



INFORMATION DISCLOSURES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF WATER PROJECTS IN MACHAKOS COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

This study investigated the effects of information disclosure as part of engagement of stakeholders on implementation of water projects in Machakos County, Kenya. The paper is guided by stakeholder theory advanced by Freeman (1984). The study was guided by causal comparative research design. The study targeted 172 water projects being implemented in Machakos County from the year 2016-2018 with the respondents being seven members of project management committees. Simple random sampling technique was used in selecting 17 water projects that was involved in this study. Questionnaires were used to collect data for the research. The collected data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data from open-ended questions was analysed using thematic content analysis. It was found out that there was an above degree level of correlation ($r=0.584$) between information disclosure and implementation of water projects. The paper concludes that when all information pertaining project is disclosed to the respondents, implementation goals would be achieved. On recommendations, the research suggests that communication needs to be improved during implementation stages to ensure every information from the project is relayed to all stakeholders.

Keywords: stakeholder, information, disclosures, implementation, water projects

1. Introduction

A stakeholder is defined as a person, organisation or group, which either is affected by or may influence a problem or its solution (PMBOK, 2013). In project management activities, stakeholders may support or oppose the decisions, be influential in the organization or within the community in which it operates, hold relevant official positions or be affected in the long-term (Sokolova, 2016). The importance of identifying and including important stakeholders in the strategic management process is critical since when stakeholders are excluded, the relevance and anticipated benefits from the strategy will be limited (Awino, 2013). Stakeholders can be engaged in different ways in a project development, all resuming to one or another form for management system that an organization can put in place (Aapaoja & Haapasalo, 2014). This paper looks at the stakeholder engagement through information disclosure.

The dissemination of project information is crucial in ensuring the effectiveness of the stakeholders' engagement (Midin, Joseph & Mohamad, 2016). Information disclosure is a formal sounding term for making information accessible to involved stakeholders and communicating such information in a manner that is understandable to the stakeholders is an important first step in stakeholder engagement (International Finance Corporation 2007). In any project that involves multiple stakeholders, it becomes critical that there is transparency in whatever information is being passed on or disclosed. Especially in complex projects that have specific requirements, transparency becomes a vital aspect of collaboration as it helps understand exactly the needs of the project keeping in mind the best interests of everyone involved (Bennis, Goleman, & O'Toole, 2008). IFC (2007) informs that through disclosure of information comes transparency. Transparency is vital to all aspects of the project. All other activities including consultation, informed participation and negotiation and grievance resolution will be more constructive if all stakeholders involved have accurate and timely information about the project and its impacts and any other aspects that may influence them. Lack of transparency in complex projects leads to misinformation about the activities and project as a whole and stunts the efforts taken to create open communication between the various stakeholders that will delay the project progress in the end. This paper looks at how information disclosure has been promoted when implementing projects in the county of Machakos, Kenya.

1.1 Problem Statement

The county government of Machakos Kenya has the responsibility of ensuring that all projects planned are executed on time and according to the standards in place. The concept of stakeholder engagement is expected to be embraced in implementation of all development projects within the Kenya national and county governments. Despite this progress in Kenya Counties through devolution, a few challenges in the water projects are emerging and slowing the successful achievement of their goals. Some stakeholders have welcomed the projects while others have rejected the projects hence indicating that there appears to be a gap in the project implementation strategies. Little is known as to

whether negative attitude and rejection by beneficiaries of the projects could be because of their non-engagement during and implementation stage. This paper therefore looks at the influence of information disclosure and water project implementation in Machakos County, Kenya.

1.2 Objective of the Paper

The main objective of this paper is to investigate the extent to which disclosure of project information affects water projects implementation in the county of Machakos Kenya.

1.3 Hypothesis for the Paper

The study null hypothesis states that:

H₀: There is significant effect of information disclosure on implementation of water projects by Machakos County Government, Kenya

2. Literature Review

This sections looks at the research studies that have been conducted in various countries with regard on how disclosure of project information influence effective implementation. One research by Midin, Joseph and Mohamad (2016) highlighted the importance of websites as a strategic tool in promoting the sustainability agenda. In a research involving, 108 Malaysian local council websites findings indicate the presence of institutional isomorphism – particularly coercive and normative isomorphism – in explaining the extent of stakeholders' engagement disclosure on websites. This research determined whether Machakos County Government website have disclosures on implementation of projects. In another study, Heravi, Coffey and Trigunarsyah (2015) examined the level of stakeholder involvement during the project's planning process. A series of literature reviews was conducted to identify and categorise significant phases involved in the planning. For data collection, a questionnaire survey was designed and distributed amongst nearly 200 companies who were involved in the residential building sector in Australia. Results of the analysis demonstrate the engagement levels of the four stakeholder groups involved in the planning process and establish a basis for further stakeholder involvement improvement.

