**STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES BASED IN THE CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF NAIROBI, KENYA**

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*Abstract:*  This research examined the role of strategic management practices (SMPs) in enhancing performance in Catholic Social Services (CSSs) in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. The specific objectives were to: assess project planning, community participation, institutional capacity, and source of funds on the performance of CSSs. Stakeholder theory, resource dependence theory, dynamic capabilities view, strategic fit theory, and the balanced scorecard model were adapted to this research. A correlational research design was used to target a population of 75 CSSs and the corresponding 75 project managers were recruited into the sample size using the census method. A structured questionnaire deemed valid and reliable was administered. The findings indicated that all four (4) SMPs explained 96.5% of the variation in CSSs performance. The results showed that sources of funds, community participation, project planning, and institutional capacity respectively have a positive effect on the performance of CSSs. The study recommends that CSS adopt continuous stakeholder management analysis to gather support from the community, governments, and other development actors and this will contribute to better performance of projects.

*Keywords: - project planning, community participation, institutional capacity, and source of funds*

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**INTRODUCTION**The Catholic Church plays a significant role in providing social services to communities worldwide, including those within the Archdiocese of Nairobi, Kenya. However, the performance of CSSs in these projects remains in question. Kariuki et al. (2023) reported lack of awareness about Parish strategy, time, and lack of finances were significant challenges encountered in the performance of projects.

Kerubo (2019) research revealed that CSSs experienced barriers including inadequate project planning, poor community participation, institutional capacity, and sources of funds in their strategy implementation making it difficult for them to achieve targeted performance in their projects. Matini (2019) found that the CSS often fell behind schedule due to challenges experienced in the implementation of their strategies due to insufficient funding, inadequate staff retention, inadequate monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and poor staff motivation. Oteki (2022) reported that social enterprises supported by the Catholic Church's 40% - 65% budgets were dependent on external donors and suffered after their exit.

Gaturu et al. (2017) established that 25% of strategic plans were realized and this led to a decline in organisational performance among Catholic Church Mission Hospitals. Recently, Githinji (2022) found that only 32% of projects implemented by religious institutes in the Nairobi Archdiocese were successful while 35% failed, 31.1% were canceled before completion and 52.7% went over budget by an average of 189%.

Scholars and researchers (Mwaura et al., 2019; Njambi, 2020; Auma et al., 2022) agree that Churches providing social services to their communities should adopt strategic management practices (SMPs) to achieve their goals and sustainability of their activities in the community. Therefore, this study explored to what extent Churches adopt strategic management practices (SMPs) to achieve better performance in the delivery of social services. As the church persists in its missionary endeavors, its leaders must recognize strategic management practices as a fundamental operational tool for stewarding the church's social project resources.

**Review of Literature**

**Stakeholder Theory**

Community members serve as crucial stakeholders in community projects, highlighting the imperative of involving them from project inception. Stakeholder theory posits that all legitimate individuals or groups engaged with an organization do so with the expectation of benefiting, underscoring the need to prioritize the interests of stakeholders (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). This theory extends equal consideration to external and intermetal stakeholders consisting of managers, employees, government, financiers, owners, special interest groups (SIGs), and customers.

Active community participation fosters social cohesion by fostering collaborative partnerships among stakeholders. Moreover, it generates economic value by mobilizing voluntary contributions, skills development, and employment opportunities, thereby enriching community welfare and countering social exclusion. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) must make sure that community members participate actively and voluntarily in projects from the outset, acknowledging that their participation yields benefits. This entails involving community members in decision-making processes, equipping staff with skills to engage effectively with communities, and considering community interests.

**Resource Dependence Theory**

The resource dependence theory (RDT) traces its roots to the seventies and was advanced by Pfeffer and Salancik (1981) and its main argument is that when an organisation has more resources at its disposal, the better its performance will be. The possession of resources provides an organisation with greater influence and power and this, in turn, allows it to achieve its goals. Nevertheless, it is critical to admit that it is not always the case as other determinants can affect their performance.

The dependence on external resources affects the making decision processes of an organisation and surviving the turbulent environment is understanding the external environment. Development organisations are dependent on significant stakeholders to allow them to identify the beneficiaries during the inception of programmes and initiatives. These stakeholders include local chiefs, government administrations, village elders, and commissioners (Roundy & Bayer, 2019).

Therefore, the RDT is used to support the relevance of seeking information and creating networks for the organization’s success. Wang et al. (2018) note that executive and non-executive directors are motivated in their roles as they envision community change and the impact they bring to society at large. This theory supports the variable, influence of the institutional capacity on the organizational performance of CSSs in the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

**Dynamic Capabilities View Theory**

The Dynamic Capabilities View (DCV) theory was proposed by Teece et al. (1997) and proposes a strategic approach that can assist organizations to understand their competitive advantages by continuously developing and adapting their competencies and resources in expectation to and in response to the changing external environment. Simply put, DV theory is the dynamic nature of the external environment that organisations are expected to take strategic actions to meet these new challenges.

These capabilities are the organizations’ ability to recognize distinctly the external and internal competencies and organize these to match their organizational goals, mission, and vision. These dynamic capabilities are not static but are ever-evolving for each organisation and thereby become a source from which, they can achieve and maintain SCA. The DCV theory is significant to this study as it is the core of formulating a strategy that managers identify what external environments dictate and match these to their internal environment by the deployment of resources.

