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Original Article

An Evaluation of Stakeholder Management Performance in County Government-Funded Construction Projects: A Case of Machakos County

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Stakeholder Management, Stakeholder Management Performance, Stakeholders, County Government, Framework, Construction Projects.

ABSTRACT

Stakeholder management is a pivotal aspect of construction projects funded by county governments in Kenya. Effective stakeholder management is essential for aligning project objectives with the diverse needs of all the stakeholders involved. In Kenya, public infrastructure projects often face challenges such as delays and budget overruns. Therefore, robust stakeholder management practices are essential for ensuring successful project implementation. The specific objectives of this study were to determine the current state of stakeholder management performance in County government-funded construction projects, to establish the existing stakeholder management practices in County Government-funded construction projects, and to establish the influence of stakeholder management practices on stakeholder management performance in County Government-funded construction projects. The study adopted a survey research design. The data was collected using questionnaires and measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Simple stratified sampling was used to identify the 254 respondents. The respondents included contractors, project consultants, end users, ward development officers, PMC representatives, ward administrators, and village administrators. The collected data was coded and entered into Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) and analysed using descriptive statistics. The multiple regression analysis method was used to determine if a relationship existed between the dependent and independent variables. The overall level of stakeholder management performance had a mean of 2.25. This research established that stakeholder management practices are statistically significant in explaining the stakeholder management performance in construction projects funded by the County in Machakos County. Additionally, this study concluded that the level of stakeholder management performance was low in Machakos County. Finally, the study recommended that counties should prioritise stakeholder management training through well-organised awareness campaigns.

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INTRODUCTION

County Government-funded projects perform a substantial role in strengthening citizens' livelihood by contributing immensely towards the development of the counties' economy. These projects focus on addressing the development challenges which the county governments must address to benefit all Kenyans in all regions. The CGFPs in Machakos County are founded on expansive strategic objectives, which include the improvement of production in agriculture, promotion of common economic growth, improvement of good governance and development of basic infrastructure geared towards effective service delivery (County Government of Machakos, 2018).

Stakeholders permeate every phase of every project. Stakeholders are key individuals who have an interest in projects. They are those individuals or groups of individuals that could be impacted or likely to be impacted by the outcomes of the projects being executed (Project Management Institute, 2017). The stakeholders involved in CGFCPs include contractors, sub-contractors, project team members, the local community, ward administrators, regulatory authorities, relevant county department officials, and village administrators, among others. To manage these stakeholders effectively, project managers should be competent in all areas of stakeholder management.

Construction projects involve many stakeholders from various fields. Efficient stakeholder management is one of the vital success factors for construction projects (Nguyen & Mohamed, 2021). If stakeholders are not managed effectively, the project's chance of success will decrease due to disagreements between stakeholders. Ineffective stakeholder management can also lead to dissatisfaction with project outcomes and a negative impact on the budget and schedule. In addition, future work between the project team and internal stakeholders may become more difficult, and the community, as external stakeholders, may have a negative reaction to the project (Leung & Olomolaiye, 2010).

The objectives of this study include:

- To evaluate the current state of stakeholder management performance in county government-funded construction projects in Machakos County.
- To evaluate the existing stakeholder management practices in county government-funded construction projects in Machakos County.
- To establish the influence of stakeholder management practices on stakeholder management performance of county government-funded construction projects in Machakos County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Project Stakeholder Management

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The concept of stakeholders was first introduced into the mainstream general management discourse by Freeman. Cleland introduced a stakeholder perspective into the project management paradigm in 1986. Since then, the role of stakeholder management as an important part of the project management process has been strengthened. Although the importance of stakeholder management has been recognized, project research still lacks theoretical knowledge and empirical evidence of various project stakeholder-related phenomena (Yang et al., 2009).

Every project has stakeholders who are affected by the project or can have a positive or negative impact on the project. Project stakeholders can be internal or external to the project, they may be actively involved, passively involved, or unaware of the project. Internal stakeholders include the sponsor, resource manager, project management office, portfolio steering committee, program manager, project managers of other projects, and team members. External stakeholders include customers, end users, suppliers, shareholders, regulatory bodies, and competitors (Project Management Institute, 2017).

Various researchers have defined the internal and external stakeholders in projects. Internal stakeholders have a formal, official, or contractual relationship with the organization or are directly involved in an organization's decision-making processes (Atkin & Skitmore, 2008). Internal stakeholders include clients, sponsors, contractors, and suppliers. External stakeholders are not formal members of the project coalition, but they can influence or be affected by the project. This group is often referred to as non-business stakeholders or secondary stakeholders (Cova & Salle, 2005).

Kolltveit et al., (2007) point out that the stakeholder perspective emphasizes the effective management of relationships between a project and its key stakeholders to ensure the project's success. Stakeholders can be classified based on their involvement in the project, the nature of their relationship with the project, their claims and positions towards the project, their roles in the project and the degree to which their behaviours can be expected.