Doloi, Pryke and Badi (2016) investigated the practice of stakeholder integration in the planning and development of infrastructure projects. They adopted social network analysis (SNA) as the research method. They examined two large infrastructure tunneling projects, one from Melbourne, Australia and another from London, UK. Based on a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews. The analysis of the communication and satisfaction networks of the case project from Melbourne, known as East West Link project, reveals that the key actors' nodes namely the promoter, sponsor and local authority are located in the periphery with respect to the six broad issues being considered in the project. This is due to an inefficient

communication network between the project authorities and the wider community that resulted in a significant mismatch of the project's strategic intents with the public needs and expectations. Fikkert (2015) focused on the relation between stakeholder engagement and the integration of sustainability within organizations. This was based on an explorative qualitative single case study, including a seven-month participant observation period. They found out that there was increasing demand for transparency from stakeholders; the wide array of stakeholders that the organization engages with initially forms a challenge when it comes to transparency, however this transparency indirectly contributed to integration of sustainability by means of like new knowledge demands.

In Australia, Kaur (2014) explored the nature, extent and drivers of stakeholder engagement in the sustainability accounting and reporting process in Australian local councils. This study used the case study research strategy to obtain an in-depth understanding of the current state of stakeholder engagement in the sustainability accounting and reporting process. The findings of this research identified the importance of stakeholder engagement in the development of strategic plans and sustainability indicators, the measurement of sustainability performance and the preparation of sustainability reports. However, the key stakeholders, engagement methods and the extent of engagement varied depending on the purpose of engagement and the nature of the stakeholders. For instance, engagement techniques such as newsletters, annual reports, radio and television were used to create awareness about sustainability issues in the wider community. Besides these, advisory committees and precinct committees were created to empower community representatives. Malachira (2017) determined components of stakeholder engagement that were more prevalent in construction of complex projects involving multiple stakeholders. Two sources of data were used. Key components such as stakeholder identification & analysis, stakeholder consultation, stakeholder involvement in project monitoring and Information disclosure were found to be followed and implemented well on the project site which contributed to the overall project success so far. Reporting which were not found to be implemented as well as some of the other components on the project, awareness can be spread to implement these in a better manner and ensure a much smoother and effective project execution.

Pellinen (2016) investigated how four, large Finnish companies viewed CSR communications and its challenges: CSR communication channels, sustainability reporting, and stakeholder engagement; and how they communicate their CSR through one communication channel – their corporate websites. This was done through a qualitative case study. The data was gathered through interviews with managers in these companies and from the corporate websites and reports. Findings are that the strategic approach to CSR communication makes it possible to use it as a competitive advantage and in the building of corporate image. The stakeholder engagement is done through structured and formal feedback channels as well as through dialogues. Shah and Haider (2014) argued that stakeholder behaviour and stakeholder management

were essential success elements within project portfolio management (PPM) success. This pragmatic study of 87 well reputed software houses of Lahore, were managing projects in portfolios investigated the effect of engagement of internal stakeholder's engagement on project portfolio management success. Study showed that the ramification of stakeholders was phase-peculiar and that role clarity affected the nature of the relationship between the internal stakeholder's engagement and project portfolio management success as a moderator. Results explained that internal stakeholder's engagement have insignificant effect on the PPM success, but with moderating effect of role clarity internal stakeholder's engagement show strong and highly significant effect on the PPM success.

Adewale and Munano (2012) study was to establish the effect of stakeholders' involvement in the strategic planning of the University of Venda and to determine how different stakeholders were involved in the strategic planning and ultimate implication of their involvement - or lack of involvement - on the overall performance of the institution. Using a survey approach, this study revealed that the process of strategic planning was absolutely dominated by the management cadre, thereby sending the other stakeholders into the doldrums. In the practical sense, those who were directly affected by the strategic plan were least involved in the process of the planning. Because of the lack of involvement, the majority of the stakeholders became demotivated, culminating in their lack lustre approach toward the implementation of the orchestrated plan. Bal, Bryde, Fearon and Ochieng (2013) reported the results of an exploratory study involving interviews with construction project practitioners that are involved in sustainability in some way. Data were collected from the practitioners in terms of the processes for engaging with stakeholders to deliver sustainability. The data suggests six steps to a stakeholder engagement process: identification, relating stakeholders to different sustainability related targets, prioritization, managing; measuring performance, and putting targets into action. The results suggest that understanding the different sustainability agendas of stakeholders and measuring their performance using key performance indicators are important stages to be emphasized in any stakeholder engagement process to achieve sustainability-related goals.

