RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROJECT MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF GRANT FUNDED PROJECTS IN KIBRA CONSTITUENCY IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study conceptualized a relationship between project management skills and sustainability of projects. The study was contextualised in grant funded projects undertaken in Kibra constituency in Nairobi city county in Kenya. Grant funds has supported Kenya in financing projects in health and social protection since independence. In the period 2018/2019, funds received by grant funded projects amounted to Kenya shillings 166 billion. Sustainability of the funded projects is of utmost importance if the impact of funding these projects is to be realised. The study main objective was to establish the influence of project management skills on sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra constituency in Nairobi city county in Kenya. Specific objectives of the study were to: establish the influence of stakeholders' analysis on sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra constituency and to determine the influence of project communication on sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra constituency. The study was anchored on the stakeholder theory, institutional theory and the dynamic capability theory. The study employed descriptive statistic and adopted census approach. Primary data was collected from 44 non-governmental organisations with projects in Kibra constituency using a 5-point Likert type questionnaire. the questionnaire was administered through a drop and pick method and out of the 44 instruments administered 33 were filled and returned. This was a response rate of 75 percent. Descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression analysis was used to analyse data. Overall, there was a significant relation between project management skills and sustainability of grant funded projects. Results of the study indicated that project management skills explained 70 percent variations in sustainability. 30 percent of variations was explained by other factor not considered in the relationship. However, there were mixed findings as regards the individual influence of project management skills on sustainability. Managers will use the findings of this study to identify sustainability drivers in their respective organisations. Future research could be carried out using other variables not considered by the study.

Key Words: Project management skills, Sustainability of projects, Stakeholders' analysis, Project communication

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability of grant funded projects is the manifestation that projects have the capability of continuing to meet the defined objectives (Sabbil & Ada, 2015). According to the IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025, project sustainability is to ensure that institutions supported through projects and benefits realized are not only maintained, but are continuous beyond the program life (IFAD, 2015). Taken from the context of grant-funded projects, sustainability is seen as the continuation of benefits long after the donor has exited the program. However, the focus is not just about making sure that the program is sustainable, but equally ensuring the programs paybacks are sustainable as well (Riggs, 2012). In this perspective therefore, sustainability of a project is the continued delivery of the project's goals for eons.

The majority of grant funded projects usually have the objective of helping to improve the livelihood of the local communities, either through direct participation or providing funding to supplement government's budgetary allocation to the various sectors (Kiara & Kidombo, 2018). Unfortunately, most of the projects don't focus on the entire funding support that ensures sustainability of such projects long after donor funding is withdrawn. The presence of a well thought out strategy that not only looks at how a grant funded project is completed, but also the continuity of the project after the financing period, aids in sustainability (Ogada, 2016). Sustainability of grant funded projects has remained the greatest challenge in several developing states, Kenya included. It is sustainability that distinguishes successful projects from the failed ones.

According to IFAD (2015), though in the short run there was limited progress, in the long run, there is huge potential of the programs being sustainable. In Brazil, the World Bank used a three-pronged approach to enhance sustainability of development projects in the country. Those were; increased market integration, increased revenues, and food security of the organized beneficiaries (World Bank, 2019). In Malaysia, Alias, Isa, and Samad (2014) focused on on how projects sustainability was impacted by the planning processs . The researchers concluded that the success and sustainability of projects was greatly influenced by project planning.

In Somalia, Anyango (2016) examined the factors that lead to sustainable health related projects in Gedo region. According to the findings of the study, sustainability of health-related projects in Gedo region of Somalia was greatly influenced by communication. In Malawi, Hofisi and Chizimba (2015) investigated the sustainability of donor funded projects. The findings of the study were that sustainability was influenced significantly by stakeholders participation. In Tanzania, Temba (2015) examined what whether sustainability was influenced by stakeholder's involvement and indicated a positive relationship.

Statement of the Problem

The majority of grant funded projects usually have the objective of helping to improve the livelihood of the local communities, either through direct participation or by providing funding to supplement government's budgetary allocation to the various sectors beyond the grant financing period (Kiara & Kidombo, 2018). However, this funding on few occasions is insufficient to see the programs operations to their rightful end while ensuring its sustainability.