Stakeholder management has been defined by various authors. Olander (2006) views project stakeholder management as a process that involves the management functions of planning, organizing, motivating, directing and controlling the resources used. Stakeholder management is the efficient management of relationships among project stakeholders (Li et al., 2011). Bourne and Walker (2006) opine that stakeholder management involves managing activities related to project stakeholders, encouraging proactive project managers to mitigate the negative impact of stakeholder activities and ensuring stakeholders support project goals.

The stakeholder management process is considered necessary for managing relationships due to the diverse parties involved in a project and their possible conflicting interests, which affect or may be affected by the project outcome (Freeman, 2010). It entails processes and techniques employed to manage relationships between project organization and stakeholders effectively, aiming to enhance the positive impacts and reduce negative influences of the stakeholder influence on project goals and objectives.

Stakeholder Management Processes

Several researchers have proposed different processes of stakeholder management. Karlsen (2002) proposes a six-step process of project stakeholder management that includes initial planning, identification, analysis, communication, action, and follow-up. Elias et al. (2002) provide eight processes for managing the stakeholders. The process included creating a stakeholder map for the project, preparing a chart of specific stakeholders, identifying the stakes of stakeholders, preparing a power versus stake grid, conducting a process-level analysis, conducting a transaction-level analysis, determining the stakeholder management capability, and analyzing the dynamics of stakeholder interactions.

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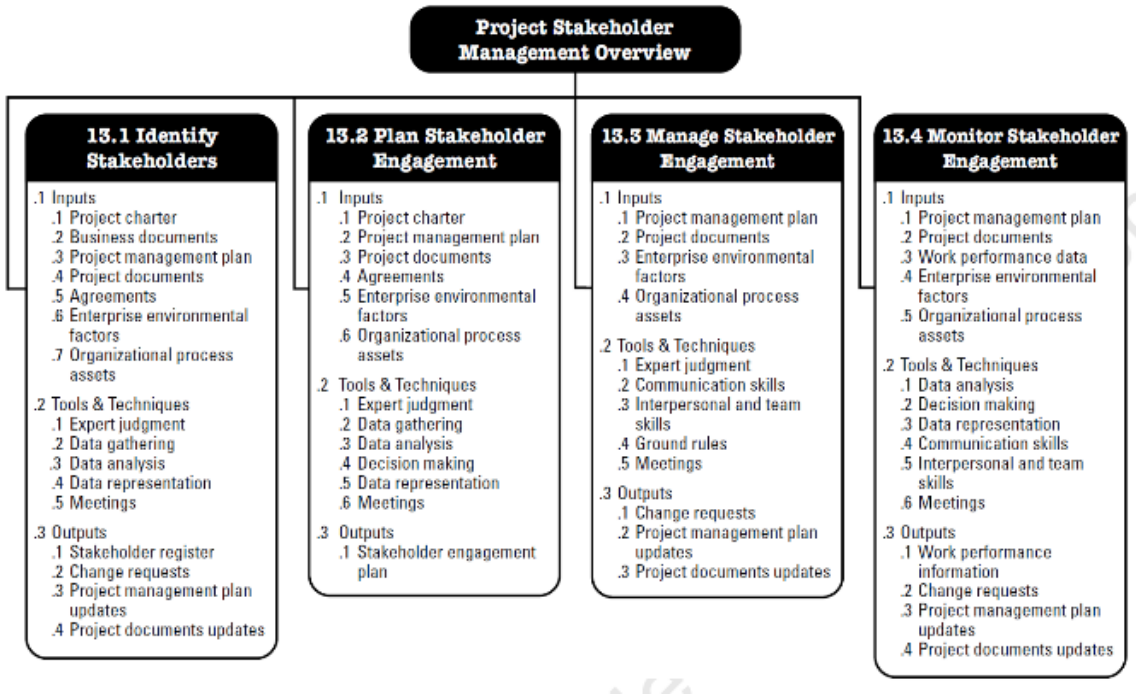
According to the Project Management Institute (2017), stakeholder management processes include identifying stakeholders, planning stakeholder engagement, and managing and monitoring stakeholder engagement, as represented in Figure 1. These processes should be reviewed and updated routinely when the project progresses through its life cycle, when existing stakeholders are no longer involved in the project, when new stakeholders become members of the project's stakeholder community, or when significant changes within the organization or the wider stakeholder community.

Figure 1. Project Stakeholder Management Overview



Source : (Project Management Institute, 2017)

The researcher adopted the PMI approach because of its clarity, widespread industry acceptance, and practicality. PMI's approach is simpler and more adaptable than the complex processes suggested by Karlsen (2002) and Elias et al. (2002). Adopting PMI's approach enhances the credibility of this research by aligning it with a model trusted by professionals worldwide. Additionally, this approach is flexible and applicable across various industries, aligning with best practices in project management.