Kituku (2014) investigated the factors affecting performance of projects of Non-Governmental organizations in Kenya: A case study of Mwingi cluster projects. The study targeted 12 project directors, 12 social workers and 12 accountants in Mwingi cluster projects. Key factors that affect Non-Governmental projects performance are leadership, staff motivation, staff competence and engagement of stakeholders. Project managers should see into it that project budget, scope, time, end users products were well managed to avoid under performance of projects. Muthoni (2016) determined the influence of stakeholder engagement on performance of street children rehabilitation programmes in Nairobi County, Kenya. The research design that was used by this study is descriptive survey. The target population used for the study was five rehabilitation programmes where 70 respondents were selected as the study population. The initiation stage of a project is a plan that encompasses stakeholder

analysis and execution based on the analysis of the needs, interests and potential will influence the street children rehabilitation programmes. Effective budgeting and enhancing effective decision making as well as generating innovation through stakeholder engagement influence performance of the street children rehabilitation centers. Wanyera (2016) investigated the influence of community participation on sustainability of community-based projects. Kiambiu Water and Sanitation (KIWESA) Slum Project in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study employed descriptive survey research design. A population of 2,404 respondents constituting of 2,400 Kiambiu slum households and 4 programme officers from Maji na Ufanisi, the main NGO sponsoring KIWESA slum project was targeted for the study. The study concluded that community participation in community-based projects has a significant influence on sustainability of the projects; sustainability is negatively influenced when community participation is zero and improves with greater community participation. The study by Wanyera was in Nairobi involving one project while this study was conducted in Machakos County involving more than one water projects.

3. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in stakeholders' theory developed by Freeman (1984). Stakeholder theory asserts that organisations should consider the concerns of individuals and groups that can affect or are affected by their activities while making decisions and achieving organisational goals (Freeman 1994; Gibson 2000). Organisations are expected to do so because they are responsible and accountable to a broader range of stakeholders for their activities than just shareholders. Stakeholders can be defined as 'any group or individual who can affect or are affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives' (Freeman, 1984). This definition indicates the existence of a two-way impact relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders. First, stakeholders can affect organisational goals that imply that organisational performance can benefit from the activities and participation of its stakeholders (Gao & Zhang 2006). This impact legitimises stakeholder engagement in decision making to achieve the best possible organisational performance.

Second, stakeholders are affected by the achievement of organisational goals and this impact legitimises a stakeholder's right for stakeholder engagement (Gao & Zhang, 2006). The pressure to communicate more proactively and more frequently with stakeholders demands an engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders through enhanced inclusiveness, partnership and dialogue (Crane & Livesey, 2003). All these actions can be accomplished through timely disclosure of project information to all stakeholders. This is because the overall success of the project depends on the extent to which information on project design, planning and implementation was shared by the implementing agency (ies) to all stakeholders.

This research study used the descriptive and empirical aspect of stakeholder theory to observe the actual behaviour of Machakos County water projects management

committees in responding to stakeholders' concerns with regard to information related to project disclosure. The descriptive and empirical aspect of stakeholder theory will also be useful in exploring how PMCs engage with their stakeholders while reporting on project plans and progress and to what extent this engagement takes place.

3.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the association between independent variable (information disclosures) and dependent variable (implementation of water projects) in Machakos County.

