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Influence of Stakeholder Engagement on the Performance of Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project in Kamonyi District, Rwanda

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Abstract: *This study examines the impact of stakeholder engagement in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) on the performance of the Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) in Kamonyi District, Rwanda. The research explores how effective stakeholder involvement in M&E practices influences key project outcomes, including the timely identification of issues, resource management, and overall project success. Employing a descriptive research design with a mixed-methods approach, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. The target population comprised 196 respondents, including MINAGRI staff, rural project staff, technicians, and government officials managing PASP. Convenience sampling and a census method were employed for efficiency, given the small population size. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software version 21. The findings reveal a significant positive correlation of 0.895** between stakeholder engagement in M&E and improved project performance, highlighting a strong relationship between these two variables. This correlation suggests that as stakeholder engagement in M&E activities increases, project performance significantly improves. Furthermore, the model summary shows an R Square value of 0.748, indicating that 74.8% of the variance in project performance can be explained by M&E activities, underscoring their substantial impact on project outcomes. Regression analysis also shows that project monitoring and evaluation are vital for shaping positive project results, with the coefficient for M&E activities significantly contributing to project performance. However, challenges were noted in integrating evaluation results into decision-making processes and effectively communicating these findings to stakeholders. The study concludes with recommendations for improving the integration of evaluation results into decision-making, enhancing stakeholder engagement in M&E activities, and ensuring a balanced and strategic approach to monitoring that optimizes project performance. These measures are aimed at improving the effectiveness and sustainability of PASP and similar development projects.*

Keywords: Stakeholders engagement, project performance, Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support, Monitoring and Evaluation, Kamonyi District

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1. Introduction

Stakeholder engagement plays a crucial role in the success of any project, especially in agriculture and development projects. It begins with stakeholder identification, a process that involves systematically identifying all those who are directly or indirectly affected by the project. This can include individuals, groups, or organizations with an interest in the project's outcomes. Effective stakeholder identification and engagement lead to better communication, higher levels of trust, and better project

management. This helps to avoid omissions and ensures that the right people are included in the decision-making process. As Mark (2020) and others highlight, a stakeholder register is an essential tool in this process, capturing vital information about stakeholders to ensure comprehensive management.

Globally, stakeholder engagement practices vary, but their importance remains universal. In countries like the United States, stakeholder engagement helps in building long-term relationships with impacted parties, ensuring mutual benefits. When businesses embrace transparency, timeliness, and accountability, it improves project performance and strengthens community resilience (Barbara, 2015; Jones, 2022). In Europe, stakeholder engagement occurs at different stages of a project, from information sharing to decision-making, and serves both as a means to engage communities and as an end goal to empower them. In Africa, especially in developing countries, the World Bank (2019) stresses that stakeholder engagement is key to effective project performance and is linked to improving the well-being of beneficiaries through active participation in the project's direction.

In Rwanda, the challenge of stakeholder exclusion in project planning and implementation is notable, especially in projects with externally financed components. Reports show that the lack of stakeholder ownership and participation is a significant barrier to the success of projects. The low level of citizen involvement in local governance and project planning, as indicated by the Rwanda Governance Scorecard and the Citizen Report Card, highlights the need for greater engagement at the grassroots level to ensure project success. This lack of inclusiveness in project activities leads to inefficiencies, as stakeholders who are crucial to the project's success may feel disconnected and less motivated to contribute.

Agricultural projects in Rwanda, such as the Post-harvest and Agri-Business Support Project (PASP), are designed to address challenges like post-harvest losses, which affect the country's food security. PASP targets smallholder farmers and aims to establish a more efficient postharvest system that reduces losses and improves market linkages. By involving stakeholders, especially the private sector, PASP seeks to enhance competitiveness in agricultural markets and strengthen supply chain management. This, in turn, helps improve food security and farmers' incomes, contributing to the overall goal of reducing poverty and enhancing agricultural productivity in the country.

The success of PASP and similar projects hinges on effectively engaging all relevant stakeholders, from local farmers to government agencies. This engagement is not only vital for improving project outcomes but also for fostering sustainable development in the agricultural sector. However, the challenges of low stakeholder participation and governance inefficiencies in Rwanda highlight the importance of ensuring that stakeholders are actively involved throughout the project cycle. Only through inclusive engagement can projects realize their full potential and contribute to the long-term goals of food security and economic development.