Stakeholder Management in Construction Projects

Every construction project is unique; some are small and simple, while others are large and complex. Construction projects are unique and involve many processes, systems, and internal and external stakeholders that can directly or indirectly affect the project's inputs and outputs. Stakeholders in construction projects have interests and needs related to the project, which should be understood during the construction process. The primary stakeholders in construction projects include engineers, builders, architects, contractors, owners, suppliers, and subcontractors (Chinyio & Akintoye, 2008). Project managers and their teams must ensure stakeholders are correctly identified and engaged to deliver the project successfully.

Stakeholder management tools are crucial in supporting decision-making, sharing information, reducing the level of subjectivity and maintaining transparency for stakeholders. They also facilitate understanding stakeholders' expectations and monitor whether the process is carried out effectively (Bourne & Weaver, 2010). The different stakeholder management tools vary from

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power-interest matrix, power-impact grid, influence-interest grid, impact-probability matrix, stakeholder impact index, vested interest index, relationship matrices, stakeholder ethical responsibility matrix, to stakeholder-commitment matrix. Yang et al. (2009) consider stakeholder management as a Critical Success Factor (CSF). CSFs are the activities and practices that should be addressed to ensure the effective management of stakeholders in the construction industry.

Stakeholder Management Performance

Stakeholder-related activities and functions are covered under the stakeholder performance domain. The effectiveness of this performance domain leads to productive working relationships with stakeholders throughout the project, stakeholder alignment with project objectives, support and satisfaction among stakeholders who are project beneficiaries, and minimal detrimental effects from stakeholders who disagree with the project or its deliverables. The effectiveness of stakeholder management should be evaluated in both positive and negative terms. A positive value may be based on considering the benefits derived from higher levels of active support from stakeholders, while a negative value may be achieved by measuring the true costs of not engaging stakeholders effectively (Project Management Institute, 2021).

Stakeholder satisfaction needs to be recognized and addressed as a project goal. Stakeholder satisfaction can be defined as meeting the interests of all stakeholders (García-Marzá, 2005). According to Yigitcanlar (2010), stakeholders' satisfaction is an important component of sustainability. Effective stakeholder engagement relies on continuous communication with all stakeholders, including team members, to understand their needs and expectations, resolve issues, manage conflicting interests, and foster meaningful engagement in project operations. Surveys, interviews, and formal feedback mechanisms can gauge how effectively stakeholders' expectations are met. In construction, this might involve evaluating whether stakeholders are satisfied with project timelines, costs, quality of work, and how well their concerns have been addressed during project execution (Karlsen, 2002).

Stakeholder commitment is multi-dimensional, and different types of commitment uniquely affect each participant's performance in the project. Regular, transparent, and effective communication is crucial in managing stakeholder relationships. Communication plans must be tailored to the needs of each stakeholder group. In construction projects, providing timely updates on project progress, changes in timelines, and addressing concerns such as environmental impacts can significantly enhance stakeholder satisfaction. The effectiveness of stakeholder engagement is often evaluated based on feedback from stakeholders, the frequency of interactions, and whether communication has mitigated conflicts (Yang et al., 2011).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopted a quantitative research strategy. This research strategy is suitable for this study because it facilitates quick data collection, and the results are analysed using unbiased statistics. This research adopted a survey research design since data was collected at a single point in time. The researcher opted for this research design due to its versatility in exploring a wide range of topics. The research was conducted in Machakos County.

Data was collected using questionnaires. The questionnaires were divided into subsections containing basic information about the respondents and items related to the objectives of this research. A 5-point Likert scale was adopted for the quantitative data.

In the financial years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022, there were 99 construction projects funded by the County Government of Machakos (Machakos County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022, 2018). The target population of the relevant stakeholders was drawn from these projects. Seven stakeholders, namely contractors, project consultants, end users, ward administrators, PMC representatives, village administrators, and ward

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development officers, were selected from each project. Thus, the target population for the stakeholders was 693.

Stratified random sampling was employed to determine the sample size. This sampling technique is useful to this research because it mitigates selection bias and provides a robust basis for generalizing findings. To obtain the required sample size, the researcher used Yamane's formula (Yamane, 1967), given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = Population

e = error tolerance (0.05)

The sample size was determined as indicated below:

$$n = \frac{693}{1 + (693 \times 0.05^2)}$$

n = 254

A total of 254 questionnaires were distributed to respondents. The respondents for this study included contractors, project consultants, ward development officers, end users, ward administrators, and village administrators. Out of the total 254 questionnaires administered, 158 were filled out, collected, and returned. The overall response rate was 62.20%. According to (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003), a response rate of 50% is adequate; 60% is a good response, while 70% is very good. Therefore, the response rate was acceptable and credible.

Data Analysis

The collected quantitative data was cleaned, coded, and entered into Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 23. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data, which were then presented in tables and graphs. Descriptive statistics enabled the researcher to evaluate the current state of stakeholder management performance in County Government-funded construction projects in Machakos County and to describe the existing stakeholder management practices in County Government-funded construction projects in Machakos County.

