanda. The researcher requested the respondents to show their level of agreement on various statements that concerned the influence of project planning on performance with reference to USAID sponsored projects in Rubavu

District. *Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale where 5 was strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree and 1= strongly disagree.* Table 2 illustrates the findings.

Table 2: Project Planning and Performance of Projects

Project Planning and Performance of Projects	Mean	Std. Dev
Projects executed in the organization prioritize time, budget, and quality factors.	4.3234	0.65568
Project coordination is effectively managed in this company.	4.2134	0.66548
All project activities adhere to established policies throughout the entire project life cycle.	4.1654	0.87656
The quantity of projects the organization handles impacts both the quality and the final outcome	3.9764	0.75675
Potential risks are assessed early, and a risk management plan created.	3.8667	0.65008
There is clear communication where the perspectives and opinions of all stakeholders are considered	3.8333	0.88618
Project office is established to oversee the project's operations	3.8167	0.72467
Proper project planning promotes efficiency and effectiveness	3.8000	0.70830
The allocation of resources plays a crucial role in planning process.	3.7833	0.82527
Financial backing has a great effect on project planning	3.7667	0.78905
Overall Mean Score	**3.9545**	

The findings presented in Table 2 clearly demonstrate that project planning plays a pivotal role in enhancing the performance of the CORE project in Rubavu District, with an overall mean score of 3.9545. The data reveals that several aspects of project planning, such as prioritizing time, budget, and quality (Mean = 4.3234), effective coordination (Mean = 4.2134), and adherence to established policies (Mean = 4.1654), significantly contribute to project success. These elements are critical in ensuring that projects stay on track, mitigating the risk of delays or cost overruns. Planning also supports other vital aspects, such as risk management (Mean = 3.8667), clear communication (Mean = 3.8333), and efficient resource allocation (Mean = 3.7833), all of which further solidify the relationship between planning and project outcomes.

These results are consistent with the findings of Chandra (2022), who emphasized that detailed planning is essential for achieving project objectives, particularly in avoiding delays and managing costs effectively. Similarly, Perez-Guzman (2023) highlighted that thorough planning from the outset of a project leads to better performance and timely completion. By incorporating clear goals, adequate resources, and proactive risk management, planning becomes the foundation for a project's success, ensuring that challenges are anticipated and addressed in a structured manner.

Performance of USAID Sponsored Projects

This section was meant to determine the performance of USAID sponsored projects in Rwanda and in particular CORE project in Rubavu district as the dependent variable of this study. The researcher required the respondents to show their level of agreement with the statements on the performance of CORE projects sponsored by USAID in Rubavu district, Rwanda. Rating of the respondents' responses was based on a five-point Likert scale where 5 was strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree and 1= strongly disagree. Table 3 illustrates the findings.

Table 3: Performance of USAID Sponsored Projects

Performance of USAID Sponsored Projects	Mean	Std. Dev.
Implementation of projects is per the planned timelines and timely delivery of resources	3.6886	0.84392
Project implementation is always done as per the limits of the budget	3.6000	0.97772
The quality measures intended during the project planning is met	3.5833	0.90370
The project stakeholders are satisfied by the project implementation	3.4667	1.03456
Implementation of the project is per the objectives	3.3167	0.89237
Monitoring and evaluation is done as per the project plan	3.3000	0.88872
Overall Mean Score	**3.4816**	

The findings presented in Table 3 contribute significantly to the understanding of NGO project management effectiveness, particularly in developing regions. The results suggest that the CORE project in Rubavu District performed well, with respondents showing moderate agreement on key aspects such as timely project implementation (Mean = 3.6886), adherence to budget limits (Mean = 3.6000), meeting quality standards (Mean = 3.5833), and ensuring stakeholder satisfaction (Mean = 3.4667). These aspects reflect essential components of effective project management, which are crucial for NGO projects in developing regions where resources are often limited and outcomes are under constant scrutiny. The positive correlation between well-executed project management practices and project performance underscores the importance of planning, resource allocation, and monitoring throughout the project lifecycle.

