

FACTORS INFLUENCING PERFORMANCE OF ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN PROJECTS IN IMENTI NORTH SUB COUNTY, MERU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Every child requires basic needs to develop and grow to a healthy and responsible adult. A child requires parental love, care and protection in the early stages of development. The immediate family and environment of a child is critical in determining how that child develops because it is in this environment that they get nurtured, thereby experiencing love and acceptance, a sense of belonging, safety and security as well as developing trust, respect and confidence. Orphans and vulnerable children are one of the main problems of developing countries, especially sub Saharan Africa. In Kenya, VC are associated with malnutrition, sickness, lower school enrolment rates, drugs and substance abuse, lack of clothing and shelter and poor school participation compared to the less vulnerable children. The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors influencing the performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County in Meru County. The study sought to assess how management competence influence performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya. The study further sought to establish how resource availability influence performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya. The study sought to establish how community involvement influence the performance of orphans and vulnerable children in Imenti North ,The study also sought to determine how monitoring and evaluation influence performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County,

Kenya. The study adopted descriptive research design. The study was grounded on resource dependence theory, stakeholder theory, and public participation theory. The stud had a target population of 214.The respondents were selected using stratified proportionate random sampling technique where by a sample size of 137 was used. Primary data was obtained using self-administered questionnaires that were made up of both open ended and closed ended questions. The reliability of the study was measured using test retest method. The Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social and multiple regressions. From the findings the study revealed that professional and academic qualification helps the staff acquire skills needed to perform their jobs effectively and that experience in OVC related aspects influences service delivery in OVC projects. From the findings the study revealed that financial allocation/availability improves OVCs health status, that human resources efficiency enables monitoring of OVC projects and on the fact that information communication and technology promotes knowledge transfer that enables individuals to satisfy present and future needs of stakeholders. From the findings, the study found that involvement in initiation and identification influences service delivery and that labor contribution ensures timely completion of OVCs projects. The study revealed that frequency of Monitoring opportunities for improving the performance of the projects and that facilitated negotiations and identification of gaps and suggesting the way forward. The study concluded that resource availability had the greatest effect on the Performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects followed by community

involvement, then management competence while monitoring and evaluation had the least effect to the performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects. The study recommends that financial allocation should be

increased to improve the OVCs health status.

Key Words: *performance, orphans and vulnerable children projects, Imenti North sub County, Meru County, Kenya*

INTRODUCTION

Every child requires basic needs to develop and grow to a healthy and responsible adult (UNICEF, 2016). A child requires parental love, care and protection in the early stages of development. The immediate family and environment of a child is critical in determining how that child develops because it is in this environment that they get nurtured, thereby experiencing love and acceptance, a sense of belonging, safety and security as well as developing trust, respect and confidence. According to Gaventa and Blauert (2016), disadvantaged groups are unappreciated, devalued or derided by the larger society. Vulnerable children (VC) and orphaned children fall in the category of the disadvantaged group, United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF 2016). Access to food, shelter and education remains a key challenge for the VC. This is due to the fact that their vulnerability has greatly been aggravated by lack of supportive socioeconomic factors such as quality health, income, and demographic changes.

The management of vulnerable and orphaned children projects plays an important role in the daily lives and activities for the children (Weisman, 2011). A manager is the person who is vested with formal authority over an organization or one of the organization's subunit. Management is concerned with the optimum attainment of organizational goals and objectives with and through other people, therefore, effective communication is vital to maintain cordial relations, devise strategies, make decisions, and implement actions (Gibson, 2009). Therefore, management affects the entire organization by providing direction. They are also required to ensure that resource availability, socio-cultural factors, community involvement and ownership, and monitoring and evaluation are aspects of the socioeconomic environment, should be well considered so that their effect in project performance is positive rather than negative. Vulnerable and orphaned children projects are either publicly or privately funded for children who either have no parents (Orphans) or cannot get adequate support from the parents or guardian who should take care of them as they grow (Gibson, 2009).