Inferential statistics included correlation and multiple regression analysis. Pearson's Correlation (r) was used to reveal the strength of the relationship. Multiple linear regression helped to determine the relationship between stakeholder management practices and stakeholder management performance of County Government-funded construction projects in Machakos County. The researcher chose to use multiple linear regression because the study included multiple independent variables used to determine the outcome of a single dependent variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background Information of Respondents

Age of Stakeholders Involved in CGFCPs

According to the findings, the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 34 and 41 years (32.3%), while the minority were between the ages of 18 and 25 years (8.2%). Ages of 26-33 years, 42-49 years and 50-57 years were represented by 17.1%, 29.8% and 12.7%, respectively. The findings showed that most of the participants were in the most active age group. Figure 2 illustrates the age distribution of participants in this study.

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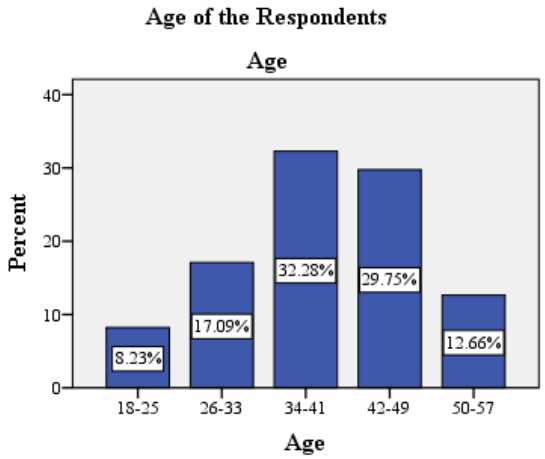
Figure 2. Age of the Respondents



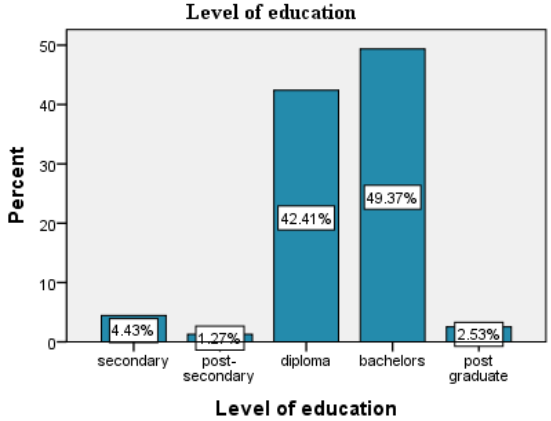
Source: (Researcher, 2024)

The data indicated that the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 34 and 41. The minority group of respondents were aged 18-25 years (8.2%) and this raised questions about the engagement of younger professionals in construction projects.

Level of Education of Stakeholders Involved in CGFCPs

49.37% of the respondents had a bachelor's degree, 42.41% had a diploma, and 4.43% had a secondary qualification. 2.53% had a postgraduate qualification, while 1.27% had a post-secondary qualification. This indicated that the respondents were generally well-educated and could give credible data about these projects. The results for the levels of education of respondents are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The Level of Education of Respondents



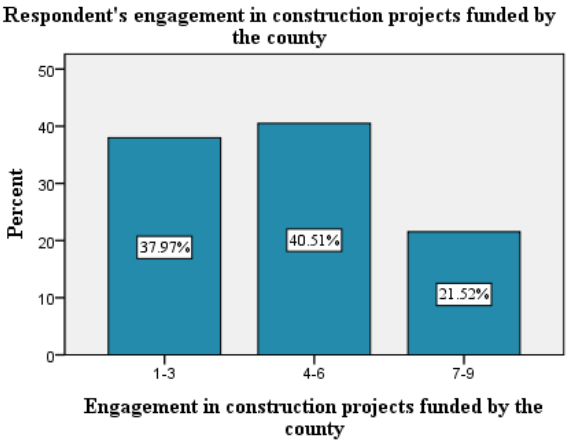
Source: (Researcher, 2024)

The high percentage of respondents with bachelor's and diploma qualifications suggested a workforce well-equipped to engage in complex discussions about construction project management. According to Müller and Jugdev (2012), stakeholders with higher education levels are generally able to understand the technical concepts, regulatory requirements, and project management methodologies.

Engagement in County-Funded Construction Projects

Respondents indicated the period for which they were engaged in construction projects funded by Machakos County.

Figure 4. Respondents' Engagement in CGFCPs



Source: (Researcher, 2024)

Figure 4 shows that 40.51% of the respondents had been engaged for 4-6 years, 37.97% for 1-3 years and 21.52% for 7-9 years in the construction projects funded by the county. This indicated that the stakeholders were actively involved in CGFCPs and possessed substantial knowledge about these projects.