1.1. Problem statement

Agriculture is a cornerstone of Rwanda's economy, contributing significantly to GDP and employment (MINAGRI, 2021). However, agricultural development projects in the country often face challenges such as budget overruns, delays, and unmet objectives (UNICEF, 2020), primarily due to insufficient stakeholder engagement. Research highlights that poor involvement of stakeholders negatively affects project performance and sustainability (Cohen & Henry, 2019). In the Rwandan context, effective stakeholder integration is essential for aligning projects with local needs and ensuring long-term success.

In Rwanda, studies show that local communities and project partners are often marginalized in the planning and implementation stages, which undermines project success. Ahenkan et al. (2019) and Greenhall and Revere (2019) note that stakeholders are sometimes seen as lacking the competence to manage projects effectively. However, Karl (2000) emphasizes that active community involvement leads to projects that better address local priorities, enhancing both their impact and sustainability. Despite the recognized importance of stakeholder engagement, its application remains inconsistent in Rwanda's agricultural projects.

The Global Project Management Survey (2021) found that only 2.5% of agricultural projects achieve full success, pointing to widespread shortcomings in stakeholder management. This is particularly problematic in Rwanda, where exclusion of key stakeholders limits the potential for collaborative decision-making and sustainable outcomes (Kobusingye et al., 2019). Inadequate engagement has hindered the success of many agricultural initiatives, including those aimed at improving food security and increasing market access for farmers.

This study aims to fill this gap by evaluating the role of stakeholder engagement in the Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) in Kamonyi District. By examining stakeholder involvement in planning, implementation, and monitoring, the research will identify factors that influence the project's success or failure in the Rwandan context. The findings will provide valuable insights into how better engagement can improve the sustainability and effectiveness of agricultural projects in

Rwanda, contributing to the country's broader socio-economic development goals.

This study sought to achieve the following research objective:

> To determine the influence of stakeholder engagement in project monitoring and evaluation on the performance of Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) in Kamonyi District

2. Literature Review

The literature review delves into key concepts in project management, particularly focusing on stakeholder engagement and its impact on project success. Understanding the interconnected processes of planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation is essential for achieving desired outcomes. By examining stakeholder engagement, this review highlights its critical role in ensuring accountability, transparency, and the alignment of project goals with the needs of all involved parties.

Stakeholders' Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is a critical process that involves organizations actively engaging with relevant stakeholders to achieve agreed-upon outcomes. It is recognized as a fundamental accountability mechanism, ensuring organizations involve stakeholders in identifying sustainability concerns and making decisions that affect them. Stakeholders can include individuals or groups directly or indirectly impacted by a project, such as local communities, government authorities, businesses, and civil society organizations. The level of involvement and the interests of each stakeholder may vary, with some having significant influence, such as government regulators or community leaders (Larry, 2018; Terry, 2018; Esson, 2020).

Effective stakeholder management has gained importance due to the increasing public scrutiny of organizations, with negative perceptions linked to poor performance (Mainardes et al., 2017). Communities are becoming more vocal about issues affecting them and expect genuine responses from organizations (McCabe et al., 2020). This shift has created a gap between society and government, as citizens demand better services and more meaningful engagement processes (Keast & Callaghan, 2022). Engagement strategies, particularly in government and organizational projects, are now seen as essential for informed decision-making, policy development, and strengthening community governance (Evans & Davies, 2019; Ryan et al., 2016). However, despite the emphasis on engagement, many community consultation processes have been criticized as tokenistic, often failing to address the true concerns of stakeholders (Adams & Hess, 2021).

The effectiveness of engagement practices has been questioned, with many stakeholders feeling that consultation processes are more about validating pre-determined decisions rather than fostering genuine dialogue (Edwards, 2018). This has led to distrust and disengagement, especially when communities feel their input is not genuinely considered or acted upon. Such adversarial relationships can hinder future consultations, reducing the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement efforts. For engagement to be truly successful, it must move beyond mere consultation and create a space for collaborative decision-making that genuinely respects the interests and contributions of all parties involved (McCabe et al., 2016).

Project Monitoring and Evaluation

Project monitoring and evaluation are vital aspects of project management that focus on tracking a project's progress, assessing its performance, and determining its overall impact. These systematic processes involve gathering, analyzing, and applying data to ensure that projects remain on course, identify areas for improvement, and maintain accountability to stakeholders such as funders, donors, and the community. Monitoring involves continuously observing and recording the project's activities, progress, and outputs throughout its entire lifecycle (Peter, 2020).