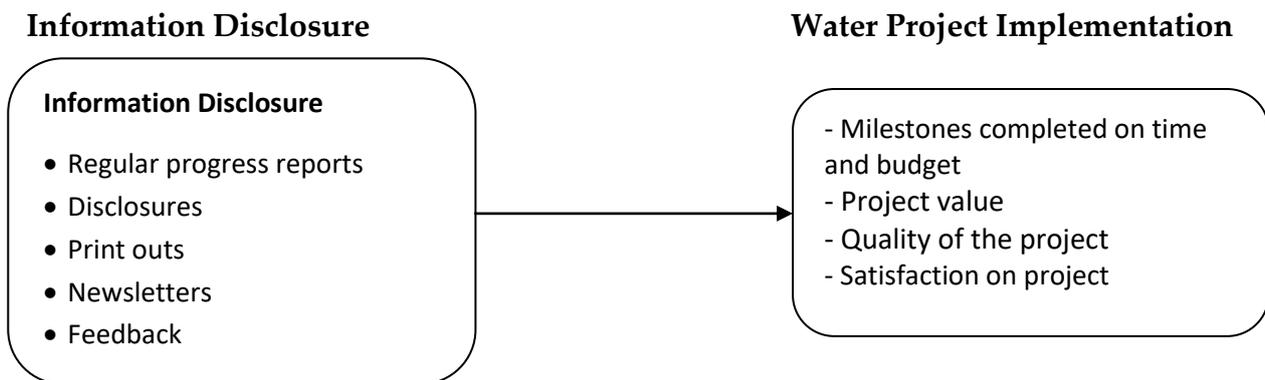


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

4. Materials and Methods

This study used causal comparative research design. Ogula (2009) informs that causal comparative research study is non – experimental but they examine the cause and effect relationships. The target population for this research consists of water projects by Machakos County Government, Kenya (sinking of boreholes, building of water pans and dams and connecting piped water) ongoing in Machakos County thirty nine (39) county assembly wards. The total target population for the research consisted of 172 water projects being managed by 1204 respondents. a sample of 17 water projects involving 120 respondents were selected as the sample size. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 17 water projects from the initial 172 from all 39 wards in the constituency. The researcher used questionnaire as the instrument of collecting data in this study. The collected data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics was analysed in form of frequencies and percentages to answer research questions. Further, the researcher use inferential statistics Pearson correlation was computed to determine the effect of independent variable (positive or negative) on the dependent variable. Qualitative data from open-ended question was analysed using thematic analysis.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1 Implementation of Water Projects in Machakos County

Machakos County is one of the Kenya's region classified by commission for revenue allocation as an arid and semi-arid land (ASAL). This implies that natural free flowing water is scarce in most regions of the county despite river Athi and Tana passing in some areas. Therefore, the county government has been implementing various water projects with the aim of meeting the needs of Machakos people. Therefore, this section looks at the extent to which project members perceived to be the implementation level of water projects in Machakos. Through questions measured on Likert scale of five, the committee members were asked to state the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements on status of implementation of water projects. The results of analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents Views on Implementation of Water Projects

Implementation level	Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
The water project has achieved its set targets on its current stage	12	13.0	13	14.1	59	64.1	8	8.7
The water project will be completed within the stipulated duration without delays	15	16.3	27	29.3	35	38.0	15	16.3
The water project stage of implementation is within the approved budget costs estimates	10	10.9	23	25.0	53	57.6	6	6.5
The community members highly value the implementation of this project	3	3.3	2	2.2	72	78.3	15	16.3
The water project is being completed without costs overrun	9	9.8	23	25.0	57	62.0	3	3.3
The implementation of this water project has met community satisfaction level	7	7.6	2	2.2	52	56.5	31	33.7
Average data	9	10.2	15	16.3	55	59.4	13	14.1

Source: Field Data (2018)

Table 1 result shows that 59 (64.1%) of respondents agreed that their water project had achieved its target on its current stage. Secondly, 35 (38.0%) agreed and 15 (16.3%) strongly agreed that the water project will be completed within the stipulated duration immediately. However, 15 (16.3%) disagreed and 27 (29.3%) were undecided. This research therefore shows that more than half (54.3%) of respondents believe that water projects will be completed on time. Thirdly, 53 (57.6%) of respondents agreed that water project stage of implementation is within the approved budget costs and estimates. This implies that most projects are implemented within the budget with few cost overruns. When asked as to whether community members highly value the implementation, 3 (3.3%) disagreed, 2 (2.2%) were undecided, 72 (78.3%) agreed and 15 (16.3%) strongly agreed. The result shows that water project implementation enjoys public support as community members highly value it. Most 57 (62.0%) of respondents agreed that water

projects they are implementing is being implemented without costs overrun. This implies that project management committees are prudently utilising material and financial resources budgeted to minimise project delays and incidents of projects stalling.

Lastly, when asked as to whether the implementation of water project has met community satisfaction level, 7 (7.6%), 2 (2.2%) were undecided, 52 (56.5%) agreed and 31 (33.7%) strongly agreed with the statement. Average data shows that 9 (10.2%) disagreed that water projects was being implemented well, 15 (16.3%) were undecided, 55 (59.4%) agreed and 13 (14.1%) strongly agreed. This implies that 73.5% of project committee members agreed that water projects were implemented well in Machakos County. This study will use the above data to determine stakeholder engagement strategies influenced them.