Stakeholder Roles in County Government-Funded Construction Projects

Figure 5 shows that 22.15% of the respondents were end users, 14.56% were PMC representatives, 13.92% were ward administrators, 13.29% were contractors, 12.66% were project consultants, 12.66% were village administrators, and 10.76% of the respondents were ward development officers. This indicates

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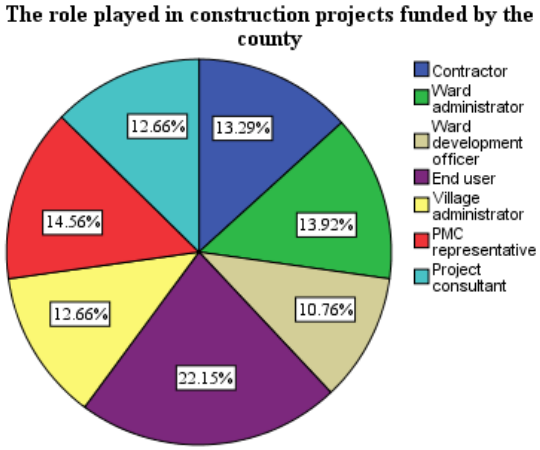
that all respondents were actively involved in various roles in construction projects funded by Machakos County.

End users are referred to as the primary beneficiaries of construction projects. They play a vital role in shaping the project requirements and ensuring that the outcomes are in line with community needs. Their involvement is essential for aligning project objectives with local expectations, which can enhance user satisfaction and project effectiveness (Kanja & Ngatia, 2024). PMC representatives oversee project execution and ensure adherence to governance standards. Their involvement in decision-making processes significantly influences the project's direction and resource allocation, ultimately impacting overall performance.

Figure 5. Respondents' Role in CGFCPs



Source: (Researcher, 2024)

Ward administrators act as liaisons between the community and the government. They facilitate communication and collaboration among multiple stakeholders. Their insights into local dynamics help tailor projects to better serve the community interests (Kitui & Khisa, 2024). Contractors are responsible for the actual implementation of projects. Their expertise is vital for timely and quality delivery. Their engagement in planning phases can lead to more realistic timelines and cost estimates, ultimately enhancing project feasibility (Njue et al., 2021).

Project consultants provide specialized knowledge and technical guidance throughout the project lifecycle. Their involvement improves project design and execution strategies, ensuring that best practices are followed (Kobusingye et al., 2017). Village administrators play an important role in grassroots mobilization and community engagement by ensuring that local voices are heard in the planning and implementation phases. Ward development officers monitor development initiatives within their jurisdictions. Their feedback is instrumental in assessing project impacts and identifying areas for improvement post-implementation.

The Current State of Stakeholder Management Performance in CGFCPs in Machakos County

The dependent variable was measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The findings in Table 1 indicate that the respondents expressed moderate disagreement with the state of existing stakeholder management performance.

Table 1: Current State of Stakeholder Management Performance

Indicator	Statement	Mean	SD	Rank
Stakeholder diversity	The county has appropriately addressed the diverse needs and concerns of all relevant stakeholders	2.04	.77	7
	The county actively sought input from a diverse range of stakeholders.	2.28	.87	4
Stakeholder inclusivity	Stakeholders from different demographics, backgrounds, and perspectives were included in the stakeholder management process.	2.28	.86	5
	There was adequate representation of marginalized or underrepresented groups as stakeholders.	2.23	.88	6
	Efforts were made to remove barriers to participation for stakeholders, ensuring equal opportunity for input.	2.58	1.01	1

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Indicator	Statement	Mean	SD	Rank
Stakeholder satisfaction	There were accommodations made to ensure that all stakeholders could participate meaningfully.	2.41	.93	3
	There were feedback mechanisms to gauge stakeholder satisfaction and make improvements accordingly.	1.99	.94	8
	Efforts were made to engage stakeholders in meaningful dialogue and collaboration.	2.49	1.01	2
	The County consistently met stakeholders' expectations for engagement and involvement.	1.92	.90	9
	Overall stakeholder management performance level	**2.25**	**0.98**	

Source: (Researcher, 2024)

The overall performance level for stakeholder management had a mean score of 2.25. This showed that there was a need for substantial improvement in all aspects of stakeholder management. The study's findings revealed systemic weaknesses in stakeholder diversity, stakeholder inclusivity, and stakeholder satisfaction in CGFCPs in Machakos County. Stakeholder inclusivity performed the best overall. It included the highest-scoring indicator. On the other hand, stakeholder satisfaction had the lowest results. It included the two lowest-scoring indicators. These results suggested that although inclusivity efforts were somewhat effective, the county struggled to meet stakeholder expectations and provide meaningful feedback mechanisms. These findings are consistent with Bryson's (2004) observations, which highlighted that failure to engage stakeholders effectively often stems from inadequate feedback processes and unmet expectations.

The Existing Stakeholder Management Practices in CGCFPs in Machakos County

This independent variable had four indicators: stakeholder identification, planning stakeholder engagement, managing stakeholder engagement and monitoring stakeholder engagement.