In Yemen, for instance, there are 30,000 VCs and orphans who are in need of care and protection. Migration to the cities, poverty, unemployment, high fertility rates, lack of social services, and abandonment of support for the poor by the state, all led to the problem of VCs and orphans. The VCs and orphaned children could be used for selling drugs and girls for sex; they could be trafficked and sold as well. These children want to live and so can be involved in such illegal activities.

According to UNICEF (2016) approximately 15 million children worldwide have lost one or both parents due to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV and AIDS). Nearly 12 million of these children live in Sub-Sahara Africa. Many more children have been made vulnerable because of family illness, family breakups, school withdrawals, stigma, poverty, property loss, loss of their shelter, child labor, inadequate health care, loss of rights of inheritance, vulnerability to either sexual or physical abuse and children heading their households (International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2002). In most of the African countries, close to half of the children enrolled in primary schools cannot manage to access secondary education because of the inability of the caregivers to finance their education at this level (UNAIDS, 2010).

In Africa, for example Ghana, Orme and Seipel (2010) argue that children have made the street their home for a variety of reasons. While a few children are from intact families and have come to urban streets for economic reasons or for adventure, a large number of children are pushed into a life on the streets of urban centers for the same reasons as children in other parts of the world. Typically, they end up on the streets as a result of the death of their parents, poverty, sexual abuse, violence in the home, neglect, divorce in the family and the like. Some of these children maintain some contact with their families and may even receive some support from them, but many more are living and working on the street without any contact with or support from family members. In almost all cases, these children live without adult protection and without decent income-generating employment. They usually work as laborers, vendors or domestic servants. Some children support themselves by begging or prostitution.

Orphans and vulnerable children are some of the main problems of developing countries, especially sub Saharan Africa. UNAIDS (2010) estimated that of the 16.6 million children (aged 0–17) who have lost one or both parents to AIDS, 14.8 million are in sub-Saharan Africa. Within Ethiopia 5.5 million children, around 6% of the total population, are categorized as orphans or vulnerable children (OVC). OVC comprise almost 12% of Ethiopia's total child population. Over 83% of these OVC are living in rural settings of which 855,720 of them are orphaned children as a result of the death of one or both parents due to HIV/AIDS (Save the Children UK, 2011).

Research from the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA) shows that the survival rate of OVC from Class One to Class Eight is below 40%, while those who survive from Class One to university is 1.69%. (KIHBS 2005/6:47) Many OVC still remain unreached and this is the reason for further appeal, to address the plight of OVC. According to the NPA on OVC, OVC interventions are clustered into four thematic areas; first are interventions relating to child survival (access to food, health, clean water, hygiene), secondly are interventions relating to child development (education, psychosocial support, social welfare and support), third are interventions relating to child protection (birth registration, adoption, guardianship and foster care) and lastly are OVC interventions relating to child participation (capacity building, income generating activities - IGA. UWEZO, (2012) OVC Report.

Providing care and support for OVC is one of the biggest challenges Kenya faces today, as the growing numbers overwhelm available resources. AIDS, fuelled by high poverty levels, is one of the main contributors to OVC incidence in Kenya. Understanding the magnitude of the problem and socio-demographic characteristics of OVC can provide the foundation for building programs of appropriate design, size and scope.

The Kenyan government has responded by putting in place the National Plan of Action on OVC which helps to strengthen the capacity of families to protect and care for OVC, provide economic, psychosocial and other forms of social support, as well as mobilize and support community based responses to increase OVC access to essential services such as food and nutrition, education, health care, housing, water and sanitation. The Department of Children Services, within the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development, in collaboration with the National Steering Committee on OVC developed the OVC Policy, a key aspect of which is the provision of a direct predictable and regular cash subsidy of KSH 2,000 per month to households caring for OVC (Sloth-Nielsen, 2014).

Despite efforts to improve lives of children, social indicators continue to show decline in social and economic welfare of children as a result of poverty, conflict, HIV/AIDS, and war (Gibson, 2009). The extended family network that traditionally used to support orphans has collapsed due to urbanization, poverty and other socio-economic factors, therefore children homes have provided protection for such children. Every day the children homes' management, staff and children face new issues and revisit the old ones.