In Nairobi's Kibra constituency, evidence indicate that some grant-funded projects end up not being sustainable with the exit of the grantors (Kihuha, 2018). Although there is significant improvement shown by the trend with project implementation, the sustainability after implementation is somehow disappointing due to very few grant funded projects being sustained (Keura & Moronge, 2016). Data gathered indicates that the NGO sector makes significant contribution to grant funded projects in Kenya. Statistics from the government indicate that since 1992 to June 30, 2019, the cumulative number of NGOs that have been registered stood at 11, 262. In the period 2018/19, the sector received Kenya Shillings 166 Billion, an 8 percent increase from the previous period (NGOs Co-ordination Board, 2019). However, 88 percent of the funds were raised outside Kenya.

This over dependency on external funding could suggest that the sector is largely unsustainable a fact that is confirmed by the overall sustainability index that declined from 89 per cent in the previous year to 81 per cent in the period 2018/2019 due to overdependence to uncertain donor funding (NGOs Co-ordination Board, 2019).

There has been little empirical research that have investigated the role of project management skills on sustainability of projects. The little existing literature have not focussed on how the two concepts relates. Hwang and Tan (2012), for instance, focussed on project implementation and how it was influenced by proper managemnt skills, while Munyao (2017) examined factors influencing performance of self-help groups in Machakos Kenya. Thacker and Adshead (2018), views that inadequate consideration of contextual issues has led to the development of projects which might not be sustainable.

Though the few studies have had the context of project management skills, none focussed on how they related with sustainability of grant funded projects. In addition, neither are they from the context of grant funded projects in Kibra constituency. It with this in mind, that the current study sought to explore the relationship between project management skills and sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra Constituency in Nairobi City County in Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

i.   To establish the relationship between stakeholders' analysis and sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra Constituency in Nairobi City County in Kenya.
ii. To determine the relationship between project communication and sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra Constituency in Nairobi City County in Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review
Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder model as hypothesised by Freeman (2010) states that it is the firms duty to ensure that they not only earn profits, but also maximize shareholders wealth. Further, the stakeholder theory argues that organizations are a collection of various interested parties or groups who are affected or affect the actions of the organization (Freeman, 2010). However, organizations are no longer selfish institutions with a sole aim of profiteering the shareholders. In the context of the theory, stakeholders are viewed as consisting of different groups and individuals who have varied interests, either benefiting or incurring a cost as a result of the firms' actions. The stakeholders have privileges which can either be positively or negatively affected by the decisions the firm makes.

The firm also is affected by the actions of the stakeholders and should it lose their support, it would also lose its existence (Freeman, 2010). From project management perspective, the stakeholders would include the targeted beneficiaries, the community in which the project is domiciled, political groupings, local administration and other interest groups. According to Freeman (2010) how the firm and the various stakeholders relate creates a ripple effect to the firm and stakeholders due to interdependence between the two.

Stakeholder theory suggests that by management addressing stakeholders' interests, the organization will perform better than those organizations that do not address these groups' interest. Organizations will need to be concerned with those stakeholders who work hard to make strategy successfully implemented and on those who will seek to sabotage the successful management of the strategy. Stakeholder theory thus informed the choice of the first independent variable in this study.
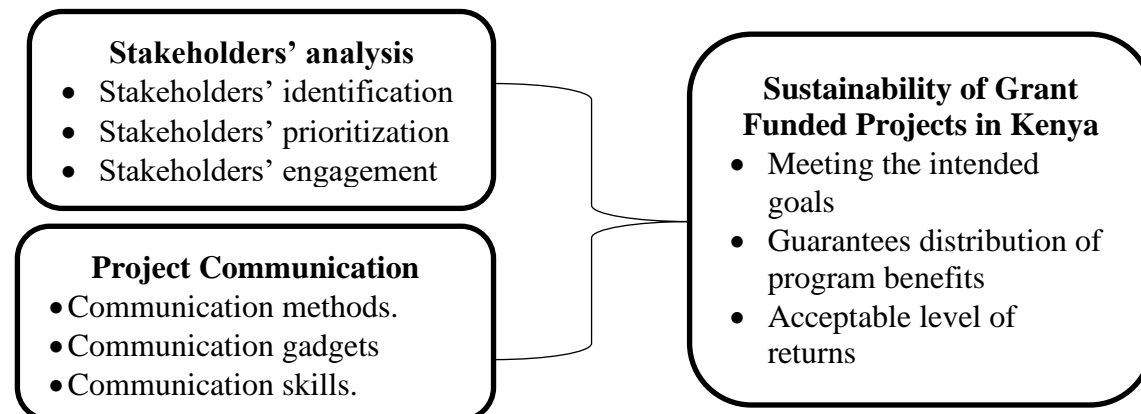
The Institutional Theory