The DCV is relevant to the strategy formulation which is measured by the vision, mission, values, and objectives that are created by management by matching the internal environment of the organisation to the external environment by taking advantage of their capabilities. These capabilities are not constant but these are constantly evolving. This means that religious organisations need to create their own unique capabilities that will allow them to evolve in addressing the challenges of providing social services to society.

**Strategic Fit Theory**

Strategic Fit theory was advanced by Wright and Snell (1998) and its major argument is that there is no universally acceptable formula for SMPs and the observed variations in organizations’ strategy planning and execution can be explained by the lack of “fit”. Using SMPs is based on the culture, business strategy, and setting of an organisation and they become effective only when they are well integrated into the organisation and environment setting (Slabbert & Mukhongo, 2018). This means that SMPs are unique to each organisation and more so to the social services environment in which they are operating.

The proper application and integration of SMPs indicate their effectiveness and the theory explains that the fitness of strategy revolves around an organisations procedures, policies, and core values. The SMPs should make sure that the interests of the staff and beneficiaries are addressed and that social service organisation should always design strategic practices that best match their needs in terms of their operations (Donaldson & Luo, 2009).

The theory has been found to assist managers in the social services sector in effectively managing their limited resources to reduce overhead costs and respond to the dynamic environment of the social services industry (Yusoff et al., 2016). Thus, social services organisations can be able to integrate change into their plans. The theory speculates that when CSS is aligned to their environment, the better the chances for increased performance of projects.

**Balanced Scorecard Model**

Kaplan and Norton (1996) advanced the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) as a tool for measuring performance and its main goal is to transform the mission and vision of organisations into actions. It emphasizes using non-financial and financial measures of performance as financial measures are limited to measure the performance of modern organisations. The BSC has four (4) components namely: customer, innovation and learning, internal business processes, and financial perspective (Yahanpath, Pacheco, & Burns, 2017).

There are changes made to the BSC and this allows managers to adapt it to NPOs and public organisations and has been dominant in corporate organisations. It demands the need for equilibrium between short-term and long-term objectives, external and internal dimensions, leading and lagging indicators, and financial and non-financial aspects. The BSC promotes harmony in the combination of different dimensions and perspectives so they do not hinder each other (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). In this case, the non-financial dimensions of the BSC model can be employed to measure the performance of social services and also include other indicators specific to social services.

**Project Planning and Performance of Catholic Social Services**

In the U.S., Mitchell (2021) qualitative multi-case study examined the abilities, skills, and knowledge of leaders in Churches in project management by gathering information from 13 interviews across three (3) states. The findings revealed that coordinating, planning, controlling, commanding, and organizing tools had a positive effect on the success of project teams in achieving their targeted deliverables.

In Rwanda, Kamashara and Ogbe (2022) examined project planning practices on outcomes of Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP) development projects using a descriptive survey and targeting 120 management officials from the cell, sector, and district level. There was a positive relationship between the performance of Community Development Projects (CDPs) and project risk and project cost planning while a moderate relationship between project planning practices.

In Kenya, Mutula and Engairo (2024) did an analysis of risk identification on project execution among construction projects in the Ngong Diocese using contingency theory. Descriptive research targeted 240 respondents from the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) and Parish Education Committee (PEC) from which 72 members were reached by simple random and purposive sampling. The use of risk management techniques resulted in good project outcomes.

**Community Participation and Performance of Catholic Social Services**

In Tanzania, Temba et al. (2023) evaluated Small Christian Community (SCC) engagement in project development management in the Moshi Diocese using a concurrent triangulation design. A simple random technique was used to select 370 respondents from 165 SCCs. Binary logistic regression and content analysis revealed community participation in designing, contributions in-kind, and decision-making increased the growth of development projects.

In Kenya, Mbugua et al. (2017) assessed factors affecting the sustainability of Catholic Church projects in the Archdiocese of Nairobi using Stakeholder and Human Capital theories. A qualitative research method was used to target 156 respondents from (13) deaneries using cluster sampling. It was revealed that the community-based method did not contribute to greater sustainability but a strong link between community engagement and project success was found.

Mbui and Wanjohi (2018) investigated community participation and community water project performance in Meru County adopting a descriptive survey research design. Moderate positive effect of community participation in financial planning, community participation in M&E, and project governance on performance while community participation in project management and operations had a weak effect on performance.

**Community Participation and Performance of Catholic Social Services**

In Sudan, Jundi (2023) explored the association between public performance and institutional capacity using an extensive literature review highlighting the barriers facing public institutions and showing the transformative potential of institutional capacity building. There was a strong institution that improved the efficiency of service delivery while promoting accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to public needs.

In Ethiopia, Kenea et al. (2022) sought to identify major challenges that affect the capacity of institutions deter effective service delivery, and suggest a way forward. The research used a theoretical and empirical review that found the presence of vivid institutional capacity also improved evidence-based policy-making and the effectiveness of its implementation. This contributed to the success of project implementation.

In Kenya, Wachira and James (2018) explored the important determinants in community-based projects (CBPs) implementation using descriptive research where stratified random was used to select 121 projects. Financial distress theory, stakeholder theory, and program evaluation theory. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques selected 86 CBP leaders and their information found there was a positive influence on institutional capacity and implementation of projects.