Stakeholder Identification in CGCFPs in Machakos County

The findings in Table 2 show that respondents were in moderate disagreement with the current state of stakeholder identification as a stakeholder management practice.

Table 2: Stakeholder Identification in CGCFPs in Machakos County

Indicators of stakeholder identification	Mean	SD	Rank
All relevant stakeholders were identified systematically.	2.58	.97	1
All relevant stakeholders were categorized based on their level of influence and interest.	2.47	.85	2
The county allocated sufficient resources and expertise to conduct thorough stakeholder identification.	1.76	.87	6
The classification of the stakeholders involved was clear and intuitive.	2.42	1.01	3
The current classification of stakeholders was flexible enough to accommodate changes or updates as the project progressed.	2.35	.82	5
The classification of stakeholders adequately represented their respective interests and concerns.	2.37	.83	4
Stakeholder identification	**2.35**	**.892**	

Source: (Researcher, 2024)

The highest mean score of 2.58 for the statement "All relevant stakeholders were identified systematically" suggested some level of awareness of the structured approach to stakeholder identification, ranking first among the indicators. This finding aligns with the work of Kanja & Ngatia (2024), who emphasized that systematic stakeholder identification is fundamental to effective stakeholder management to ensure that all relevant parties are considered early in the project lifecycle. The second-highest score of 2.47 for categorizing stakeholders based

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on their level of influence and interest ranked second, reflecting a moderate agreement with the effectiveness of this practice. This approach is supported by stakeholder theory, which posits that understanding stakeholders' power dynamics is crucial for prioritizing engagement efforts.

In contrast, the statement regarding the allocation of sufficient resources and expertise for thorough stakeholder identification received a significantly low score of 1.76, ranking it sixth. This finding highlighted a significant gap in the allocation of resources required for effective stakeholder engagement (Orina et al., 2023). Insufficient resources lead to inadequate stakeholder mapping and engagement strategies. The clarity of stakeholder classification ranked third with a score of 2.42, indicating that there was some agreement on its effectiveness, but improvements are needed to enhance intuitiveness. The flexibility of classification ranked fifth with a low score of 2.35. This indicated that while there was some capacity to adapt classifications as projects evolved, this flexibility was not fully realized in practice.

The classification's ability to adequately represent stakeholders' interests and concerns ranked fourth with a score of 2.37. This finding suggested that while there was some acknowledgement of representation, there are still gaps that need to be addressed to ensure that all voices are heard and considered throughout the project lifecycle.

Planning Stakeholder Engagement in CGFCPs in Machakos County

The findings in Table 3 show that respondents were in moderate disagreement with the current state of planning stakeholder engagement in construction projects funded by the County government.

Table 3: Planning Stakeholder Engagement in CGFCPs in Machakos County

Indicators of Planning Stakeholder Engagement	Mean	SD	Rank
The county provided a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan.	2.49	.80	3
Regular monitoring and updates were carried out on the stakeholder engagement plan.	2.40	.77	4
The stakeholder engagement plan was effectively implemented.	2.36	.76	5
The engagement plan included the identification and assessment of stakeholder requirements.	2.63	.79	1
Stakeholders were actively involved at every stage of the project.	2.58	.87	2
The county established competent stakeholder engagement strategies.	2.42	.74	7
Stakeholders were well informed about the stakeholder engagement plan.	2.44	.76	6
The county adhered to the planned stakeholder engagement strategy.	2.25	.84	8
Planning Stakeholder Engagement	**2.44**	**.79**	

Source: (Researcher, 2024)

The statement *"The engagement plan included identification and assessment of stakeholder requirement"*, with a mean score of 2.63, was the top-ranked indicator. This suggests that the county made a good effort to understand and assess the needs and expectations of stakeholders at the planning stage, a critical component emphasized by Freeman's Stakeholder Theory.

Similarly, "*Stakeholders were actively involved at every stage of the project"*, with a mean score of 2.58, also received a relatively positive assessment, ranking second. This suggests that stakeholders were engaged in various stages of the project, although not to the level of complete satisfaction. Continuous and proactive involvement of stakeholders is essential for building trust and ensuring that projects meet stakeholder expectations, as noted by Bryson (2004).

"The county provided a comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan" received a mean score of 2.49, ranking third, indicating that the plan was somewhat comprehensive. This is supported by the work of Aapaoja et al. (2013), who stress the importance of having a well-rounded and detailed engagement plan that

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addresses all relevant stakeholder concerns and expectations. Similarly, the effective implementation of the engagement plan received a lower score (2.36, ranked fifth), suggesting that although a plan was in place, its execution did not fully meet stakeholders' expectations. Turner (2008) and Olander (2007) have both argued that even a strong plan can falter if not implemented effectively, which appears to be the case here.