In Kenya, VC are associated with malnutrition, sickness, lower school enrolment rates, drugs and substance abuse, lack of clothing and shelter and poor school participation compared to the less vulnerable children. Currently, Kenya has not managed to carry out a comprehensive survey but the government approximates that there are close to 2.4 million orphaned and vulnerable children in the country (UNICEF, 2016).

The Government of Kenya (GoK) does acknowledge that even though free primary education has been introduced, Orphans and Vulnerable Children do not tend to enroll in the government system (GoK, 2013). Substantial progress has been made since 2009 towards strengthening Kenya's child protection system. The government, supported by UNICEF, has completed a mapping and assessment of the current system in Kenya which identifies priority gaps that should be addressed.

Based on this mapping a draft Child Protection System Strategy has been developed. The above strategy highlights the public sector contributions to the child protection system under Kenya's Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), and emphasizes gaps that represent substantial opportunities for Kenya's development partners and the donor community to engage. Orphans and vulnerable children continue to lag behind in accessing and acquiring formal education. Therefore, it is imperative to make follow ups and discover what could be the underlying factors causing school dropout (UNICEF, 2016).

In Meru County, and specifically Imenti North sub County, there are several projects for the OVCs and the orphaned children. They include the Thelyann children's home, MCK Kaaga childrens home, Almano children home, Meru children home (Nkabune), Jerusha Mwirari

childrens home, Clover leaf Children home, Ripples International, and Sos villages. However, even at these projects, children still face profound challenges because the management still lacks the capacity to provide for all their basic and critical needs [GOK: (Vision 2030 blueprint), 2010]. Therefore, even in such projects some of these children spend nights on the floor, with little food, medical care, some walk bare-footed and partially naked. Some attend informal school lessons in mud-walled and non-equipped classrooms. Some are forced out of school due to lack of school fees (Schutt, 2009).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Providing care and support for OVC is one of the biggest challenges Kenya faces today, as the growing numbers overwhelm available resources. AIDS, fuelled by high poverty levels, is one of the main contributors to OVC incidence in Kenya. Understanding the magnitude of the problem and socio-demographic characteristics of OVC can provide the foundation for building programs of appropriate design, size and scope.

Despite efforts to improve lives of children, social indicators continue to show decline in social and economic welfare of children as a result of poverty, conflict, HIV/AIDS, and war (Gibson, 2009). The extended family network that traditionally used to support orphans has collapsed due to urbanization, poverty and other socio-economic factors, therefore children homes have provided protection for such children. Every day the children homes' management, staff and children face new issues and revisit the old ones.

In Imenti North Sub County, there are numerous OVC projects. The performances of these projects have not been adequate given that the county has recorded significant numbers of street children and orphans dropping out of school. This is according to a report by KNBS (2014) which further postulates that these projects have failed to offer quality and follow up services to OVC mainly due to lack of availability of adequate resources. The report states that in Meru County as a whole, the number of street children have increased by 3% since 2010. AS well, the report holds that the number of drop outs has increased with 13% of which 45% are part of the OVC cohort. This is the data that shows that OVC projects in Meru County and Imenti North Sub County have failed and need further research for policy makers to formulate sound policies.

On Orphans and vulnerable children, various studies have been conducted; Nzioki (2014) studied the school-based factors influencing participation of orphans and vulnerable children in primary schools concentrating on Kamukunji District, Nairobi County Kenya. In another study by Magampa (2014), focus was on the academic performance of orphaned primary school learners aged between eight and ten years in Mankweng Circuit. Further, Jakachira (2013) focused on a different dimension in this topic by concentrating on the interface of child-headed households and academic performance. These studies failed to focus on the plight of OVCs' Projects and the factors affecting them in Imenti North Sub County. This is literature gap that the study seeks to fill.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

The purpose of the study was to investigate the factors influencing the performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North sub County in Meru County, Kenya.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To assess how management competence influence of performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya.
2. To establish how availability of resources influence performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya.
3. To establish how community involvement influence performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya.
4. To determine how monitoring and evaluation influences performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section discusses the theoretical foundation on which the study is anchored. The study was grounded on resource dependence theory, stakeholder theory, theory of change and public participation theory.