These findings are consistent with Kaluai (2020), who emphasized that adherence to project management practices is critical for achieving timely, cost-effective, and quality outcomes. The study's results align with this, demonstrating that when NGOs implement established project management practices, such as budget control, quality assurance, and stakeholder engagement, the likelihood of project success increases significantly. This highlights that for NGOs operating in developing regions like Rwanda, applying robust project management strategies not only helps in achieving objectives but also in ensuring sustainability and long-term positive impacts for the communities they serve.

Regression Analysis

The study was required to find out the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and the multiple regression analysis was used.

Model Summary

Table 4: Summary Model

Summary Model				
Model	**R**	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**
1	0.824	0.679	0.664	0.348

a. Predictors: (Constant), Risk Management, Planning and Monitoring and Evaluation process

While the regression model in Table 4 demonstrates a strong relationship between the three variables and the performance of the CORE project (R = 0.824), and explains 67.9% of the variation in project performance (adjusted $R^2 = 0.679$), there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. One key limitation is the potential for omitted variable bias. The unexplained 32.1% of variation suggests that there may be other important factors influencing project

outcomes that were not included in the analysis. These omitted variables could encompass factors such as political climate, socio-economic conditions, or organizational culture, which may also affect the performance of the project. If these variables were not considered, the results of the regression model might be biased, leading to an inaccurate estimation of the effects of the included variables. Furthermore, there is the possibility that some of the variables included in the model might be correlated with the omitted factors, which could result in multicollinearity and affect the stability of the coefficient estimates. To address these limitations, future studies could incorporate additional relevant variables to improve the model's explanatory power and reduce the risk of bias, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting project.

ANOVA

This study utilized ANOVA results to check if the independent (Project management practices) and dependent variables (performance of CORE project sponsored by USAID in Rubavu District) were significant or not. The results were illustrated in Table 5 as follows.

Table 5: ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22.388	6	5.760	45.978	.000[b]
	Residual	11.545	85	0.125		
	Total	**33.933**	**91**			

a. Independent Variables (Constant), Risk Management, project planning and monitoring and evaluation
b. Dependent Variable: Performance of CORE project sponsored by USAID in Rubavu district

The p value is 0.000 which is not greater than 0.05 making this model statistically significant to forecast how the three project management practices influence the performance of CORE projects sponsored by USAID in Rubavu District, Rwanda. The F critical (45.978) at 5% level of significance was greater than the F calculated as the value of 2.476 and $p<0.000<0.05$. The results clearly showed that the overall model of this study was significant to predict the project management practices that influence performance of CORE project sponsored by USAID in Rubavu District, Rwanda.

Coefficients of Regression

This study was based on the model; $Y= \beta_0+\beta_1X_1+\beta_2X_2+\beta_3X_3+\beta_4X_4+\epsilon$ that was transformed into Y= 1.720+0.528 (Risk Management) + 0.260 (Project Planning) + 0.234 (Monitoring and Evaluation) + ϵ. Y was the dependent variable (Performance of CORE project sponsored by USAID), β_0 = constant; β_1 = Risk Management; β_2 = Project Planning and β_3 = Monitoring and Evaluation. The regression coefficients are as presented in the Table 6.

International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Project Management
ISSN 2518-2838(Online)
Vol.9, Issue 4, No.3. pp 36 - 54, 2024
www.iprjb.org

Table 6: Coefficients of Regression

Coefficients [a]								
Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**	**95% Confidence Level for B**	
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**			**Lower Bound**	**Upper Bound**
1	(Constant)	1.720	0.413		4.161	0.000	0.891	2.548
	Planning	0.260	0.096	0.235	2.703	0.007	0.067	0.452
	M&E	0.234	0.70	0.203	3.321	0.009	0.093	0.375
	Risk Management	0.528	0.086	0.487	6.131	0.000	0.355	0.700

At a 95% confidence level, all independent variables in the study were statistically significant, with p-values below 0.05. Findings indicated that CORE projects sponsored by USAID positively affected project management practices, including risk management ($\beta1 = 0.528$), project planning ($\beta2 = 0.260$), and monitoring and evaluation ($\beta3 = 0.234$). Specifically, risk management showed a strong positive association with project performance, aligning with Carvalho (2020), who emphasized the importance of managing uncertainties in project delivery.