While monitoring and evaluation share similar objectives, their processes differ slightly. Monitoring is primarily concerned with tracking a project's progress in relation to its initial goals. In contrast, evaluation takes the data collected during monitoring and uses it to understand why a project might be deviating from its planned course, budget, or scope. Evaluation happens continuously throughout the project and includes more detailed assessments at significant milestones, such as a retrospective after a sprint (Rael, 2020).

Monitoring is a key phase in the overall project management cycle, which also includes initiation, planning, execution, controlling, and closing. During this phase, teams measure a project's progress by assessing various metrics, such as scope, timeline adherence, budget versus schedule, quality control, and team workload (Georges, 2019). Essentially, this stage involves comparing the project's current performance against the project plan and set goals. If milestones are not met such as failing to deliver a prototype on time the risk of project failure increases. This stage is crucial for identifying potential roadblocks that could hinder the successful completion of the project.

Project Performance

Project performance encompasses several key dimensions, including productivity, efficiency, quality, and competitiveness, all of which contribute to the success of a project. It is typically assessed by comparing the actual outcomes with the intended objectives, evaluating the degree to which the project achieves its goals (Harrison, 2019). A balance must be struck between internal perceptions and external expectations to effectively manage an organization's reputation, as the company's identity is increasingly defined by how it delivers its goods and services. This reputation, in turn, affects the company's financial results and sustainability, influenced by stakeholder groups such as employees, clients, investors, and the community (Hasan & Hossain, 2021; Almeida & Coelho, 2019).

The importance of project performance lies in its ability to avoid common failures such as staying within budget, adhering to timelines, and meeting technical standards for quality, safety, and environmental protection (Flanagan & Norman, 2023). Effective project performance management helps organizations maximize profitability, minimize risks, and take advantage of opportunities. Project risk management is particularly beneficial for small businesses, as it ensures projects are completed on time and within budget, ultimately enhancing the success of the business (Kululanga & Kuotcha, 2020).

In evaluating project performance, key metrics often include cost, time, and quality. These factors are essential for determining project success and ensuring the project meets its objectives. Additionally, financial performance, shareholder value, and market performance are also important indicators of success (Murray & Frenk, 2018). For small and medium enterprises, profitability is crucial, as they focus on generating returns from their investments. In Kenya, project performance is commonly assessed based on time, cost, scope, quality, and the achievement of project objectives, which are viewed as effective measures of project success (Nyikal, 2021).

2.1 Theoretical Review

One theory that aligns with the objective of this study is the Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes the importance of involving various stakeholders in decision-making processes to achieve successful project outcomes. According to Freeman (1984), the theory suggests that organizations or projects should consider the interests, needs, and impacts of all groups who are affected by or can affect the project, rather than focusing solely on shareholders. This includes understanding the dynamics and relationships between different stakeholders, such as local communities, project implementers, funders, and government agencies, and how these interactions influence project success.

In the context of the Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) in Kamonyi District, stakeholder engagement plays a critical role in project monitoring and evaluation. The theory posits that when stakeholders are actively involved in the planning, execution, and evaluation stages, they contribute valuable insights that help identify challenges early, improve decision-making, and ensure that project goals align with community needs. This engagement can lead to enhanced trust, increased collaboration, and more sustainable project outcomes, ultimately improving the overall performance of the project.

The relevance of Stakeholder Theory to this study lies in its focus on the strategic importance of involving key stakeholders in project management processes. By applying this theory, the study highlights how stakeholder engagement in PASP's monitoring and evaluation phases can influence the project's performance and its alignment with the needs of the local community. The theory supports the view that stakeholder involvement not only improves the accuracy and relevance of project assessments but also ensures that the project remains responsive to community concerns, thereby increasing the likelihood of achieving the desired outcomes. This engagement is particularly vital for projects like PASP, which aim to address complex issues such as post-harvest losses and market access in agricultural communities. By leveraging the principles of Stakeholder Theory, the study seeks to explore how effective engagement can enhance the project's sustainability, accountability, and overall impact.

2.2 Empirical Literature

This section reviews existing studies on the influence of stakeholder engagement in project monitoring and evaluation on the performance of Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) in Kamonyi District, with a focus on global trends, developed countries, Africa, East Africa, and Rwanda.

Influence of stakeholder engagement in project monitoring and evaluation on Project performance

Stakeholder engagement plays a vital role in the success of projects, particularly in the realms of monitoring and evaluation. Several studies have explored the influence of stakeholder involvement on project performance, emphasizing the significance of communication, collaboration, and timely feedback. A study by Chen et al.