Resource Dependence Theory (RDT)

This theory was developed by Pfeffer and Salancik, (2003). In employing this theory to this study, the researcher looks at how the dependence on external resources organizations affects the performance of OVC. Further, the author argues that the OVC projects under study are dependent on resources, these resources ultimately originate from the environment of such as donors, the environment to a considerable extent contains other organizations, the resources one organization needs are thus often in the hand of other organizations, resources are a basis of power, legally independent organizations can therefore be dependent on each other Jakachira (2013). In addition by adopting this theory, the researcher also argues that; in as much as organizations are inter-dependent, the theory of Resource Dependence needs a closer examination. Its' very weakness lies in its very assertions of dependence. According to this theory, organization depends on resources for their survival; therefore, for any organization to achieve sustainability, resources are indispensable. For community based organizations to achieve performance, resources are important. The researcher therefore argues that these resources will not only come in the form of financial resources but for project sustainability, other resources of human for example volunteers and land should be considered. This theory addressed research question two which sought to empty the effects of access to funding in the performance of the OVCs projects, the theory will explain the important role that funding plays as part of the overall system that makes up CBOs and how earmarked funding influences their operations.

Stakeholder Theory

According to Freeman (2008) the stakeholder theory looks into how an organization influences both its internal and external environment. In adopting this theory to this study, the researcher argues that implementing OVCs projects, it is important understand how their

operations are influenced by others and how they influence others. The leadership of these OVCs projects should lay emphasis on the relationships of the firm with its stakeholders, by finding ways to balance and assimilate the different relationships and objectives that a firm can have. However, according to Freeman (2008) an organization's leadership should categorize its stakeholders as primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders with greater priority granted to primary stakeholders. Management competence should prioritize their influence on these stakeholders and the influence of these stakeholders the OVC project objectives. Secondary stakeholders could include; government, media and other special interests groups. This theory addressed research questions which sought to unpack the effects of management competency in projects, the theory will explain the important role that it plays as part of the overall system that makes up OVC projects and how these influence their operations.

Public Participation Theory

Erick Erickson is a personality theorist who believes that the most important force driving human behavior and development of personality is the social interaction. He points out that the social environment combined with biological maturation provides each individual with a set of crises that must be resolved. Erick Erickson's human development theory comprises of eight psychosocial stages, and the fourth stage is more relevant to this study. This fourth stage is a period occurring from about six years to twelve years. At this stage the child is expected to learn rudimentary skills via formal education (Baron, Boschee & Jacobson, 2009). The child within the OVCs community projects develops a sense of industry and learns the reward of perseverance and diligence. The child learns to do things well or correctly in comparison to a standard or to others. Society meets these tendencies of the child by creating opportunities for learning and co-operation. Virtues of competence arise during this stage (Sloth-Nielsen, 2014).

The theory underscores the fact that the creation and the ongoing operations of each project are as a result of several actors' activities, who are the stakeholders. The central idea therefore is that a programme/project's success is dependent on how well the organization manages the relationships with key groups such as community in place and others that can affect the realization of the project objectives. This theory gives an understanding of the influence of community involvement and ownership of project which form basis for this study on performance of OVC projects.

Summary of Literature Review

Orphans and vulnerable children are some of the main problems of developing countries, especially sub Saharan Africa. In Kenya, VC are associated with malnutrition, sickness, lower school enrolment rates, drugs and substance abuse, lack of clothing and shelter and poor school participation compared to the less vulnerable children. Availability of resources ensure effective and quality monitoring and evaluation. It is critical to set aside adequate financial and human resources at the planning stage. National monitoring and evaluation systems in resource-limited settings tend to be chronically challenged, with persistently incomplete reporting and inaccurate data posing a major threat to their utility. Management skills are effective in achieving goals by performing four major functions; planning, which is

involved in selecting missions and objectives, actions to achieve them, decision making and choosing future causes of actions from among alternatives.