The institutional theory emphasizes that firms are based on a set of rational systems of rules that control behaviour in those firms. Institutional theories were postulated by sociologists, mainly Meyer and Rowan (1977), Di-Maggio and Powell (1983), and Scott (1987). The theorist

classifies firms into two – technical and institutional. Technical firms are well structured and have well defined goals that are specific and measurable, while institutional firms are unstructured with no clear goals.

According to Scott (2008) firms and organizations must abide by laws, rules and systems in the immediate enivironment. The theorist argued that programs operating in areas with diverse institutional enivironment, like most grant funded programs, have to put up with different pressures that would force them to adopt sustainable practices. Institutional theory is geared towards stability together with institutional change.

Conceptual Framework

Stakeholders' analysis
- Stakeholders' identification
- Stakeholders' prioritization
- Stakeholders' engagement

Project Communication
- Communication methods.
- Communication gadgets
- Communication skills.

Sustainability of Grant Funded Projects in Kenya
- Meeting the intended goals
- Guarantees distribution of program benefits
- Acceptable level of returns

Stakeholders' Analysis

Stakeholders are persons or organizations who are actively involved in, concerned with, or whose interests are affected by the implementation of a project, whether positively or negatively (Weiss & Wysocki, 2012). Stakeholders tend to have significant influence over project, its deliverables, as well as the project members. Bal (2016) suggested a six-step to a stakeholder participation process: identification of stakeholders, relationship, priority setting, management, measurement, and actualization of targets. Some of the benefits resulting from general stakeholder engagement includes better understanding of the market condition, as stakeholders often possess a wealth of information; promoting of reputation; building relationships; better understanding of the priorities and needs of stakeholders; building trust and long-term collaborative relationships; sharing experience and skills; and understanding and mitigating the threats and uncertainties (Bal, 2016).

Project Communication

According to The Project Management Association (2015), the discussion of information and data which is specifically tied to the project is what is refered to as project communication. Project communication has to have the acuracy in reflecting the reality of the project if it is to facilitate the sustainability of a project. Further more, it must be on time, precise and delivered to each of the projects team members. To ensure the diversity in the member's needs is covered, communication must be prepared in a variety of ways. Communication must also facilitate feedback (Jainendrakumar, 2015)

Emperical Review
Stakeholders' Analysis and Sustainability of Grant Funded Projects

The role of stakeholders participation has been the subject of various stuides. In Tanzania, Temba (2015), explored the role played by stakeholders particpation in enhancing the sustainability of grant funded programs in the Tanga region of the country. Using cross sectional descriptive research design on a sample of seventy respondents, findings from the study indicated the need of engaging stakeholders from project inception. Further, Temba (2015) infered that stakeholders also played the role of resource mobilization, partnership, collaboration and citizen control.

Ndegwa (2015) looked at KEMRI-HIV-AIDS project's sustainability and sought to find out its determinants. The study that was carried out in Kenya assessed stakeholder's involvement and how

it affected sustainability of those projects. Ndegwa (2015) used descriptive research design and had a population of 20 projects. However, as the population size was small, the study resulted to using a census survey. The study findings revealed a significant positive relationship between stakeholders participation and project sustainability (Ndegwa, 2015).

Project Communication and Sustainability of Grant Funded Projects

A number of scholars have researched on project communication and sustainable projects. In Somalia, Anyango (2016) examined the aspects that led to effective implementation of health related projects in Gedo region of the country. The study focussed more on communication and how it related to sustainability. To attain its objectives, descriptive research design was adopted. The study had a population of 55 respondents drawn from the health projects. The study results indicated that communication had a direct effect on sustainability of health projects in Somalia. However, the survey was specifically premised on health projects and more so in Somalia. It thus remains to be seen if the findings could be generalized to all projects In Kibra in Kenya.