**Sources of funds and performance of Catholic Social Services**

Getui et al. (2023) sought to find out the diversification of financial sources for the sustainability of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church in South East Kenya using descriptive research. The study employed resource mobilization theory. The findings showed that SDA encountered financial difficulties related to a lack of diversification of financial sources. The church relies entirely on traditional financial sources that are insufficient to finance the church's activities.

Ugbene et al. (2021) investigated the income diversification effect on organisational sustainability and development among Catholic women religious congregations in Nairobi Archdiocese anchored on the RDT and using descriptive research design. A sample of 97 respondents selected via random sampling revealed that income diversification affected sustainability to a great extent. The reduced donations are moving congregations to invest in income-generating projects for self-reliance and as a source of funding. Awiti et al. (2021) aimed to determine income diversification strategies for the financial sustainability of Catholic Societies of Apostolic Life (CSAL) by applying descriptive research. The increase in non-related sources of cost recovery and income diversification strategy increased financial sustainability.

**Methods**

**Research Design**

The research used a correlational research design in which the objective is to measure the association between variables to explain the covariance between variables. The correlational research design is also used to test hypotheses as well and is an adequate design to be used when administering questionnaires to gather information. Its main objective was to identify the extent to which values for two or more factors are related, therefore it is suitable for this research as it attempts to determine covariance between SMPs and organisational performance based on the respondents’ opinions and behaviors (Creswell, 2014).

**Target Population**

The target population is the main foundation for the sample and it describes the characteristics of all units that are of interest to a researcher (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014). In describing a population, it is critical to describe the units of analysis and the units of observation; the units of analysis are the CSSs while the units of observation are project managers in each of the CSSs in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. The researcher analyzed data from 75 CSSs making up for the target population as described in Appendix 3. These CSSs were summarized in Table 3.1 under the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), health, education, gender & development, humanitarian programme, and climate change.

**Table 3.1: Target Population and Sample Size**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Projects** | | **Population** |
| 1 | Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) | 5 |
| 2 | Health | 10 |
| 3 | Education | 27 |
| 4 | Gender and development | 10 |
| 5 | Humanitarian programme | 12 |
| 6  7  8 | Climate change  Pastoral Work  Youth Formation | 5  3  3 |
| **Total** | | **75** |

**Sample and Sampling Procedures**

The census sampling method involves the complete enumeration of participants in a target population into the sample and its merit lies in its ability to reduce any sampling error or bias (Kim, 2022). Therefore, the sample size was 75 respondents

**Data Collection Tools**

The structured questionnaire had sections on the demographic characteristics of respondents, project planning, community participation, institutional capacity, source of funds, and CSSs performance. Close-ended questions were used for the demographic profile while a 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the variables as summarized in Table 3. The data collection procedure began by seeking authorization from the University to proceed to gather data by acquiring a letter of authorization. This letter was presented to the Archdiocesan Projects Office at Cardinal Otunga Plaza to get their consent and their contact information. A research permit was also obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI).

**Pilot Study**

The questionnaire was piloted to test its effectiveness, relevance, and suitability and to check defects in the tool or the research protocol (Cooper &Schnider, 2013). Scholars (Nachmias et al., 2008; Mugenda et al., 2009; Gaturu, 2018) recommend a sample size of 10% of the population for a pilot. The pilot was done with 20 respondents from the Diocese of Murang’a, all of whom are directors or managers of the CSSs within the diocese. These twenty social institutions were randomly selected from the entire region covered by the diocese. The questionnaires were administered through email and face-to-face interactions.

Out of the twenty questionnaires dispersed, sixteen were returned, yielding a response rate of 80%. This response rate was deemed sufficient to establish the suitability of the study instrument. Following the pilot, the actual study protocol involved contacting the CSSs managers through mobile phone and email contacts to schedule the physical administration of the questionnaire. Those that were available for face-to-face administration were scheduled for the meetings while those not able to participate in person were sent the questionnaire via email and WhatsApp by creating a Google Doc form.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The study gathered quantitative data which is categorized as numerical data or data that can be counted. This data was analyzed using the statistical package of the social sciences (SPSS) Version 27 where descriptive statistics and inferential statistics will be adopted. This means frequency and counts were presented for close-ended data while mean and standard deviation as measures of central tendency were used to analyze the Likert scale data. The next phase of analysis was undertaking multiple linear regression analysis using the proposed regression model:

**Y = B1X1 + B2X2 + B3X3 + B4X4 + ε**

Where:

Y = Performance of Catholic Social Services

X1 = Project Planning

X2 = Community Participation

X3 = Institutional Capacity

X4 = Source of Funds

ε = Error term

**Validity and Reliability**

Validity is defined as the extent to which a tool measures what it sets out to measure and can be distinguished between external and internal validity (Bolarinwa, 2015). Internal validity is the accuracy of measures obtained from empirical reviews that can be used to measure variables while external validity describes on accuracy of measures obtained from respondents and can be used as a reference for the population from which they were selected (Bolarinwa, 2015). To increase its internal validity, the researcher adequately planned the recruitment of respondents into the sample; and developed a data collection protocol while undertaking adequate data analysis and interpretation. To increase its external validity, the researcher selected project managers and coordinators from different types of projects under the CSS in the Archdiocese of Nairobi as described in the population.