Human Rights Watch investigations in countries that include Colombia, Guinea, India, Israel, Mexico, Spain, South Africa, and Sri Lanka found that migrant children, children from rural areas, ethnic or religious minorities, internally displaced and refugee children, indigenous children, or low-caste children were often denied equal access to education, or in some cases, access to any education at all. For children in detention, opportunities for education are often grossly deficient. The report further stated that discrimination, ostracism and humiliation are common occurrence in many Kenyan schools and especially so among the urban poor OVCs who are normally denied the right to participate in education. Advocates have promoted broad community mobilization and public awareness about the importance of early childhood. For the most part, however, activity to promote healthy child development and provide support to families with young children has not been linked with efforts to promote family economic security in low-income communities.

Parents play a role in the gratification of the needs of their children. Public Participation theory possesses information on the role played by the management in getting the community to participate. While some valuable research has been conducted on OVC in Kenya, significant gaps remain. The lack of vital strategic information is hindering policy makers and program leaders from making well-informed decisions about the path forward. However, with limited resources available to divide between programming and research, a reasonable balance should be found to answer key questions without sacrificing support for critical services.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

According to Best and Khan,(2012) descriptive design is concerned with determining the frequency with which something occurs or the relationship between variables .Thus, this approach was suitable for this study, since the study intended to collect comprehensive information through descriptions which is helpful for identifying variables.

Target population

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010), a population is the total collection of elements about which we wish to make inferences.The target population for this study composed of 214 stakeholders in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County as shown in Table 3.1.

Sample size and Sampling Procedures

Sampling is a deliberate choice of a number of people who are to provide the data from which a study is draw conclusions about some larger group whom these people represent. The section focuses on the sampling size and sampling procedures.

The sample size is a subset of the population that is taken to be representatives of the entire population (Kumar, 2011). A sample population of 137 was arrived at by calculating the target population of 214 with a 95% confidence level and an error of 0.05 using the below formula taken from Kumar (2011).

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot N \cdot \hat{p}^2}{(N - 1)e^2 + z^2 \hat{p}^2}$$

Where: n = Size of the sample,

N = Size of the population and given as 214,

e = Acceptable error and given as 0.05,

\hat{p} = The standard deviation of the population and given as 0.5 where not known,

Z = Standard variate at a confidence level given as 1.96 at 95% confidence level.

The sample size fits within the minimum of 30 proposed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012). The study selected the respondents using stratified proportionate random sampling technique. Stratified random sampling is unbiased sampling method of grouping heterogeneous population into homogenous subsets then making a selection within the individual subset to ensure representativeness. The study used simple random sampling to pick the respondents in each stratum.

Research Instruments

Primary data instruments were questionnaires. The questionnaires were made up of both open ended and closed ended questions. The open ended questions were used so as to encourage the respondent to give an in-depth and felt response without feeling held back in illuminating of any information and the closed ended questions allowed the respondents to respond from limited options that are stated. According to Saunders (2011), the open ended or unstructured questions allow profound response from the respondents while the closed or structured questions are generally easier to evaluate. The questionnaires were used in an effort to conserve time and money as well as to facilitate an easier analysis as they are in immediate usable form.

Pilot Testing

Pilot testing refers to putting of the research questions into test to a different study population but with similar characteristics as the study population to be studied (Kumar, 2011). Pilot testing of the research instruments was conducted using stakeholders of community development projects in Imenti South sub County since it has a similar setting. 14 questionnaires 10 percent of the sample size was administered to the pilot survey respondents who were chosen at random. This helped to improve on the efficiency of the instrument. This process was repeated until the researcher was satisfied that the instrument does not have variations or vagueness.

Validity of Research Instruments

The study used content validity which drew an inference from test scores to a large domain of items similar to those on the test. Content validity is concerned with sample-population representativeness. Gillham (2011) stated that the knowledge and skills covered by the test items should be representative to the larger domain of knowledge and skills. Expert in the field of study especially the lecturers opinion was requested to comment on the representativeness and suitability of questions and gave suggestions of corrections to be made to the structure of the research tools. This helped to improve the content validity of the data that was be collected.