Wamalwa and James (2018) explored the influence of communication on implemetion of projects in Busia, Western Kenya. The scholars took a descriptive approach, and used questionnaires to collect data from 96 respondents. It was found that communication had a significant and positive influence on project implementation (Wamalwa & James, 2018). However, the focus of the study was on implementation while the current study regresses communication againast sustainability. It's therefore not clear if communication would influence sustainability the same way it influences implementation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research design was adopted in this study. Descriptive design is an examination worried about noting questions like what, where, and how of a subject (Saunders & Tossey, 2015). Descriptive research design was considered convenient since it does not manipulate any study variable, but aids in establishing the variable status as at the time of study (Mugenda, 2014).

Reliability is the consistency of a set of measurement items (Cooper & Schindler, 2013). Reliability ensures that results can be replicated either by another study or in another sector and still get the same results. The study used Cronbach Alpha Co-efficient (α) that shows the extent to variables are reliable. The recommended and accepted minimum value of 0.7 in social sciences was used as a cut–off of reliability for this study (Mugenda, 2014). Items that did not have meet the condition were either dropped from the study or refined to meet the criteria. The extent to which an instrument covers the study is the content validity. It is determined by subjecting the instrument to a panel of experts (supervisors) to assess whether it captures all the required information of study variables as guided by the conceptual framework constructs of the study. Criterion-related validity looks at how well a researcher can estimate the variables. The study used correlation coefficients to determine the inter-variable correlation amongst and between the study variables. Finally, construct validity is the degree to which a test measures what it claims or purports to be measuring (Kothari, 2013). It is achieved by ensuring that the questionnaire items are picked from conceptual framework constructs. This ensured comprehensiveness of the item. Besides, the study utilized the theoretical underpinning to justify the theoretical framework variables.

Before the actual data analysis, data obtained through questionnaires was validated, edited and then coded. The returned instruments were scrutinized to determine correctness and accuracy. Qualitative data was operationalized and analysed with the use Version 21 of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). By carefully reviewing the empirical and theoretical literature, the study developed the multiple linear regression model presented as equation (i). The model expressed the relationship between the dependent variable (sustainability) and the predictor variables (stakeholders' analysis and project communication). Multiple regression analysis yielded the coefficient of determination (R^2) which provided the proportion of

variance in the dependent variable accounted for by the combination of predictors (Mugenda, 2014). Multiple regression analysis was performed at 95 percent confidence level.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response rate

The population of the study comprised of 44 non-government organisations; however, 33 firms completed and returned the duly filled questionnaires. However, three questionnaires were incomplete these were dropped from further analysis. The response rate was 75 per cent. According to Saunders and Tossey (2015), a renspose rate of over 70 percent is very good. Thus the response rate achived in this study was, therefore considered sufficent and repressantative of the population thus suitable for conducting data analysis and drawing inferences, conclusions and recommendations which can be generalized.

Project Management Skills

Project management skills are important to sustainability of grant funded projects. To better understand the role of project management skills of projects sustainability, project management skills were conceptualised to influence project sustainability. In this study, project management skills were captured along two broad categorizations, namely stakeholders' analysis and project communication. To capture data on various project management skills, descriptive statements derived from literature were presented to respondents on a 5 -point Likert scale. They were presented to the respondents' and were requested to indicate the extent to which they applied to their NGOs. The study thereafter calculated the mean and standard deviation of the Likert scale items and obtained the average for each of the variable. The range of each point in the scale was obtained by obtaining the quotient of the difference between the highest and the lowest score and number of points in the scale. That is [(5-1)/5 = 0.8]. Therefore, mean scores of 1 to 8 represented to "no extent", 1.81 to 2.6 represented to "less extent", 2.61 to 3.4 represented "moderate extent", 3.41 to 4.2 represented "large extent" and the mean score of 4.21 to 5 represented to a "very large extent". The subsequent subsections present the findings.