"Regular monitoring and updates were carried out on the stakeholder engagement plan" scored 2.40 and ranked fourth. This score indicates that while some monitoring took place, it was not consistent. Liden et al. (2006) emphasize the importance of regular updates and monitoring to maintain a dynamic and responsive engagement process.

"Stakeholders were well informed about the stakeholder engagement plan" had a mean score of 2.44 (ranked sixth). While stakeholders were generally aware of the plan, this score indicates that the communication could have been more transparent and consistent. Effective communication is essential for building trust and managing expectations, as highlighted by (Grunig & Grunig (2008).

Finally, adherence to the planned engagement strategy was ranked the lowest, with a mean score of 2.25. This finding suggests that the county struggled to stick to the initial engagement strategy. As Olander (2007) notes, deviation from a well-crafted engagement plan can erode stakeholder trust.

Managing Stakeholder Engagement in CGFCPs in Machakos County

Table 4 shows that respondents were in moderate disagreement with the current state of managing stakeholder engagement in construction projects funded by the County government.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Managing Stakeholder Engagement

Indicator	Mean	SD	Rank
All relevant stakeholders of the projects met regularly.	2.23	.75	7
There were adequate channels for stakeholders to raise their concerns and feedback regarding the project	2.28	.78	6
Stakeholders had access to progress project reports.	2.54	.86	3
Stakeholder engagement activities were documented and tracked for accountability.	2.64	.88	1
There was a designated individual or team responsible for managing stakeholder relationships.	2.61	1.09	2
There was transparency in communications with stakeholders.	2.40	.84	4
Managing stakeholder engagement	**2.45**	**.865**	

Source: (Researcher, 2024)

The lowest-ranked indicator was the regularity of meetings among stakeholders, with a mean score of 2.23. This suggested that collaborative decision-making was potentially impeded. Similarly, the availability of channels for stakeholders to voice their concerns or provide feedback scored poorly (mean: 2.28), highlighting a lack of effective mechanisms to capture and act on stakeholder input.

Stakeholders' access to progress reports achieved a higher mean of 2.54. While this indicates some level of communication, it also suggests that access to these reports was inconsistent. These findings are in agreement with a study by Chinyio and Akintoye (2008), who identified documentation and accountability as frequent areas of weakness in stakeholder management. The documentation and tracking of stakeholder engagement activities emerged as the top-ranked indicator with a mean of 2.64. This reflects an effort to maintain accountability, though the score still suggests room for improvement in systematic tracking.

The designation of individuals or teams responsible for managing stakeholder relationships had a mean of 2.61. Although this

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points to some level of role assignment, the high variability (standard deviation: 1.087) indicated inconsistency in the implementation of this practice. This is echoed in a study by Aaltonen and Kujala (2016), who found that effective stakeholder management often hinges on having dedicated personnel responsible for engagement.

Transparency in communication scored moderately (mean: 2.40), suggesting that despite efforts to keep stakeholders informed, there were gaps in clarity and openness. This aligns with a study by Yang et al. (2009), who highlighted transparency and accountability as critical yet commonly underdeveloped aspects of stakeholder engagement.

Monitoring Stakeholder Engagement in CGFCPs in Machakos County

Table 5 shows that respondents were in moderate disagreement with the current state of monitoring stakeholder engagement in construction projects funded by the County government.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Monitoring Stakeholder Engagement

Indicators of Monitoring Stakeholder Engagement	Mean	SD	Rank
The county had effective mechanisms for resolving conflicts among stakeholders when they arose.	1.99	.87	7
Stakeholders were provided with transparent and accessible information regarding the project.	2.39	.97	2
Stakeholders were adequately consulted and involved in decision-making processes related to the project.	2.27	.95	5
The county was transparent in its interactions with stakeholders.	2.34	.90	4
Inputs of various stakeholders were incorporated into the project outcomes.	2.40	.92	1
There was collaboration among all stakeholders involved in the project.	2.39	.90	3
Stakeholder concerns and issues were addressed.	2.06	.87	6
Monitoring Stakeholder Engagement	**2.26**	**.911**	

Source: (Researcher, 2024)

The findings on monitoring stakeholder engagement indicated substantial shortcomings in how stakeholders were involved, consulted, and engaged during project execution. The overall mean score of 2.26 (standard deviation: 0.911) indicated a lack of robust mechanisms to effectively address stakeholder dynamics and facilitate meaningful collaboration. The indicator with the lowest score (mean: 1.99, SD: 0.871) was the presence of mechanisms to resolve conflicts among stakeholders. This finding suggested a reactive rather than proactive approach to conflict management. Unresolved conflicts can derail projects by eroding trust and cooperation, as supported by Jepsen and Eskerod (2009), who emphasize the importance of conflict resolution for project alignment.

Stakeholders' access to transparent and accessible information received a mean score of 2.39 (SD: 0.969), indicating that efforts were made to achieve this, but their effectiveness varies. A lack of consistent communication can lead to disengagement, as documented by Savage et al. (1991), who noted that accessible information fosters stakeholder commitment. The mean score of 2.27 (SD: 0.949) for stakeholder consultation and involvement in decision-making highlighted limited engagement opportunities. Reed et al. (2009) stress that participatory approaches in decision-making significantly enhance stakeholder satisfaction.