Reliability of Research Instruments

Reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable. The questionnaire was administered to a pilot group of 14 randomly selected respondents from the stakeholders of OVC projects in Imenti South sub County and their responses were used to check the reliability of the tool. A construct composite reliability co-efficient (Cronbach alpha) of 0.7 or above, for all the constructs, were considered to be adequate for this study (Rousson & Gasser, 2012). The computed values for the reliability analysis were as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

	Cronbach's Alpha
Resource adequacy	.829
Management competence	.733
Monitoring and Evaluation	.751
Community Involvement	.748

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained an introduction letter from the university which was presented to each stakeholder so as to be allowed to collect the necessary data from the respondents. The drop and pick method was preferred for questionnaire administration so as to give respondents enough time to give well thought out responses. The researcher personally administered the research instruments to the respondents. This enabled the researcher to establish rapport, explain the purpose of the study and the meaning of items that may not be clear as observed by Best and Khan (2003).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 21.0). All the questionnaires received were referenced and items in the questionnaire were coded to facilitate data entry. After data cleaning which entailed checking for errors in entry, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean score and standard deviation was estimated for all the quantitative variables and information presented in form of tables. The qualitative data from the open-ended questions were analyzed using conceptual content analysis and presented in prose. Multiple regression analysis was used to establish the relations between the independent and dependent variables. Since there were four independent variables in this study the multiple regression model generally assumed the following equation:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y= performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects

β_0 =constant $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$ and β_4 = regression coefficients

X_1 = Management competence, X_2 = Resource availability, X_3 = Community involvement, X_4 =Monitoring and evaluation, ϵ =Error Term

RESEARCH RESULTS

Multiple Regression Analysis

In this study, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the effect among predictor variables. The summary of regression model output is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Regression Model Output

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.891	0.794	0.784	2.137

The study found that independent variables selected for the study (i.e. management competence, resource availability, community involvement and monitoring and evaluation) accounted for 78.4% of the variations on performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects. According to the test model, 21.6% percent of the variation performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects could not be explained by the model.

Table 3: Summary of One-Way ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1597.2	4	399.300	55.953	2.18E-23
	Residual	628	88	7.136		
	Total	2012.82	92			

The probability value of 0.000 indicates that the regression relationship was significant in predicting the effects of resource adequacy, management competence, monitoring and evaluation and community involvement on performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects. The calculated F (55.953) was significantly larger than the critical value of F= 5.6125. This again shows that the overall test model was significant.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	0.786	0.323		2.433	0.016
Resource adequacy	0.896	0.302	0.616	2.967	0.003
Management competence	0.694	0.316	0.545	2.196	0.030
Monitoring and Evaluation	0.516	0.217	0.443	2.378	0.019
Community Involvement	0.753	0.236	0.531	3.191	0.018

The established multiple regression equation for predicting performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects from the four independent variables was:

$$Y = 0.786 + 0.896X_1 + 0.694X_2 + 0.516X_3 + 0.753X_4 + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y= Performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects

X₁= Management competence, X₂= Resource availability, X₃= Community involvement

X₄=Monitoring and evaluation, ε=Error Term

The regression equation above has established that taking all factors into account (Management competence, availability of resources, community involvement and monitoring and evaluation) constant at zero, performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects was 0.786. The findings presented also show that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit increase in the resource adequacy would lead to a 0.896 increase in the scores of performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects and a unit increase in the scores of management competence would lead to a 0.694 increase in the scores of performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects. Further, the findings show that a unit increase in the scores of monitoring and evaluation would lead to a 0.516 increase in the scores of performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects. The study also found that a unit increase in the scores of community involvement would lead to a 0.753 increase in the scores of performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects Meru County. Overall, resource adequacy had the greatest effect on the Performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya, followed by community involvement, then management competence while stigma and monitoring and evaluation had the least effect to the performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti north sub county, Meru County, Kenya. All the variables were significant (p-values < 0.05).