Conversely, project planning and monitoring and evaluation had negative relationships with project performance, with p-values of 0.007 and 0.009, respectively. Idoro (2022) noted that effective planning should prioritize task-focused analysis for improved outcomes. Additionally, Waithera (2021) highlighted the role of monitoring frameworks in guiding project management adjustments. Overall, the study found risk management to be the most significant contributor to the performance of CORE projects, followed by project planning and monitoring, echoing Owino's (2022) findings on the relationship between project management practices and performance in NGO-sponsored projects.

Conclusion

This study makes a significant contribution to the project management literature, particularly in the context of developing countries like Rwanda, by highlighting the critical project management practices that influence the performance of USAID-sponsored CORE projects. The research emphasizes the importance of risk management, project planning, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in ensuring the success of development projects. By identifying risk management as the most influential factor, the study underscores the necessity of equipping project managers with the skills and knowledge needed to address potential risks effectively. This finding is especially relevant for projects in developing countries, where resource constraints and external challenges can heighten the risk of delays and failures.

Moreover, the study's focus on the importance of clear project planning and M&E practices adds valuable insights to the literature, particularly for projects in resource-limited settings. It highlights that successful project outcomes depend on well-defined objectives, collaboration among stakeholders, and continuous monitoring to make informed decisions. These findings offer practical recommendations for improving project management practices in similar contexts, suggesting that investing in training programs and strengthening M&E systems can enhance the overall efficiency and effectiveness of development projects. Ultimately, this study provides a foundation for future research and practice in project management within

developing countries, contributing to the broader understanding of how strategic management practices can improve project performance in challenging environments.

Recommendations

The study offers several recommendations to improve project outcomes and address challenges in the CORE project, focusing on key aspects of project management.

Enhancing M&E Strategies: The study recommends improving monitoring and evaluation through clear reporting, feedback, and learning from past experiences. This will help track progress, identify challenges early, and adjust plans, ensuring better alignment with project goals and increased efficiency.

Risk Management: Prioritizing risk management in project planning and execution is essential. By embedding risk mitigation into daily operations, the project can proactively address potential obstacles, reduce delays or cost overruns, and ensure long-term economic benefits for the region.

Program Marketing: The Government of Rwanda should enhance marketing efforts for international NGO programs to increase awareness nationwide, fostering broader community engagement, participation, and better project outcomes.

Inclusive Project Planning: Engaging all stakeholders, including the government and beneficiaries, in the planning phase will ensure that projects meet the community's actual needs, avoiding duplication and improving sustainability.

Public Participation: Involving the public in project analysis before implementation will foster transparency, accountability, and trust, ensuring better decisions and alignment with community expectations.

Implementing these recommendations will improve project outcomes, address current challenges, and enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of future projects in Rwanda.

REFERENCES

Aduma, L. K. (2019). Project risk management strategies and project performance at the National Hospital Insurance Fund in Kenya. *International Academic Journal of Information Sciences and Project Management, 3*(2), 111 - 136.

Amollo, B. A. (2021). Influence of the project manager's technical skills on research and development project outputs in Kenya Industrial research and development institute. *International Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship Research, 5*(3), 63-73.

Asare, B. A. (2021). Project Management for Developing Countries: Back to Basics. *International Journal of Researchers (DIJR),, 2*(4), 15 - 19.

Benegahutu T., N. P. (2020). Influence of Project management practices on project success in Rwanda - The Case of Girinka Project in Runda Sector, Kamonyi District, Rwanda. *European Journal of Management and Marketing Studies, 5*(3), 91 - 101.