Stakeholders' Analysis

The first objective of this study was to establish the relationship between stakeholders' analysis and sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra constituency in Kenya. To establish the level of stakeholders' analysis carried out by the organisation ten descriptive statements on stakeholders' analysis were presented to the to the respondents on a five-point Likert scale. They were required to indicate the extent to which these statements applied to the organisations. Table 4.6 presents the results.

Table 1 Stakeholders' Analysis

Statements	Mean	SD	CV
Seeking feedback from stakeholders enhances project's sustainability.	3.82	0.95	0.25
The program has a robust way of identifying the stakeholders	3.23	0.98	0.30
There is a clear method of analysing the stakeholders	2.67	1.02	0.38
Regular meetings with stakeholders are held	3.03	1.29	0.42
Feedback for stakeholders is always evaluated and acted on	3.70	1.13	0.31
Stakeholders' analysis is important throughout the lifecycle of projects.	3.88	0.86	0.22
The project teams conduct a needs assessment	3.76	0.90	0.24
Addressing the needs of the stakeholders leads to sustainability of the projects.	3.45	1.15	0.33
The project team designs activities geared towards meeting the stakeholder's expectations.	3.48	1.18	0.34
Stakeholders' analysis skills enhance project sustainability.	3.42	1.20	0.35
Average	**3.45**		

Source: Research Findings (2021)

The results show that the average mean score for stakeholders' analysis was 3.4485. This implied that stakeholders' analysis applied to a large extent to Non-governmental organisations funded projects in Kibra constituency in Kenya. The statement that stakeholders' analysis was important throughout the lifecycle of the project had the highest mean score (Mean = 3.88; SD = 0.86). However, the statement also had the lowest Coefficient of Variation (CV) value of 0.22 implying that the statement reported the lowest variation in responses. Conversely, the statement that regular meetings with stakeholders were held (Mean Score = 3.03; SD = 1.29) had the highest CV value of 0.42 meaning that the statement reported the highest variations in responses. The statement with the lowest mean score was that there was a clear method of analysing stakeholder (Mean Score = 2.67; SD = 1.02).

The respondents were also asked to rate the level of involvement of stakeholders in the organisations. The majority, 64 percent stated that it was adequate while 30 percent stated that it was fair. This implied that the majority of the respondents were in agreement that the level of engagement with stakeholders in their organisations was adequate.

Project Communication

The second objective of the study sought to establish the relationship between project communication and sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra Constituency in Nairobi County in Kenya. Seven items depicting project communication and presented on a Likert Scale to were posed to the respondents and asked to indicate the extent to which they applied to their firms. The findings are presented in Table 4.7.

Table 2 Project Communication

Statements	Mean	SD	CV
Use of phones and libraries have improved project communication.	3.64	1.03	0.28
Project group members have skills to uses modern communication gadgets.	4.09	0.68	0.17
Project beneficiaries have ways of knowing about program activities.	4.36	0.49	0.11
Communication enables members participate in programs.	4.06	1.61	0.15
Communication have improved sustainability of projects.	3.88	0.79	0.20
The cooperation of parties and individuals in the project is good.	3.12	0.93	0.30
The deliverable is meeting functional performance	3.61	0.83	0.23
Average	**3.82**		

Source: Research Findings (2021)

The results indicate that the average mean score for project communication was 3.82 which show that the respondents rated project communication to a large extent. The statement that project beneficiaries had ways of knowing about project activities had the highest mean score (mean score = 4.36; Standard deviation = 0.49). The statement also had the lowest variability (coefficient of variation = 0.11). This means that the respondents were in agreement that most beneficiaries knew about activities of the project. However, the statement that the cooperation of parties and individuals was good received the lowest mean score (mean score = 0.39; Standard deviation = 0.39) and the highest coefficient of variation (CV = 0.30) indicating that there was disparity among respondents to the extent to which parties and individuals in the project cooperated.

Inferential Statistics

To establish the statistical significance, Pearson's product moment correlation and multiple regression analysis were performed at 95 percent confidence level.