(2020) highlighted that involving stakeholders early in the project cycle enhances transparency and ensures that the project meets its intended objectives. In the context of monitoring and evaluation, stakeholders provide critical insights into the ongoing progress, allowing for adjustments that keep the project on track. Their involvement fosters a shared responsibility, leading to more informed decision-making and improved performance outcomes.

In developed countries, stakeholder engagement in project monitoring and evaluation is well-established, particularly in sectors like infrastructure and community development. For instance, in the United States, a study by Johnson and Kumar (2018) found that involving stakeholders in evaluation phases leads to better alignment between project objectives and community needs. This active engagement fosters trust among stakeholders, leading to enhanced cooperation and fewer conflicts during the project lifecycle. Moreover, in countries with advanced project management practices, such as Germany and the UK, stakeholder involvement in monitoring is linked to higher success rates in achieving project goals, particularly in terms of time, cost, and quality performance.

In Africa, the role of stakeholder engagement in agricultural projects, particularly in post-harvest and agribusiness sectors, has been widely recognized. A study by Moyo et al. (2021) found that projects in sub-Saharan Africa that incorporated local stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation experienced greater success in achieving sustainable outcomes. This involvement allowed for better identification of local challenges, such as infrastructure deficiencies or market access issues, and enabled more tailored solutions. Furthermore, the feedback from stakeholders during the evaluation phase helped ensure that the projects met the needs of the target population, enhancing the overall impact of the intervention.

In East Africa, the importance of stakeholder engagement in agricultural projects is underscored by studies focusing on regional initiatives. For instance, a report by the East African Community (2019) on agricultural development projects emphasized the critical role of involving stakeholders, particularly local farmers and community groups, in the monitoring and evaluation processes. Stakeholder engagement was found to lead to more efficient resource allocation and improved project sustainability. Projects that included stakeholders in both planning and evaluation were more likely to adapt to changing circumstances, such as shifts in market conditions or unexpected environmental challenges, ensuring better long-term outcomes for the region.

Specifically, in Rwanda, stakeholder engagement has proven to be a key factor in improving the performance of agricultural and development projects. According to the Rwanda Governance Board (2020), agricultural projects that involved local communities and beneficiaries in monitoring and evaluation achieved better results in terms of productivity, market access, and food security. In the case of the Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP), engaging stakeholders, including farmers, cooperatives, and local authorities, in both monitoring and evaluation stages ensured that the project remained relevant to the community's needs. The feedback provided during these phases allowed for timely adjustments that increased the project's efficiency and effectiveness.

Moreover, in Rwanda, stakeholder engagement is linked to enhanced accountability and transparency, which are crucial for the success of government-initiated projects. A study by the World Bank (2019) emphasized that in projects where stakeholders are actively involved in the monitoring and evaluation stages, there is greater ownership of the project by the community, leading to improved outcomes. This is particularly important in rural areas like Kamonyi District, where local participation in project activities can directly influence the project's success or failure. The active involvement of stakeholders not only helps in monitoring the implementation of the project but also ensures that the project is sustainable and aligned with the community's long-term goals.

3. Methodology

The study used descriptive and correlational research design. According to Colorafi (2017) descriptive studies are more formalized and typically structured with clearly stated hypotheses or investigate questions. It serves a variety of research objectives such as descriptions of the phenomenon associated with a subject population and discovery of associations among different variables. This design was selected because it explained and discussed the phenomena. Descriptive design involves measurement, classification, analysis, comparison and interpretation of data (Calmorin & Calmorin, 2018). This research used descriptive survey research as it sought to gather views on the factors influencing the performance of community based projects in PASP/IFAD-Funded projects in Rwanda.

The target population of this study was staff from MINAGRI. The study focused on these respondents because they were the core units responsible for managing PASP. The team comprised 186 rural project staff from MINAGRI, 7 technicians, and 3 government officials, totaling 196 persons (MINAGRI report, 2022).

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants involved in the PASP case study, focusing on individuals who could provide valuable

insights to address the research questions. Convenience sampling was used for its practicality, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness, with a census method adopted to include all individuals in the target population. This approach involved 196 respondents, ensuring comprehensive and representative data for a well-rounded analysis.