Carvalho, M. M. (2020). Impact of risk management on project performance: the importance of soft skills. *International Journal of Production Research,, 53*(2), 321-340. doi:https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2014.919423

Chandra, H. P. (2022). Model of stakeholder influence on project success, an important finding from construction project in East Java. *International Journal of Academic Research,, 4*(2), 56 - 71.

Dyason, J. R. (2020). The eye diagram: A new perspective on the project life cycle. *Journal of Education for Business, 80*(1), 10 - 16.

Frimpong, Y. O. (2023). Causes of delay and cost overruns in 1156 construction of groundwater projects in a developing country: *Journal of Project Management, 21,* 321 - 326.

Idoro, G. (2022). Evaluating levels of project planning and their effects on performance in the Nigerian construction industry. *Journal of Building and Construction Economics, 9*(2), 39 - 50.

Ika, A. D. (2023). Critical success factors for World Bank projects: An empirical investigation. *International Journal of Project Management, 30*(2), 105 - 116.

Kaluai, F. K. (2020). Project Management Practices and Project Performance under the Women and Girls Economic Empowerment Program in Kiambu and Nairobi Counties. *Unpublished Kenyatta University MBA (Project Management) Thesis*, 15 - 21.

KPMG. (2023). *The KPMG survey of corporate responsibility reporting 2023.* Nairobi: KPMG.

Manikuzwe, A. (2023). The Role of Nonprofit Organizations in Socioeconomic Development of Vulnerable Families in Rwanda. *(Doctoral dissertation, Université Saint-Paul/Saint Paul University).*, 23 - 27.

Martin, S. (2023). *Project Management Pathways.* Nairobi: APM Publishing Ltd.

Nalianya, R. S. (2021). Project management practices and performance of agricultural projects by community-based organizations in Bungoma county, Kenya. *A thesis submitted to the school of business in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of doctor of philosophy in business (project management) of Kenyatta University.*, 10 -15.

Njau, D. N. (2019). Effect of Project Management Practices on Effective Implementation of Building Construction Projects in Kenya. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Project Management, 4*(3), 1 - 16.

Office of the Auditor General. (2022). *Annual Audit Report.* Kigali: Government of Rwanda.

Owino, K. O. (2022). Project management practices and performance of non-governmental organizations in Migori County, Kenya. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management, 9*(4), 568 - 581.

Perez-Guzman, K. I. (2023). Sustainability implications of Rwanda's Vision 2050 long-term development strategy. *Sustainability Science, 18*(1), 485-499.

Pierre, T. J. (2022). Success Factors and Performance of NGO Education Projects in Rwanda: A Case of USAID Soma-Umenye, Early Grade Reading Project. *Journal of Entreprenuership and Project Management, 6*(6), 22 - 35.

Pinto J., K. a. (2019). Project Success: Definitions and Management Techniques. *Project Management Journal, 19*(1), 67 - 71.

Price Waterhouse Coopers. (2021). *Annual report on project cycle management. .* Nairobi: PwC Press Kenya.

Project Management Institute. (2023). A guide to the project management body of knowledge. *A journal of project management*, 20 - 24.

Project Management Institute, P. (2020). *Project Management Body of Knowledge.* Newton Square: Project Management Institute.

Rahman, M. M. (2023). Sample size determination for survey research and non-probability sampling techniques: A review and set of recommendations. *Rahman, M. M. (2023). Sample size determination for survey research and non-probability sampling teJournal of Entrepreneurship, Business and Economics., 11*(1), 42-62.

Rwanda Governance Board (RGB). (2018). *Assessing Girinka Project (2006-2016):*. Kigali: Citizen perspectives.

Sebastian, N. (2017). *The Definitive Guide to Project Management. Second Edition.* London: Financial Times/Prentice Hall.

USAID. (2021). *A Report on project management using logistical framework. .* Washington DC: USAID.

Waithera, S. L. (2021). Influence of Project Monitoring and Evaluation on Performance of Youth Funded Agribusiness Projects in Bahati Sub-County, Nakuru. *Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology, Kenya Master of Arts Thesis*, 34 - 38.