Reliability is the extent to which outcomes obtained from a tool can be replicated and also contributes to its validity. There exist three (3) forms of reliability namely: equivalence, internal consistency, and stability. Among these, internal consistency which is the degree that items in a tool measure the same thing. This form of reliability was adopted for the questionnaire as it used a Likert scale consisting of several items to measure a variable (Bolarinwa, 2015). The test was conducted using the pilot study results from 20 subjects not included in the sample. The pilot was conducted in Murang’a Diocese as it is near the Archdiocese of Nairobi and it shares some characteristics such as size and demographics which make it suitable as a site for the pilot test.

**Table 1: Reliability Results**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Scale** | **Cronbach's Alpha** | **N of Items** |
| Project planning | 0.958 | 16 |
| Community participation | 0.974 | 16 |
| Institutional capacity | 0.961 | 16 |
| Source of funds | 0.963 | 16 |
| CSSs performance | 0.958 | 20 |

Table 1 indicates that the results of the pilot designated that the tool was reliable as its internal consistency met the threshold of accepting an instrument as reliable. The scales for each of the variables were shown to be over 0.9 which based on Gottems Cronbach Alpha Reliability classification occurs as follows: very low (α ≤ 0.30); low (0.30 0.90); moderate (0.60 <α ≤ 0.75); high (0.75 <α ≤ 0.90) and very high (α> 0.90) (14-17).

**Ethical considerations**

Several ethical principles are of importance to researchers and should be adhered to. Voluntary participation is one of these and this was guaranteed to respondents as they were explained that it is their choice to participate in the survey or to drop out during the survey if they wish to. The next ethical principle is providing informed consent which was guaranteed by providing all necessary information for participants on the aim of the study, their role in the study, and to answer any concerns they may have with the research.

Participant confidentiality is another principle where researchers hide the identity of their respondents (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). Confidentiality was offered by using codes for each of the questionnaires returned from the participants. There was also no risk of harm to respondents by their participation in this study while respondents were not promised and did not receive any monetary or material benefits from their participation. The researcher applied and obtained a research permit from NACOSTI.

**Results**

**Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics are useful in summarizing data and in this section, the variables are summarized using the measures of central tendency (mean and standard deviation). The major findings from the statements were therefore highlighted, interpreted, and implications given and discussed.

**Catholic Social Services Performance**

The performance of Catholic Social Services (CSSs) was the dependent variable and this was measured by a five-point Likert scale with a total of 20 items representing organisational effectiveness, quality of service delivery, financial viability, stakeholder satisfaction, and organisational resilience. Based on the findings, the respondents were in disagreement that their project was financially viable as indicated by a mean score of 2.64, and a standard deviation of 1.4240.

The respondents also agreed that the projects had contingency plans and strategies in place to mitigate risks and ensure continuity of operations as indicated by mean score 4.11 and 0.967 standard deviation. This suggests that CSSs were adopting risk mitigation measures to achieve their sustainability and overall performance. This implies that reducing donations is moving congregations to invest in income-generating projects for self-reliance and as a source of funding Ugbene et al., 2021).

**Table 2: Catholic Social Services performance**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Performance of CSSs** | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** |
| The organization’s programs are effectively achieved to benefit the targeted communities | 3.25 | 1.434 |
| There are established processes and systems in place to measure and monitor organizational performance. | 3.36 | 1.530 |
| The organization’s programs are effective in attaining the satisfaction of beneficiaries | 3.28 | 1.494 |
| The organization’s programs have contributed to volunteer development | 3.07 | 1.339 |
| There is satisfaction with the quality of services provided by the organization. | 3.29 | 1.450 |
| The organization recruits skilled staff and experience to attain its outputs | 3.35 | 1.341 |
| The organization commits to schedule to achieve the program's outputs | 3.41 | 1.552 |
| The organizations have been able to provide planned services and products | 3.31 | 1.404 |
| The organization is financially stable | 2.64 | 1.420 |
| The organization is currently facing financial challenges and constraints in delivering its services to the community. | 3.59 | 1.443 |
| The organization effectively manages its financial resources to support its mission and objectives. | 3.19 | 1.270 |
| I am confident in the organization's ability to maintain its financial viability in the long term. | 3.43 | 1.129 |
| The organization considers collaborative partnerships with its stakeholders in its operations. | 3.13 | 1.329 |
| Inputs and feedback are valued and considered by the organization. | 3.08 | 1.412 |
| The organization communicates with stakeholders and keeps them informed about its activities and initiatives. | 3.17 | 1.339 |
| There are some areas the organization could improve to better meet stakeholder needs and expectations. | 4.31 | 0.854 |
| The organization can adapt and respond to challenges and changes in its operating environment. | 3.68 | 0.947 |
| There are instances where the organization demonstrated resilience in overcoming adversity and setbacks. | 3.03 | 1.355 |
| The organization has contingency plans and strategies in place to mitigate risks and ensure continuity of operations. | 4.11 | 0.967 |
| The organization has the ability to navigate future uncertainties and maintain its resilience. | 3.77 | 0.981 |

**Project planning**

In terms of project planning, there were unique findings that emerged from the respondents as they disagreed with the statements. First, the results showed that respondents disagreed that all the stakeholders were involved in the project planning process as shown by the mean score of 2.95 and a standard deviation of 1.413. The findings imply that there was poor involvement of community, government, and other actors in planning the CSSs and this may be a hindrance to the performance of CSSs in the Nairobi Archdiocese. According to Chigozie et al. (2017), The planning and implementation of a project can have a substantial effect on its long-term sustainability. For example, fostering participation strategies, remaining flexible in the face of uncertainties, and strengthening stakeholder capacity to manage and plan future actions. Development officers can make sure that interventions have a long-term effect on vulnerable communities being served.

