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Human Capital Development and Managerial Skills in Projects and Performance in Selected Assumption Sisters of Nairobi Projects, Kenya

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between human capital and managerial skills and project performance in Assumption Sisters Congregation of Nairobi (ASN) projects in Kenya. Using a mixed-method convergent design, data were collected from 153 respondents; 138 through questionnaires and 14 via interviews across 14 ASN projects, achieving a 95.1% response rate. The analysis was done using SPSS version 27 and NVivo programs, and results presented through tables and charts and narratives. Findings from the study shows that, human capital development shows a positive correlation with performance ($r=0.377$, $p<0.01$), indicating that investing in human capital can enhance project outcomes. The findings show that project performance can be significantly improved through staff training, technical proficiency, education, leadership development, effective resource mobilization, systematic onboarding, and adoption of realistic budgets and strategic plans.

Key words: Project, Human Capital Development, Managerial Skills, Project Performance

1.1 Background of the Study

Projects play a vital role in development, operating within constraints of time, cost, and scope (PMI, 2021). Their success largely depends on efficient project management. The roots of modern project management can be traced back to Frederick Taylor's 19th-century concept of scientific management. Today, project managers are expected to possess diverse knowledge and skills to ensure effective planning, scheduling, monitoring, and delivery. Strong managerial abilities help projects meet scope, cost, time, and quality requirements, ultimately leading to the achievement of intended outcomes (Amoah & Marimon, 2021). However, the World Bank (2016) notes that global development projects often experience more setbacks than successes, primarily due to inadequate funding, poor prioritization, weak planning, limited stakeholder involvement, and ineffective management.

Globally, the definition of project success has evolved beyond simply delivering on time and within budget. Modern perspectives emphasize performance in terms of efficiency, sustainability, adaptability, and intangible outcomes such as learning, relationships, and long-term organizational growth (Ranadive, 2023; Khatib & Harmoodi, 2020). Successful implementation also depends on skilled, knowledgeable implementers. According to Frost and Vinck (2022), community participation is more effective when project leaders are experienced, whereas lack of expertise increases the risk of failure.

Empirical studies further highlight the importance of adequate resources and capable staff. Amoah and Marimon (2021) found that both technical and interpersonal skills are essential for project managers, while Mukamana (2022) emphasized cost, risk, and management as key factors influencing performance in Kigali City. Similarly, Bitesigirwe and Ndede (2023) stressed the role of competent personnel, effective management practices, and open communication. Political instability can also disrupt projects, as shown by the Arab Uprising, which halted 95% of Egypt's planned economic growth.

In Kenya, while progress has been made in project development under local leadership, challenges such as outdated technology, inadequate financing, poor stakeholder involvement, and weak management persist. As a result, project failure rates remain high, ranging from 60% to 80%, largely due to poor resource allocation, insufficient planning, and ineffective engagement (World Bank, 2016; Ndirangu, 2021). ASN congregation owns thirty projects such as hospitals, schools, care facilities, hospitality services, and agribusiness ventures. Some of them are aimed of making money for long-term viability and self-sufficiency. While others are solely charitable in nature. Unfortunately, some perform sub-optimally.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the world undertake projects in the hope that they will be successful and have a positive impact on society. Nevertheless, according to the Project Management Institute (PMI, 2018), more than 70% of projects worldwide fail to complete their tasks on time or within budget, eventually failing to achieve their desired outcomes. Project failure rate in Kenya ranges between 60% and 80%, which is a similarly concerning situation (World Bank, 2016). This high percentage demonstrates the widespread difficulty of successfully completing projects while adding value for stakeholders and achieving the expected performance. Unfortunately, numerous projects encounter setbacks, delays, cost overruns, or fall short of anticipated quality requirements and performance (World Bank, 2016). The rationale behind this study was that despite the growing focus on quality services, performance, competitive advantage and sustainability in many organizations, there exists persistent issues derailing performance in some ASN projects. These persistent issues have led to some projects performing sub-optimally with high staff turnover. This has caused growing worries that some ASN projects may experience significant delays or perhaps complete failure if they are not addressed immediately. Therefore, this study was crucial and timely as it aimed at analyzing how human capital development and managerial skills influenced project performance in selected ASN projects in Kenya.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The results will assist project managers become more knowledgeable and enhance overall performance. Clients, students, employees, suppliers and ASN institute members (sisters) will all gain from this study. The study's emphasis on human skill development that will help administrators by providing them with

specialized training and skill development. The knowledge and abilities acquired will help with efficient planning, obtaining resources, and applying best practices in improving project performance.

1.4 Scope and delimitation of the study

The Assumption Sisters of Nairobi projects in Kenya provided the setting for this investigation. The study was confined in fourteen (14) ASN projects that are dispersed among six Kenyan counties in the year 2025. The study emphasized on the influence of training and capacity building, planning and scheduling, monitoring and evaluation and risk management and problem solving on project performance.

1.5 The Conceptual Framework

Conceptual Framework. in this study illustrates the connection between human capital development and managerial skills and project performance in selected ASN projects in Kenya. We supposed that by enhancing staff capacity and managerial efficiency have an impact on the success of ASN initiatives.