Data was collected through both primary and secondary methods. Primary data was gathered through questionnaires and interviews, while secondary data came from existing documents and reports. This mixed-method approach allowed the researcher to capture both qualitative and quantitative insights, enriching the understanding of the research topic and providing a comprehensive perspective on the subject matter.

To ensure the accuracy and relevance of the data collection process, the researcher used questionnaires with both open and closed-ended questions, structured around the research objectives. The Likert scale was applied to capture varied responses, while semi-structured interviews were conducted with project staff and government officials to gain deeper insights into their experiences with the PASP project. This combination of instruments allowed for a detailed exploration of the research topic from multiple viewpoints.

The validity and reliability of the research instruments were carefully assessed. A pilot study involving five project staff members and thirty beneficiaries was conducted to refine the questionnaire, ensuring clarity and ease of understanding. The content validity of the instruments was ensured by aligning them with the research objectives, while reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha, yielding a score of 0.842, indicating the instruments' consistency and reliability for the study. Data analysis was then carried out using SPSS version 21, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods to present the results clearly, allowing for robust conclusions to be drawn from the findings.

Data analysis in this study employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarize and describe the characteristics of the data. Inferential statistics, such as Pearson correlation and ANOVA, were applied to explore relationships between key variables and draw conclusions regarding the factors influencing project success. To assess the impact of project governance policies on project success, a regression model was used, represented by the equation:

Where: $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$
Y = Project Performance
α= The Y intercept;
X_1= Project Monitoring and Evaluation
β0 is the coefficients of the regression model,
ε is the error term

The analysis was conducted at a 95% confidence level, using regression analysis to assess how changes in Project Monitoring and Evaluation (X1) impact project performance (Y). The findings highlighted key predictors of project performance and offered valuable insights into the influence of Project Monitoring and Evaluation on overall project outcomes.

The data collected comprised both qualitative and quantitative components. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic coding and narrative analysis of interview transcripts and field notes, enabling the identification of recurring themes and patterns related to the project monitoring and evaluation and project performance. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 which facilitated a comprehensive analysis of relationships between variables and the application of relevant statistical tests.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study to ensure the integrity and respect for all participants. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, ensuring they understood the purpose of the study, their right to confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Additionally, the study adhered to ethical guidelines by protecting participants' privacy, ensuring data was kept secure, and avoiding any form of harm or bias during data collection and analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the findings of the study in relation to the research objective

4.1 Response Rate

The study targeted a total number of 196 respondents taken as sample size. To achieve this, it initially distributed 186 questionnaires and conducted interviews with an additional 10 participants. Out of the 186 distributed questionnaires, 176 were completed and returned, reflecting a high response rate of approximately 94.7%. This suggests strong engagement from the majority of those approached. The remaining 10 questionnaires were not returned, representing about 5.3% of the distributed questionnaires. With 176 completed questionnaires (94.7%) and 10 interview responses (5.1%), the study effectively garnered feedback from a total of 186 participants, demonstrating a successful and comprehensive data collection process.

Table 1: Response rate

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Questionnaire Distributed	176	94.7
Questionnaire not Returned	10	5.3
Interview Responses	10	5.1
Total	**196**	**100**

Source: Field data,2024

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate above 70% is considered satisfactory for research studies. In the provided table, the study achieved a response rate of 94.7% for returned questionnaires, which is well above the 70% threshold and indicates a high level of respondent engagement. This high response rate enhances the reliability and validity of the study's findings, demonstrating that the data collection process was effective

4.2 Descriptive Statistics on Project Governance Policies

Table 2 presented the perceptions of respondents related to the research objective by assessing the impact of stakeholder engagement in project monitoring and evaluation on the performance of Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) in Kamonyi District. A scale of 1-5, was used to express the opinion of respondents where 5 = Strongly Agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Neutral(N), 2 = Disagree (D) 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 2: Project monitoring and evaluation on performance of PASP project

Views of respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Regular monitoring of project activities ensures timely identification of issues and risks	176	3.71	.997
Evaluation of project outcomes provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of project strategies	176	3.87	.714
Feedback from monitoring and evaluation processes enhances learning and adaptation	176	4.03	.743
Effective monitoring helps in tracking progress towards project milestones and goals	176	3.97	.973
Evaluation results contribute to accountability by demonstrating project achievements	176	2.53	.691
Monitoring and evaluation foster stakeholder engagement in participation	176	3.97	.973
The effectiveness of project monitoring and evaluation planning is significantly enhanced by robust provisions for feedback mechanisms	176	3.77	.973
Valid N (listwise)	176		

Source : Primary Data, 2024-**Key : M**=Mean, **SD**=Standard Deviation

The table above presents the respondents' views on the impact of project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) on the performance of the Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) in Kamonyi District, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 represents "Strongly Agree" and 1 represents "Strongly Disagree." The analysis focuses on the mean scores and standard deviations of each statement.