Second, the respondents were in disagreement that allocated resources were sufficient to meet the project's needs and objectives as shown by a mean score of 2.68 and a standard deviation of 1.397. This experience of inadequate resources is not limited to CSSs in the Archdiocese of Nairobi but has also been reported in other areas such as in Isiolo where Chigozie et al. (2017) found unreliable funds contribute to budgetary allocation as well we timely disbursement of financial resources to different projects. This in turn negatively influences the sustainability of various church funded projects. Kagunya (2017) research in Nakuru County established that managers of Catholic Church projects allocate more resources to cultivating quality and good leadership for the projects’ benefit.

Third, respondents showed disagreement that there were no challenges or constraints encountered during the resource allocation process as indicated by a mean score of 2.39 and 1.374 standard deviation. Several resource challenges have been reported in Catholic Church projects including wastage of resources (Kagunya & Kirui, 2018), inadequate financial resources (Wafula et al., 2017), and too much resource dependence on other actors (Awiti et al., 2019). Making recommendations for overcoming these challenges, Kagunya (2017) used RDT and the RBV to show the need for resource planning in the implementation of Catholic Church projects.

Fourth, respondents were in disagreement there was a formal risk management plan in place to address identified risks as shown by a mean score of 2.81 and a standard deviation of 1.504. The lack of risk management has been associated with time and cost overruns in development projects and in some extreme, to total failure of projects. Risk management in projects is particularly sensitive to the identification and minimization of risk probability so that the project is completed (Mitchell, 2021). Mutula and Engairo (2024) showed proof that project managers needed to employ risk management techniques to guarantee good project outcomes in the Catholic Parish at Ngong Town.

Fifth, findings showed disagreement that risk mitigation strategies are effectively implemented throughout the project lifecycle as shown by a mean score of 2.92 and a standard deviation of 1.393. This implies that out of the many risks that a project may face, the CSSs were vulnerable to these events and this further hindered their performance as this may result in time and cost overruns. Mutula and Engairo (2024) agree that projects face different uncertainties and challenges from their start to implementation to completion. If these uncertainties are not mitigated properly, this can affect subsequent delivery of project objectives leading to cost overruns, delays, and project failure.

There was agreement among respondents that there were unforeseen risks that emerged during project implementation as shown by a mean score of 4.01 and a standard deviation of 0.993 suggesting that their risks experienced in CSSs implementation. According to Kagunya (2017), a well-constructed and refined project plan reduces project risks of failure and the associated cost of projects suggesting that adequate project planning that is clear and well defined is able to assist in reducing risks of failure due to high costs of projects.

**Table 3: Project Planning in Catholic Social Services**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Project planning** | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** |
| The project was thoroughly planned before its implementation. | 3.32 | 1.499 |
| The objectives were clearly defined to the stakeholders before the inception of the project | 3.40 | 1.385 |
| All the stakeholders were involved in the project planning process. | 2.95 | 1.413 |
| Objectives of the project align with the overall goals of the organization and entity leading the project. | 3.29 | 1.450 |
| Resources are effectively (financial, human, and material) allocated for the project. | 3.01 | 1.457 |
| The allocated resources are sufficient to meet the project's needs and objectives. | 2.68 | 1.397 |
| There is a systematic process in place for determining resource allocation priorities. | 3.00 | 1.525 |
| There were no challenges or constraints encountered during the resource allocation process. | 2.39 | 1.374 |
| Potential risks and challenges were identified during the project planning phase. | 3.00 | 1.433 |
| There was a formal risk management plan in place to address identified risks. | 2.81 | 1.504 |
| There were unforeseen risks that emerged during project implementation. | 4.01 | 0.993 |
| Risk mitigation strategies are effectively implemented throughout the project lifecycle | 2.92 | 1.393 |
| Clear timelines and milestones are well established for the project. | 3.21 | 1.536 |
| Established timelines and milestones are realistic and achievable. | 3.17 | 1.418 |
| There were deviations from the planned timelines or milestones during project implementation | 3.12 | 1.325 |
| Project progress and milestones are closely monitored and tracked. | 3.04 | 1.428 |

**Community participation**

Tale 4.4 shows that respondents were in disagreement that there were no challenges encountered in engaging stakeholders as shown by a mean score of 2.29 and standard deviation 1.343. This implies that CSSs were facing a challenge in their engagement of stakeholders. The findings suggest that CSSs were experiencing difficulties in their effort to engage all stakeholders during project implementation. The findings also show disagreement among respondents that stakeholders’ inputs were integrated into project planning and implementation as indicated by mean scores 2.92 and 1.373 standard deviation. This finding suggests that input from stakeholders was not always integrated into project activities.