5.2 Effect of Information Disclosure on Implementation of Water Projects

The constitution of Kenya guarantees that every member of the public has a right to information. When public projects are implementation, residents have a right to demand information the project being undertaken in their area as a way of public engagement strategy. To answer the research question for this study, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which information disclosure was done to residents of Machakos during implementation of water projects in Machakos County, Kenya. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Information Disclosure on Implementation of Water Projects

Information disclosure	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Undecided		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
There has been release of regular projects reports to all stakeholders	0	0	4	4.3	16	17.4	18	19.6	54	58.7
Any disclosure with regard to project progress is regularly made to all	2	2.2	31	33.7	9	9.8	42	45.7	8	8.7
The project team publishes articles on the project projects for all stakeholders	5	5.4	41	44.6	5	5.4	31	33.7	10	10.9
Every project details are filed and store where needed can be retreated easily	2	2.2	19	20.7	25	27.2	36	39.1	10	10.9
Materials on this water project progress are easily accessible to all stakeholders	0	0	20	21.7	20	21.7	43	46.7	9	9.8
Average data	2	2.0	23	25.0	15	16.3	34	37.0	18	19.8

Source: Field Data (2018)

Research data in Table 2 shows that 54 (58.7%) of respondents strongly agreed there has been release of regular projects reports to all stakeholders. This implies that as the projects are being executed; periodical reports are disseminated to all respondents to keep the informed on the ongoing of projects. In line with study findings, Muthoni (2016) informs that if information disclosure is done at early stages to all those concerned, they can propose changes which can impact on the successful

implementation of that project. Research data also revealed that 31 (33.7%) of respondents disagreed that any disclosure with regard to project progress was regularly made to all. Only 42 (45.7%) appeared to agree with the statement. The findings therefore show that disclosures on project progress is sometimes made to all while at times it does not. This implies that not all project progress reports are not regularly provided as some are classified not to be beneficial to stakeholders due to their technical nature and may not be understood by non-technical persons.

When asked on whether they published articles on the project for all stakeholders, 5 (5.4%) strongly disagreed, 41 (44.6%) disagreed, 5 (5.4%) were undecided, 31 (33.7%) agreed and 10 (10.9%) strongly agreed. Water projects management committee members in Machakos County do not regularly public water project documents to all stakeholders. Research result also showed that 36 (39.1%) of respondents agreed and 10 (10.9%) strongly agreed that every project details are filed and stored where needed so that they can be retrieved easily. However, 2 (2.2%) strongly disagreed and 19 (20.7%) disagreed. The result shows that only 50.0% of project details are filed and stored in places where they can be retrieved easily while 50% is not. Lastly, 43 (46.7%) of respondents agreed and 9 (9.8%) strongly agreed that that materials on water projects are easily accessible by all stakeholders. This implies that only half of the materials on projects can be accessed while others cannot be accessed. Similarly, to the study results, Tengan and Aigbavboa (2016) found out that stakeholders also perused project implementation minutes and meeting attendance. Average data shows that 56.8% of respondents agreed that information disclosure is done during implementation of water projects in Machakos County.

5.3 Hypothesis Testing

The researcher computed correlation analysis on the direction of the relationship that existed between stakeholder engagement strategies and implementation of water projects in Machakos County, Kenya. Therefore, a Karl Pearson correlation analysis was computed. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing

		Implementation of Water Projects
Information Disclosure	Pearson Correlation	.731**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	92

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

The correlation statistics shows that there exist a strong positive effect ($r=0.731$) which is significant ($p<0.01$) between information disclosure and implementation of water projects in Machakos county. Considering the calculated $p<0.01$, the null hypothesis leading to the conclusion that information disclosures significantly influence implementation of water projects. This result suggests that effective implementation of water projects could be attained in situations where PMC consider releasing regularly

project information of all projects. In agreement with the study findings, Doloi et al. (2016) concluded that information disclosure of projects ensures that it has higher public support as it aligns the strategic intents of the project with constituents' expectations and needs.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study found out that most of project information was found to be often disseminated to all stakeholders in Machakos County. The purpose of disclosure was to assist community members to conduct social audits and to question on areas that they were not satisfied with. The disclosure mainly happened through publication of projects costs and expenses and work schedule through (work break down structure). However, not all information was provided to stakeholders as it was considered too technical for the common person to understand. In light of this finding, it was discovered that the effect of information disclosure and water project implementation was above average. Therefore, the second null hypothesis was rejected leading to the conclusion that there existed significant positive effect of information disclosure on implementation of water projects in Machakos County, Kenya. To address information disclosure issues, the respondents suggested that communication process should be improved to ensure that project information is delivered quickly, non-distorted and using the right and proper channels. This can happen through posting messages in chiefs' offices notice boards rather than shopping centres.

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