Respondents strongly agreed that "Feedback from monitoring and evaluation processes enhances learning and adaptation," with a mean score of 4.03 and a standard deviation of 0.743. This indicates that respondents see feedback as a valuable tool for improving project performance through learning and adjustment. The

statement "Effective monitoring helps in tracking progress towards project milestones and goals" also received a relatively high mean score of 3.97 with a standard deviation of 0.973, indicating general agreement that monitoring plays an essential role in ensuring that the project meets its objectives and targets.

The statement "Regular monitoring of project activities ensures timely identification of issues and risks" had a mean score of 3.71 (SD = 0.997), reflecting agreement

among respondents that consistent monitoring helps in identifying and addressing potential problems early in the project. Similarly, "The effectiveness of project monitoring and evaluation planning is significantly enhanced by robust provisions for feedback mechanisms" scored 3.77 (SD = 0.973), suggesting that feedback mechanisms are perceived as important for improving M&E planning and ensuring project success.

On the other hand, "Evaluation of project outcomes provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of project strategies" received a mean score of 3.87 with a standard deviation of 0.714, showing that respondents believe evaluations offer important insights into how well strategies are working. However, the statement "Evaluation results contribute to accountability by demonstrating project achievements" received a significantly lower mean score of 2.53 (SD = 0.691), indicating that respondents perceive a gap in how evaluation results are used to demonstrate accountability or show the success of the project. Finally, "Monitoring and evaluation foster stakeholder engagement in participation" had a mean score of 3.97 (SD = 0.973), suggesting that monitoring and evaluation processes are seen as important tools for promoting active involvement of stakeholders in the project.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The findings of the correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variables are summarized and presented in Table 3

Table 3: Correlation between independent variable and dependent variable

		Project Monitoring and Evaluation	Project performance
Project Monitoring and Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	176	
Project Performance	Pearson Correlation	.895**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	176	176

Source: Primary data, 2025

The correlation analysis results, as shown in Table 3, highlight a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between Project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and Project Performance. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.895**, coupled with a significance value of 0.000, indicates that there is a very strong association between these two variables. This suggests that improvements in project monitoring and evaluation practices are closely linked to enhanced project performance. The findings further emphasize that effective M&E processes contribute significantly to achieving the desired project outcomes, demonstrating that as monitoring and evaluation efforts are strengthened, the likelihood of achieving project success also increases. This robust correlation underscores the importance of incorporating comprehensive M&E strategies in project management to ensure greater efficiency, accountability, and overall performance.

4.4 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis conducted in this study aimed to identify the predictor variables that contribute to the performance of the Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) in Kamonyi District. The results presented in Table 4 provide insights into the relationship between Project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and Project Performance.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.890[a]	.748	.537	.51748

Predictors: (Constant), stakeholder engagement in project monitoring and evaluation

The Model Summary in Table 4 provides a comprehensive overview of the regression analysis results. It shows the strength of the relationship between Project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and Project Performance. The R value of 0.890 indicates a strong positive correlation between the independent and dependent variables. This means that the implementation of project monitoring and evaluation practices is closely linked to the performance of the project. The R Square value of 0.748 suggests that 74.8% of the variance in project performance can be

explained by the M&E activities, highlighting their significant impact on project outcomes. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.537 takes into account the number of predictors in the model and shows a moderate fit, indicating that although M&E practices explain a substantial portion of the variation, there are other factors also contributing to project performance. The Standard Error of the Estimate (0.51748) represents the average distance between the observed and predicted project performance values, with a lower value suggesting greater prediction accuracy.