Discussion of the Key Findings

This section focuses on the discussion of the findings relative to what previous researchers have found on the study variables. It correlates the findings with those of the previous literature and establishes where they are in agreement or they were contrary.

Management Competence

Under this, the study further sought to assess how management competence influence performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya. From the findings the study revealed that professional and academic qualification helps the staff acquire skills needed to perform their jobs effectively. This was similar to Jobber (2009) who said that training hence helps individuals in acquiring the knowledge and skills they need to perform their jobs and do it effectively. The study also found that experience in OVC related aspects influences service delivery in OVC projects. These concur with (Gareth, 2012) who agrees that management skills are effective in achieving goals by performing four major functions; planning, which is involved in selecting missions and objectives, actions to achieve them, decision making and choosing future causes of actions from among alternatives. Further the study showed that information sharing promotes knowledge transfer that enables individuals to satisfy present and future needs of stakeholders. This correlates with Armstrong (2016) who said that information sharing in communication is required so that the management can keep the employees informed of the policies and plans affecting them.

The study also revealed that leadership style influences the coordination of the OVC project management team, that knowledge on policies guiding OVC projects motivates employees to achieve high levels of performance and that technical expertise of the OVC project staff doesn't help in achievement of the objectives. These were in line with Gibson (2013) who says that in a reward context, recognition refers to a managerial acknowledgement of the

employee achievement that could result in improved status where recognition could include public praise, expressions of a job well done or special attention.

The study further concluded management competence influenced performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya positively. From the findings the study deduced that professional and academic qualification helps the staff acquire skills needed to perform their jobs effectively and that experience in OVC related aspects influences service delivery in OVC projects. Again the study showed that information sharing promotes knowledge transfer that enable individuals to satisfy present and future needs of stakeholders and that leadership style influences the coordination of the OVC project management team. The also deduced that technical expertise of the OVC project staff doesn't helps in achievement of the objectives.

Resource Availability

The study further sought to establish how resource adequacy influence performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya. From the findings the study revealed that financial allocation/ availability improves OVCs health status. This was similar to Magampa (2014) who argued that financial resources should be estimated realistically at the time of planning for the success of the OVC project that human resources efficiency enables monitoring of OVC projects. Again the study found that information communication and technology promotes knowledge transfer that enables individuals to satisfy present and future needs of stakeholders. This correspond to KAACR Annual Report (2007) which claims that goals are to generate enough funding to maintain services, re-invest in their communities, and provide employees with an up-to-date education and training to service their clients and maintenance funds to continue servicing their communities. However the study found that stationery and equipment availability fairly influences service delivery in OVC projects and that consistency of funds fairly ensures timely completion of OVCs projects. These were in line with Magampa (2014) who argue that adequate resources is a major challenge because these projects their base is servicing needs of the community; there is little focus on making a profit.

Community Involvement and Ownership

The study sought to evaluate how community involvement influence performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya. From the findings the study found that involvement in initiation and identification influences service delivery and that labor contribution ensures timely completion of OVCs projects. These are in line with Weisman (2011) who found that the degree to which stakeholders are personally involved in the implementation process will cause great variation in their support for that project. Further the study revealed that involvement in planning influences service delivery in OVC projects. This corresponds to Ndagi (2013) whose study found that stakeholder consultation is more influential in service-oriented projects such as information technology. The study also found that public dialogue promotes knowledge transfer that enable individual's satisfaction of present and future needs of stakeholders. This concurred with World Bank (2012) which claimed that stakeholder involvement is the number one reason for

successful projects followed by executive management support and a clear statement of requirements.