**Table 4: Community Participation in Catholic Social Services**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Community participation** | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** |
| Stakeholders are actively engaged in the project planning and decision-making processes. | 3.08 | 1.531 |
| There are mechanisms in place to facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration with stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle. | 3.11 | 1.485 |
| There were no challenges encountered in engaging stakeholders. | 2.29 | 1.343 |
| Stakeholders’ inputs were integrated into project planning and implementation. | 2.92 | 1.373 |
| Efforts were made to incorporate local knowledge and cultural considerations into project planning and decision-making. | 3.09 | 1.337 |
| The diversity of perspectives within the project team leads to innovative approaches and solutions. | 3.75 | 1.264 |
| The inclusion of diverse perspectives and local knowledge is valuable in enhancing the project's outcomes. | 3.68 | 1.387 |
| Diversity is well represented within the project team. | 3.12 | 1.252 |
| The project aims to empower local community members and organizations. | 3.39 | 1.488 |
| Capacity-building activities are implemented to enhance the skills and capabilities of community members. | 3.15 | 1.531 |
| Capacity-building efforts are engendered by empowering community stakeholders to participate in project activities. | 3.11 | 1.494 |
| Community stakeholders express increased confidence and ability to engage in decision-making processes as a result of project interventions. | 3.04 | 1.370 |
| The project contributes to fostering social cohesion and trust within the community. | 3.41 | 1.396 |
| There are opportunities for community members to collaborate and work together towards common goals. | 3.97 | 1.078 |
| The project helps in building trust between different stakeholders involved in the project. | 3.40 | 1.375 |
| Change is observed in both social dynamics and relationships within the community as a result of project participation. | 3.16 | 1.507 |

**Institutional Capacity**

Table 5 shows the institutional capacity of CSSs in the Archdiocese of Nairobi from which respondents were in disagreement that there were diversified sources of funding available to the organization as shown by a mean score of 2.91 and a standard deviation of 1.406. This means that funding of CSSs was concentrated on specific sources and this implies that any change in relationship with these sources would result in financial instability for these initiatives. The results show respondents agreed that strategic partnerships and collaborations are important for the organization to achieve its mission and objectives as indicated by a mean score of 4.29 and 0.969 standard deviation.

**Table 5: Institutional Capacity of Catholic Social Services**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Institutional capacity** | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** |
| The institution does collaborate effectively with other stakeholders to support project goals | 3.17 | 1.519 |
| There are established processes and systems set in place to measure and monitor organizational performance. | 3.13 | 1.408 |
| The organization demonstrates accountability and transparency in its operations. | 3.29 | 1.343 |
| There have been recent initiatives and efforts aimed at improving organizational effectiveness. | 3.24 | 1.364 |
| The organization is successful in mobilizing financial resources to support its activities and programs. | 3.29 | 1.353 |
| There are diversified sources of funding available to the organization. | 2.91 | 1.406 |
| The organization leverages its networks and relationships effectively to secure funding opportunities. | 3.24 | 1.272 |
| There have been challenges encountered in resource mobilization efforts. | 3.91 | 1.164 |
| The organization employs adaptive management strategies to respond to changing circumstances and uncertainties. | 3.15 | 1.216 |
| The organization is flexible in adjusting its strategies and approaches based on monitoring and evaluation findings. | 3.07 | 1.379 |
| There are mechanisms put in place for learning and knowledge sharing within the organization to inform adaptive management practices. | 3.15 | 1.372 |
| There have been notable instances where adaptive management strategies led to improved project outcomes. | 3.40 | 1.208 |
| Strategic partnerships and collaborations are important for the organization to achieve its mission and objectives. | 4.29 | 0.969 |
| There are established criteria and guidelines for identifying and selecting strategic partners. | 3.04 | 1.456 |
| The organization engages effectively with partners to leverage complementary strengths and resources. | 3.19 | 1.353 |
| Strategic partnerships have resulted in mutually beneficial outcomes for the organization and its partners. | 3.28 | 1.361 |

**Source of funds**

Table 6 indicates respondents were in disagreement that CSSs were financially stable in regard to their funding sources as indicated by a mean score of 2.77 and, a standard deviation of 1.351. The findings suggest that there was no financial stability in CSSs in the Archdiocese of Nairobi. This is not new as past research had raised concern over this issue. Secondly, the respondents disagreed that CSSs funding sources are reliable and predictable, allowing for consistent budget planning and execution as shown by a mean score of 2.89, and a standard deviation of 1.305.

Third, respondents disagreed there are some reserves and contingency plans in place to mitigate financial risks or uncertainties as shown by a mean score of 2.81, and a standard deviation of 1.259. Contingency plans assist project teams in dealing with uncertainties and in enforcing innovative actions so as to increase plan flexibility. Contingency planning allows for developing a ready answer to protect a project from delays by adding more time to the initial schedule (Zarghami, 2024). This means that CSSs do not have contingency plans to cover almost every eventuality and this can have negative consequences on their performance (Kirira et al., 2019).

Fourth, the organization is flexible in reallocating funds across different programs and activities as needed as represented by a mean score of 2.84, and a standard deviation of 1.263. The finding implies that there are no contingencies made in the area of reallocation of funds as found in terms of contingency planning. Managers should be flexible in projects by shifting environments owing to changing beneficiary expectations and the dynamic environment in which projects are being implemented (Sohi et al., 2020). This lack of flexibility means that uncertain events that may occur have a negative impact on the CSSs activities and implementation. Showing the importance of flexibility, Awiti et al. (2021) found that CSAL operating in Kenya benefitted from financial sustainability as they had adopted flexible approaches to start and implement their own activities.