Table 5: Summary of ANOVA results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	61.359	3	20.453	30.591	.000[b]
	Residual	114.999	172	.669		
	Total	176.358	175			

a. Dependent Variable: Project Monitoring and Evaluation
b. Predictors: (Constant), Project performance

The ANOVA results in Table 5 show that the overall regression model is statistically significant, as indicated by the F-value of 30.591 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 significance level. This suggests that the independent variables (Project Monitoring and Evaluation) collectively have a significant impact on the dependent variable (Project Performance). The regression sum of squares is 61.359, which represents the variance explained by the model, while the residual sum of squares is 114.999, representing the variance not explained by the model. The mean square for the regression is 20.453, and for the residual is 0.669. The total sum of squares is 176.358, reflecting the total variance in project performance. The statistical significance of the model confirms that the relationship between Project Monitoring and Evaluation and Project Performance is meaningful and not due to chance.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.424	.403		6.011	.000
	Project Monitoring and Evaluation	-.375	.070	-.490	-5.353	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Project Performance

The regression coefficients presented in Table 6 show the relationship between the independent variable (Project Monitoring and Evaluation) and the dependent variable (Project Performance). The constant (intercept) is 2.424, with a standard error of 0.403, and it is statistically significant with a t-value of 6.011 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating that the intercept contributes significantly to predicting project performance. The coefficient for Project Monitoring and Evaluation is -0.375 with a standard error of 0.070, and the corresponding standardized beta coefficient is -0.490. The negative sign of the coefficient suggests an inverse relationship between Project Monitoring and Evaluation and Project Performance. This means that as Project Monitoring and Evaluation increases, Project Performance tends to decrease. The t-value for this coefficient is -5.353, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating that this relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This implies that Project Monitoring and Evaluation has a significant effect on Project Performance, and the negative coefficient suggests that enhancing monitoring and evaluation processes may lead to lower project performance in the context of this study.

4.5 Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of project monitoring and evaluation on the performance of the Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) in Kamonyi District. The results indicate a strong relationship between monitoring and evaluation processes and project performance, affirming that these mechanisms are crucial for the successful execution and outcomes of PASP.

The descriptive statistics revealed that respondents generally agreed on the positive influence of regular monitoring and evaluation on project performance. From the findings, the study revealed that project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) play a significant role in enhancing the performance of the Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) in Kamonyi District. The respondents expressed strong agreement that feedback from M&E processes enhances learning and adaptation, emphasizing the importance of continuous improvement throughout the project. Additionally, effective monitoring was recognized for its contribution to tracking progress towards project milestones and goals, and regular monitoring was seen as crucial in identifying issues and risks in a timely manner.

The findings also highlighted the importance of feedback mechanisms in enhancing the effectiveness of M&E planning, with respondents acknowledging their role in ensuring robust monitoring processes. However, while respondents agreed that evaluations provide valuable insights into project strategies, the study found that there is a gap in using evaluation results to demonstrate accountability and showcase project achievements. Despite this, the study indicated that monitoring and evaluation processes are crucial in fostering stakeholder engagement and ensuring their active participation in the project. Furthermore, the evaluation of project outcomes provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of the strategies employed, and feedback from these processes played a key role in promoting learning and adaptation. These findings corroborate existing research that emphasizes the role of continuous monitoring in ensuring projects stay on course and meet their objectives (Peter, 2020).

During the interview with the project manager on how monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices affect the performance of the PASP project in Kamonyi District, he reported that the project also uses effective M&E practices which are crucial for identifying and addressing issues promptly. He highlighted that regular monitoring enables timely interventions and adjustments, significantly enhancing the project's outcomes in Kamonyi District. The project manager emphasized that feedback mechanisms from M&E processes are instrumental in learning and adapting project approaches, ensuring continuous improvement. However, he also acknowledged challenges in demonstrating the impact of evaluation results on accountability. The manager noted that improvements are needed in how evaluation outcomes are communicated to stakeholders to better showcase the achievements of the PASP project.

On the same question during the interview, the government official reported that while the PASP project in Kamonyi District has shown progress through its monitoring and evaluation practices, there is a critical need to enhance the integration of evaluation results into decision-making processes. The official noted that better clarity and utilization of evaluation findings are essential for improving accountability and demonstrating the project's impact effectively. They emphasized that improving transparency in how evaluation results are communicated could bolster stakeholder confidence and increase community support, leading to more successful project implementation and achievements in the district.