However the study found that involvement in running and management influences effectiveness of OVCs projects. This was in line with Naidoo (2010) who found out that user involvement refers to a psychological state of the individual and is defined as the importance and personal relevance of a system to a user. The study concluded that community involvement influenced performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya positively and significantly. From the findings the study deduced that involvement in initiation and identification influences service delivery and that labor contribution ensures timely completion of OVCs projects. Further the study revealed that involvement in planning influences service delivery in OVC projects and that public dialogue promotes knowledge transfer that enable individual's satisfaction of present and future needs of stakeholders.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The study sought to determine how monitoring and evaluation influence performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya. As per the findings, the study revealed that frequency of Monitoring opportunities for improving the performance of the projects and that facilitated negotiations and identification of gaps and suggesting the way forward. These correspond to Chikati (2010) who said that participatory monitoring encourages continuous monitoring of OVC projects by the community members with an aim of collecting, analyzing and communicating information in-order to put measures on where things are not working as per the plan. Further the study showed on efficiency and effectiveness and revealed that M&E plan development forums makes processes more transparent as well as providing clear regulatory frameworks. This concur with World Bank (2011) which asserts that M&E creates a good environment for interaction between stakeholders and bring on board resources available, use and monitor and evaluate impact brought by the resources. However the study showed that programs involving stakeholder integration influences service delivery. These are contrary to Gaventa and Blauert (2009) who claim that the purpose of evaluation is to help the stakeholders of a project to better understand whether their hard work is having the impact they desire. Again the study concluded that monitoring and evaluation influenced performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya significantly. The study deduced frequency of Monitoring opportunities for improving the performance of the projects and that facilitated negotiations and identification of gaps and suggesting the way forward. Further the study showed that M&E plan development forums makes processes more transparent as well as providing clear regulatory frameworks.

CONCLUSIONS

The study further concluded management competence influenced performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya positively. From the findings the study deduced that professional and academic qualification helps the staff acquire skills needed to perform their jobs effectively and that experience in OVC related aspects influences service delivery in OVC projects Again the study showed

that information sharing promotes knowledge transfer that enable individuals to satisfy present and future needs of stakeholders and that leadership style influences the coordination of the OVC project management team. The also deduced that technical expertise of the OVC project staff doesn't helps in achievement of the objectives.

The study concluded that resource availability influenced performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects positively and significantly. From the findings the study deduced that financial allocation/ availability improves OVCs health status, that human resources efficiency enables monitoring of OVC projects and that information communication and technology promotes knowledge transfer that enables individuals to satisfy present and future needs of stakeholders. Further the study concluded that consistency of funds fairly ensures timely completion of OVCs projects.

The study concluded that community involvement influenced performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya positively and significantly. From the findings the study deduced that involvement in initiation and identification influences service delivery and that labor contribution ensures timely completion of OVCs projects. Further the study revealed that involvement in planning influences service delivery in OVC projects and that public dialogue promotes knowledge transfer that enable individual's satisfaction of present and future needs of stakeholders.

The study concluded that monitoring and evaluation influenced performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects in Imenti North Sub County, Meru County, Kenya significantly. The study deduced frequency of Monitoring opportunities for improving the performance of the projects and that facilitated negotiations and identification of gaps and suggesting the way forward. Further the study showed that M&E plan development forums makes processes more transparent as well as providing clear regulatory frameworks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the following:

1. The study recommends that financial allocation should be increased to improve the OVCs health status and that financial resources should be estimated realistically at the time of planning for the success of the OVC project that human resources efficiency enables monitoring of OVC projects. This will ensure that the projects are successfully carried out and completed on time
2. The study also recommended that the information gained from evaluating the monitoring should be used to tell the project manager where is going to plan and where it is not, and if action is required. The study suggested that further study be done on factors influencing performance of orphans and vulnerable children projects.
3. The study also recommends that information communication and technology which promotes knowledge transfer that enable individuals to satisfy present and future needs of stakeholders should be enhanced. This will improve the performance of the OVCs projects.

4. Further the study recommends that the management team should be trained on leadership styles which were found to influence coordination of the OVC project management team. This will in turn create an environment where the projects can be carried out successfully. This can be done through workshops and also leaders related seminars to enlighten the leaders on how to carry the projects as well managing their teams.
5. The study finally recommends that the community should be sensitized to be heavily involved in these projects. This can be done through including them as the stakeholders of the projects as well as allowing them to contribute to the projects hence improving the performance of the projects.

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