Fifth, respondents were in disagreement that there were mechanisms in place for stakeholders to provide input or feedback on funding decisions and budget allocations as represented by a mean score of 2.96 and, a standard deviation of 1.299. According to Wafula et al. (2017), the allocation of adequate resources and time for participatory analysis and response to demand-led approaches are crucial for improving participation. The findings imply that such mechanisms were not present in CSSs and this resulted in limited opportunities for stakeholders to give their input. Using stakeholder theory, CSSs can be able to undertake an assessment of stakeholders and identify the importance of stakeholder groups (stakeholder analysis) and this will allow CSSs to design appropriate communication and spaces for which stakeholders can give their input during project planning to its implementation (Kagunya & Kirui, 2018).

Sixth, respondents disagreed there have been no instances where stakeholder concerns or expectations regarding fund usage were not adequately addressed as shown by a mean score of 2.77, and a standard deviation of 1.467. According to Kagunya (2017), managing stakeholder requirements involves working and communicating with different actors so as to satisfy their needs. It also consists of communicating the type of activities directed at project stakeholders to meet their expectations and address their concerns and emerging issues. Wafula et al. (2017) maintained that it was significant to include local people in the inception phase when there is a decision to be made about the type of project needed to address their priorities.

**Table 6: Sources of Funds in Catholic Social Services**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Sources of funds** | **Mean** | **Std. Deviation** |
| The organization is financially stable in regard to its funding sources. | 2.77 | 1.351 |
| The organizations’ funding sources are reliable and predictable, allowing for consistent budget planning and execution. | 2.69 | 1.305 |
| The organization has experienced significant fluctuations in funding levels in recent years. | 3.31 | 1.515 |
| There are some reserves and contingency plans in place to mitigate financial risks or uncertainties. | 2.81 | 1.259 |
| The organization is flexible in reallocating funds across different programs and activities as needed. | 2.84 | 1.263 |
| There have been instances where funding restrictions and limitations hindered the organization's ability to respond to emerging needs and priorities. | 3.85 | 1.270 |
| The organization prioritizes funding streams that allow for greater flexibility in program design and implementation. | 3.13 | 1.398 |
| The organization communicates and negotiates with funders to ensure programmatic flexibility. | 3.33 | 1.349 |
| The organization ensures transparency and accountability in its use of funds to stakeholders. | 3.33 | 1.398 |
| There are mechanisms in place for stakeholders to provide input or feedback on funding decisions and budget allocations. | 2.96 | 1.299 |
| The organization demonstrates responsible stewardship of funds to its stakeholders. | 3.19 | 1.332 |
| There have been no instances where stakeholder concerns or expectations regarding fund usage were not adequately addressed. | 2.77 | 1.467 |
| The organization incorporates long-term financial planning into its strategic decision-making processes. | 3.04 | 1.390 |
| There are strategies in place to diversify funding sources and reduce dependency on specific donors or funding streams. | 3.01 | 1.419 |
| The organization assesses the sustainability of its funding model over the long term. | 3.08 | 1.373 |
| There are initiatives and efforts underway to build financial reserves and endowments to support future sustainability. | 3.03 | 1.294 |

**Regression Statistics**

Multiple linear regression was performed to determine the effect of the study-independent variables on CSSs performance at the 95% confidence level. These results are presented in the following subsections.

**Model summary**

Table 7 indicates that the coefficient of determination was 0.965 and this indicates that the model explained 96.5% of the variation in CSS performance. This means the remaining 3.5% of variation in CSSs performance was attributed to other factors that were not investigated in this research.

**Table 7: Model Summary**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **R** | **R Square** | **Adjusted R Square** | **Std. Error of the Estimate** |
| .965a | 0.932 | 0.928 | 0.26285 |

a Predictors: (Constant), source of funds, project planning, community participation, institutional capacity

**4.5.2 Model significance**

Table 8 shows the analysis of variance (ANOVA) results which are used to determine whether the 96.5% variation explained by the model was significant. Based on the results, the model was statistically significant as the p-value was less than 0.05.

**Table 8: ANOVA**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Sum of Squares** | **Df** | **Mean Square** | **F** | **Sig.** |
| Regression | 66.14 | 4 | 16.535 | 239.322 | .000b |
| Residual | 4.836 | 70 | 0.069 |  |  |
| Total | 70.976 | 74 |  |  |  |

a Dependent Variable: CSS performance

b Predictors: (Constant), Source of funds, project planning, community participation, institutional capacity

**Coefficients**

The coefficient results in Table 9 are used to determine the influence of each of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The findings indicate that project planning (*β* = 0.036, *p* < 0.05), community participation (*β* = 0.342, *p* < 0.05), institutional capacity (*β* = 0.071, *p* < 0.05), and sources of funds (*β* = 0.616, *p* < 0.05) had a negative but insignificant effect on the CSS performance. The findings suggest that an increase in sources of funds would lead to an increase in CSS performance by 0.616 followed by community participation (0.342), institutional capacity (0.071), and project planning (0.036).