Correlational Analysis

To establish the nature and significance of association between the variables, the study conducted a Pearson's correlation analysis. The results are presented in Table 3

Table 3 Correlation Matrix

		Stakeholder's Analysis	Project Communication	Sustainability of Grant Funded Projects
Stakeholder's Analysis	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	33		
Project Communication	Pearson Correlation	.610**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	33	33	
Sustainability of Grant Funded Projects	Pearson Correlation	.449**	.688**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	.000	
	N	33	33	33

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

Source: Research Findings (2021)

The results in Table 3 indicated that stakeholders' analysis (r=0.449, p = 0.09), had a moderate positive and statistically significant correlation with sustainability of grant funded projects. Project communication (r = 0.688, p = 0.000).All had a strong positive and statistically significant correlation with sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra constituency in Kenya.

Regression Analysis

The broad objective of this study was to determine the influence of project management skills on sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra constituency in Nairobi in Kenya. To achieve this, four specific objectives were set and corresponding research questions stated. The study conducted a multiple regression analysis to ascertain the degree of the relationship of stakeholders' analysis and project communication on sustainability of grant funded projects. The tests were carried out at 95 percent significance level ($p < 0.05$). The results are presented in Table 4

Table 4 Project Management Skills and Sustainability of Projects

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.832a	.692	.648	.44219

a. Predictors: (Constant), Stakeholder's Analysis, Project Communication

ANOVAa					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	12.280	4	3.070	15.701	.000b
Residual	5.475	28	.196		
Total	17.755	32			

a. Dependent Variable: Sustainability of Grant Funded Projects
b. Stakeholder's Analysis, Project Communication

Coefficientsa					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-1.134	.697		-1.625	.115
Stakeholder's Analysis	-.099	.170	-.079	-.581	.566
Project Communication	.645	.240	.391	2.682	.012
Project Planning	.312	.160	.239	1.948	.061

The results in Table 4 indicates that overall, there was a strong correlation between independent variable, project management skills and the dependent variable, sustainability of grant funded projects as indicated by correlation coefficient (R-value) of 0.832.   The coefficient of determination R square value of 0.692 indicated that project management skills accounted for approximately 70 percent of the variations in sustainability of grant funded projects. The remaining 30 percent was explained by other factors not in the model. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) indicates that the F statistic value of 15.701 was significant as indicated by a p-value of 0.000 which was less than 0.000 hence an indication that the model was fit and significant.

The results indicated that stakeholders' analysis (β = -0.099, p = 566) had a negative but statistically not significant influence on sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra Constituency in Nairobi County in Kenya. These findings suggests that a unit change in stakeholders' analysis brought about an inverse change of 1 percent in sustainability of grant funded projects. The findings also indicated that project communication ($\beta = 0.645$; p = 0.012) had a positive and statistically significant influence on sustainability of grant funded projects. The results suggests that a unit change project communication led to a 64.5 percent improvement of sustainability of grant funded projects.

$$Y = -1.134 - 0.099X_1 + 0.645X_2$$

Where Y = Sustainability of grant funded projects; X_1 = Stakeholders' Analysis; X_2 = Project Communication

Conclusion
The first objective of the study sought to determine the influence of stakeholders' analysis on sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra constituency Kenya. On the strength of the descriptive statistics findings, the respondents concurred to a large extent that stakeholders analysis applied to grant funded projects in Kibra constituency. Further, inferential statistics indicated that stakeholders' analysis had a negative effect on sustainability. However, this was not statistically significant.

The second objective sought to establish the influence of project communication on project sustainability in Kibra constituency. Descriptive results indicated that the respondents were of the view that project communication applied to a large extent to the grant funded projects. Inferential statistics on the effect of project communication showed a positive and statistically significant influence on sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra constituency in Nairobi County in Kenya.

Recommendations of the Study
In the area of stakeholder analysis, although inferential statistics indicated a negative effect on sustainability, the respondents appeared to strongly imply that stakeholders' analysis applied to a large extent amongst the various projects. It would therefore be prudent for the leadership of the various projects to establish the reasons underlying the negative influence of stakeholders' analysis on sustainability of grant funded projects.

Owing to the empirical findings that project communication positively and in a statistically significant way contribute to sustainability of grant funded projects in Kibra constituency, it is recommended that leadership of the non-governmental organisations funding the projects should fully embrace the two skills.

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