Transparency in interactions with stakeholders had a mean score of 2.34 (SD: 0.900). Although this indicates moderate efforts toward openness, it falls short of the ideal required for stakeholders to feel informed and involved. Collaboration among stakeholders received a mean score of 2.39 (SD: 0.901). A moderate level of collaboration reflects the absence of structured frameworks for fostering teamwork, which can result in fragmented efforts. Aaltonen and Kujala (2010) noted that effective collaboration mechanisms are essential for harmonizing diverse stakeholder interests and achieving project coherence.

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Another weakness was the ability to address stakeholder concerns, with a mean score of 2.06 (SD: 0.869). Failure to adequately address stakeholder concerns can lead to dissatisfaction and undermine the legitimacy of project processes. According to Rowlinson and Cheung (2008), addressing stakeholder concerns promptly is vital to maintaining positive relationships and minimizing resistance.

Multiple regression analysis was sought to determine how existing stakeholder management practices influenced the stakeholder management performance in construction projects funded by the County in Machakos County. There was a strong positive correlation between stakeholder management practices and stakeholder management performance, which was indicated by an R-value of 0.849. The independent variables explained 71.4% of the changes in the level of stakeholder management performance of construction projects funded by the county. This research established that stakeholder management practices are statistically significant in explaining the stakeholder management performance in construction projects funded by the County in Machakos County.

A regression analysis was done to test the hypothesis. From the findings, stakeholder management practices had a statistically significant positive influence on stakeholder management performance. The p-values obtained were less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis, concluding that stakeholder management practices do significantly influence stakeholder management performance.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.059	.052		-1.14	.258
	Stakeholder identification	.171	.077	.166	2.22	.028
	Planning stakeholder engagement	.125	.106	.102	1.18	.238
	Managing stakeholder engagement	.240	.107	.187	2.25	.026
	Monitoring stakeholder engagement	.480	.080	.468	6.02	.000

a. Dependent Variable: stakeholder management performance

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research concluded that stakeholder management performance can be evaluated in terms of stakeholder diversity, stakeholder inclusivity and stakeholder satisfaction and that the level of stakeholder management performance is low in Machakos County. Moreover, it concluded that the current stakeholder management practices in construction projects funded by Machakos County do not adequately meet the needs and expectations of stakeholders. Also, there is a need for a more comprehensive approach to stakeholder management to address the diverse interests and concerns of all relevant parties involved in construction projects funded by the County. Finally, this research concluded that enhancing stakeholder management practices can significantly improve overall stakeholder management performance.

The research recommended that counties should prioritize stakeholder management training through well-organized awareness campaigns. These campaigns should target all relevant stakeholder groups, particularly community members, to educate them on their roles, rights, and responsibilities in the construction process. These efforts will cultivate a sense of ownership and shared accountability among stakeholders.

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It also recommended that counties should establish mechanisms for periodic performance evaluations. Baseline performance assessments should be conducted regularly on ongoing and recently completed projects to identify specific gaps and challenges.

The findings of this study contribute significantly to the theoretical discourse on stakeholder management. The study advances a multidimensional framework for evaluating stakeholder management performance through stakeholder diversity, stakeholder inclusivity, and stakeholder satisfaction. This conceptualization goes beyond traditional models. Furthermore, the study reinforces stakeholder theory by affirming that effective stakeholder engagement is a strategic determinant of project success.

The practical implications of the study are significant to county governments and project managers. County governments should adopt a standardized stakeholder management framework that explicitly incorporates stakeholder diversity, inclusivity, and satisfaction as performance benchmarks. This would help ensure that stakeholder needs and expectations are systematically addressed.

There is a need for capacity-building initiatives. These initiatives should focus on enhancing skills in stakeholder mapping, communication, and conflict resolution. Such capacity development would empower project teams to manage stakeholder interests more effectively.

The research also supports the establishment of feedback mechanisms. These are essential in ensuring that stakeholder concerns are heard, addressed, and used to inform decision-making throughout the project cycle. Incorporating these mechanisms would improve stakeholder satisfaction in county government-funded construction projects.

Although this study was carefully designed and rigorously executed, a few limitations are worth acknowledging. The study was confined to Machakos County. While this geographic scope limits the breadth of the study, Machakos County presents governance, infrastructure, and stakeholder challenges that are characteristic of many counties in Kenya. Therefore, while generalization should be approached with caution, the findings remain analytically useful for similar contexts.

The study focused on three core dimensions of stakeholder management; diversity, inclusivity, and satisfaction. These were deliberately selected for their relevance and measurability in the context of county government-funded construction projects. Other dimensions such as communication efficiency or stakeholder influence could be explored by other researchers.

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