**Table 9: Coefficientsa**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Variables** | **Unstandardized Coefficients** | **t** | **Sig.** |
|  | **B** |  |  |
| (Constant) | 0.720 | 6.615 | 0.000 |
| Project planning | 0.036 | -0.439 | 0.002 |
| Community participation | 0.342 | 2.995 | 0.004 |
| Institutional capacity | 0.071 | -0.486 | 0.028 |
| Source of funds | 0.616 | 5.696 | 0.000 |

**a Dependent Variable: CSS performance**

**Discussion**

**Project planning and performance of Catholic Social Services**

The first objective aimed to determine whether there was a positive and significant effect of project planning. The study further found that effective communication and clear goal-setting were identified as critical for performance. The need for a well-defined timeline and resource allocation plan was emphasized for the performance of the catholic social services. Additionally, regular progress monitoring and flexibility to adapt to changes were highlighted as important factors for performance. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of meticulous planning and continuous evaluation to ensure optimistic performance.

This means that most projects were seen as not financially viable due to their lack of financial sustainability. Wafula et al. (2017) have shown that Catholic Church projects view financial sustainability as an important factor for their success. The study found that financial resources have an effect on the sustainability of projects funded by the Church. The respondents were found to agree that the organization could improve to better meet stakeholder needs and expectations as shown by a mean score of 4.31 and standard deviation 0.854.

According to Kagunya (2017), the management of Catholic Church projects needs to have opportunities for different actors to participate and give them a feeling that their ideas are included in making decisions. These actors are also beneficiaries, local leaders, and project teams are significant groups and their contribution is important to make sure the projects perform as expected and attain the set goals.

**Community participation and performance of Catholic Social Services**

The second objective determined a positive and significant effect of community participation on the performance of CSSs. The findings suggest that increasing the participation of community members in the CSS would result in improved performance. Therefore, there exists a strong linkage between the participation of the community members and the success of the projects.

Kithangacha (2018) found the major issues that come from the identification phase including stakeholder involvement and analysis which if properly managed enables projects to use stakeholders’ knowledge. However, this was lacking in the CSSs in the Archdiocese of Nairobi and this therefore hindered better performance outcomes of their initiatives.

According to Kipkogei and Muchelule (2023), it is important to note that the best implementation strategy for any specific project should be selected through a systematic process of gathering input from a wide range of stakeholders with expertise in project implementation practice. This can include seeking input and feedback from community members, as well as providing them with information about the project and its progress which was lacking from the CSSs in Archdiocese of Nairobi from the respondents’ sentiments.

**Institutional capacity and performance of Catholic Social Services**

The third objective determined there was a positive and significant outcome of institutional capacity on performance. Therefore, increasing the institutional capacity of the projects would lead to better performance as their procedures and rules allow CSSs actors to work in tandem to solve a development concern. It involves the rules and procedures that govern a project.

Based on RDT, most NGOs depend on financial resources from their Western partners and this limits their diversification of funding sources. This sentiment is advanced by Awiti et al. (2021) found that CSAL operating in Kenya benefitted from financial sustainability as they had adopted flexible approaches to start and implement their own activities. The RDT amplifies the relationships and partnerships of NGOs with other actors so as to remain sustainable (Awiti et al., 2019).

Strategic partnerships are mutual collaborations and networks to achieve organisational goals and objectives through shared values and activities to strengthen the organisation’s resilience to respond to the needs of beneficiaries through shared resources (Mopel et al., 2023). In their study, Mopel et al. (2023) revealed strategic partnerships had an effect on resource mobilization. This means that by entering into strategic partnerships, the CSSs in the Archdiocese of Nairobi could be able to enhance their performance and meet the expectations of intended beneficiaries.

**Source of funds and performance of Catholic Social Services**

The fourth objective determined that sources of funds had the largest effect on the performance of CSSs suggesting that acquiring funding for a project is the most important factor that can contribute to the performance of CSSs. The findings showed that funding remains an important variable for the success of any development project as a lack of reliable funds has a negative effect on the timely disbursement and allocation of funds.

Wafula et al. (2017) noted there was a lack of accountability as a way of differentiating among funds for development and pastoral work. This leads to a temptation to misallocate funds, a lack of efficient financial accountability, lack of beneficiaries’ participation contributing to poor transparency in project implementation. Lack of transparency frequently leads to misusing of resources allocated to the projects which will eventually paralyze the service delivery of projects (Wafula et al., 2017).

Chigozie et al. (2017) findings revealed that unreliable funds influence budgetary allocations as well as timely disbursement of financial resources to different projects. In the end, it turns negatively influence church funded projects sustainability. The lack of reliable funds is attributed to the donor dependency that is a characteristic of CSSs which means that when donors withdraw from the projects there is a negative consequence on access and availability of funds (Wafula et al., 2017). The recommendations were that CSSs should continuously innovate new avenues for generating funds.

**Conclusion**

The first objective aimed to determine the influence of project planning on the performance of CSSs finding there was a positive and significant effect of project planning on performance. Therefore, it is the study concludes that project planning had the least effect on the performance of CSSs in the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

The second objective aimed to determine the influence of community participation on the performance of CSSs revealing a positive and significant effect of community participation on the performance of CSSs. Therefore, this study concludes that community participation has the second largest effect on the performance of CSSs in the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

The third objective aimed to determine the influence of institutional capacity on the performance of CSSs finding a positive and significant outcome of institutional capacity on performance. Therefore, this study concludes that institutional capacity has the second least effect on the performance of CSSs in the Archdiocese of Nairobi.

The fourth objective aimed to determine the influence of the source of funds and the performance of CSSs revealing that sources of funds had the largest effect on the performance of CSSs among the four variables. This study concludes that sources of funds are the most important SMP for improved performance.

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