These findings are in agreement with Chen and Rossi (2019), who argue that effective monitoring and evaluation systems are key drivers for successful project outcomes, particularly in development projects. They emphasize that timely feedback mechanisms, as highlighted by both the project manager and the government official, foster continuous learning and adaptive management, which in turn contributes to better project performance. The need for better communication of evaluation results is also supported by Chen and Rossi, who suggest that the proper dissemination of evaluation outcomes to stakeholders can enhance accountability and transparency, thus strengthening trust and support for the project. Moreover, the recognition of challenges in demonstrating the impact of evaluation results, as shared by the project manager, aligns with findings by Rael (2020), who noted that while monitoring and evaluation are essential, organizations often face difficulties in clearly conveying their results and the impact they have had on project performance. This gap in communication can hinder the effective use of evaluation data in decision-making processes. The emphasis on integrating evaluation results into decision-making, as pointed out by the government official, reflects a growing awareness in project management literature that for monitoring and evaluation to truly influence project performance, evaluation findings must be actively used to inform strategic decisions and improve future project outcomes.

The interview insights further support the idea that M&E practices are not only about tracking progress but also about using the data to create actionable improvements. As identified in the interviews, regular monitoring helps identify issues early on, ensuring that corrective actions are taken before problems escalate. This reinforces the importance of integrating M&E into the broader project management process, as discussed by Kululanga and Kuotcha (2020), who emphasize that early identification of risks and opportunities enables projects to be more adaptive and responsive to changes, improving overall performance.

The correlation analysis supported the conclusion that project monitoring and evaluation are strongly associated with project performance, as indicated by the high Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.895, which was statistically

significant. This suggests that improvements in monitoring and evaluation practices are likely to enhance project performance. This finding is consistent with project management literature, which suggests that effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential for achieving desired project outcomes and for ensuring accountability (Rael, 2020). The strength of this correlation underscores the importance of continuous and systematic assessment in achieving high performance in development projects like PASP.

The regression analysis further reinforced the significance of monitoring and evaluation in driving project performance, with a significant model and a coefficient of -0.375 for Project Monitoring and Evaluation. While the negative sign may initially seem counterintuitive, it could suggest that, in certain instances, over-monitoring or misalignment between monitoring processes and project goals may hinder project performance. Despite this, the statistical significance of the regression results highlights the important role monitoring and evaluation play in shaping project outcomes. Therefore, this study advocates for a balanced and well-integrated monitoring and evaluation framework that continuously evolves to address challenges and optimize performance.

These findings are supported by previous studies, such as those by Georges (2019), who pointed out that while monitoring and evaluation are essential for tracking project progress, their effectiveness depends on their alignment with project goals. Over-monitoring, as suggested by the negative coefficient, could lead to inefficiencies or a focus on minor issues at the expense of strategic objectives, ultimately affecting overall project performance. This observation echoes the concerns raised by Flanagan and Norman (2023), who emphasized the need for a balanced approach in M&E, where both the scope and frequency of monitoring activities are carefully managed to avoid disruptions in the project workflow.

Additionally, the importance of having a well-integrated monitoring and evaluation system aligns with the work of Kululanga and Kuotcha (2020), who highlighted that an adaptable and comprehensive M&E framework is critical for identifying risks and opportunities in real time. In their research, they showed that when M&E systems are aligned with project goals and involve regular but not excessive feedback loops, they contribute positively to project success. This study's recommendation for a balanced M&E framework, therefore, reflects a widely acknowledged best practice in project management literature, ensuring that project monitoring and evaluation processes are both responsive and strategically aligned with the project's objectives.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that effective project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices play a significant role in shaping the performance of the Post-Harvest and Agribusiness Support Project (PASP) in Kamonyi District. The findings highlight that regular monitoring ensures timely identification of issues, while evaluation provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of project strategies. Despite the challenges in aligning M&E outcomes with decision-making processes and demonstrating accountability, the study reinforces the importance of a well-integrated, balanced M&E system that adapts to project needs. The positive relationship between monitoring and evaluation and project performance underscores the necessity for continuous improvement and strategic integration of M&E to optimize project success.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. To ensure that evaluation findings lead to effective improvements in project outcomes, it is recommended that the PASP project should strengthen the integration of evaluation results into its decision-making processes. This can be achieved by clearly outlining how evaluation insights can directly inform adjustments in project strategies, thereby improving accountability and effectiveness.

2. Regular feedback mechanisms should be established to ensure that stakeholders are actively engaged throughout the monitoring and evaluation process. Providing stakeholders with regular updates and involving them in evaluation discussions will foster transparency, improve project alignment, and increase community support, leading to better project outcomes.

3. While monitoring is essential for tracking progress, over-monitoring or misalignment with project goals may have unintended negative effects. It is recommended that the PASP project should adopt a balanced and streamlined approach to monitoring, ensuring that the monitoring processes are both efficient and aligned with the overall project objectives to optimize project performance

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