Independent Variables

Dependent Variable

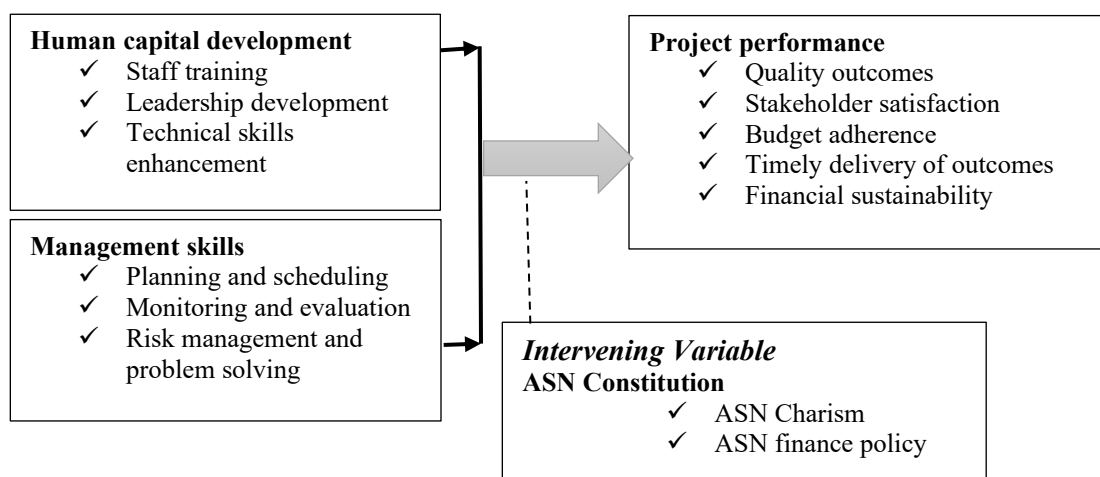


Figure 1: *The Conceptual Framework*

Source: *Own Conceptualization, 2024*

1.6 Theoretical framework

This study was grounded on three theories. That is project management theories, resource mobilization and stakeholder theory. As a standalone each has benefits and drawbacks. Integrating them maximized on their benefits and minimized their drawbacks thus giving a more robust perspective in project performance.

Project management theories: In order to provide best practices for successful project execution, project management theories are by their very nature multidisciplinary, incorporating ideas from disciplines like engineering, psychology and management. These ideas provide a framework for comprehending the effective planning, execution, and assessment of projects. Agency theory, stakeholder theory, game theory, contingency theory and the theory of constraints are some of the most well-known theories in project management. When setbacks in a project's progress are identified and addressed, the theory of

constraints aids in improving performance (Johnson & Fan, 2016). One of the fundamental idea of project management philosophy is the project life cycle. One significant problem is the over-reliance on rigid theoretical frameworks. Contemporary scholars have therefore advocated for a change in the underlying theories, encouraging the use of more varied and contextually sentient methods (Chadee & Martin, 2021) such as agile, Prince 2 and Kanban. Incorporating resource mobilization theory will curb any extreme drawbacks in constraints in project management.

Jenkins (1984) defined Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT) as the method by which organizations obtain, distribute and efficiently employ material, human, and financial resources in order to accomplish their objectives and guarantee success. In order to drive performance in organizations and projects, RMT emphasizes the significance of both tangible and non-material resources, including time, skills, social networks and organizational capacity. Jenkins' theory may be applied to the five primary components of project management: networking, sustainability, allocation, organization, and resource acquisition. These elements demonstrate that a project need adequate and properly managed financial, human, and material resources in order to achieve its objectives and provide the intended outcomes ignoring important intangible variables that are difficult to measure but are crucial for inspiring people and communities, such as emotions, social dynamics, ideologies, identity, and cultural values. Resource mobilization is criticized of emphasizing on material resources like money, media, and official organizational structures ignoring social aspects. Bringing in stakeholder theory will resolve criticisms of resource mobilization theory. According to the Stakeholder Theory, which was first presented by Edward Freeman in 1984 businesses should take into account the interests of all parties impacted by their decisions. Actively including stakeholders in the stages of planning, execution and assessment increases performance. One major critique is that putting stakeholder interests first without sufficiently attending to shareholder concerns might be detrimental to an organization's long-term financial stability. Again, trying to involve everyone too much can take up a lot of time and be interpreted as a sign of managerial incompetence or in-decisive. Integrating these theories can give a more comprehensive result.

1.7 Empirical review

Human capita and managerial skills. Human capital development methods have a favorable impact on agency performance, according to a study conducted in the United States by Wesemann (2022) (Wesmann, 2022). Knowledge and skills are necessary to improve sustainability and social-economic stability. Additionally, it aids in attracting skilled workers who enhance Ukraine's results (Hayden, 2022). According to Madueme and Orji (2022), real growth and development require human capital. Human capital comprises the talents and abilities people contribute to productive employment, claim Orji et al. (2020). It includes the workforce's skills, abilities, and knowledge all of which are essential for promoting creativity and performance. Oboh et al. (2010) emphasize that meaningful development and sustainable economic growth are impossible without deliberate investment in developing a skilled labor force in addition to physical capital. In Eastern and Southern Africa, a skilled labor force is essential for increased productivity and economic expansion (Dirir, 2023). Mose (2023) discovered that in order to boost output in East Africa, investments in knowledge, skills, and innovation are essential. According to a survey conducted in Kisii and Kakamega, 32% of county employees are underqualified. As a result, service delivery becomes incompetent (Onduso & Macharia, 2024). Better project and organizational performance is directly correlated with increased investment in human capital

development. To achieve such performance, however, deliberate hiring and training practices are essential.

On managerial skills; numerous studies have found a high correlation between managerial skills and project performance. To enhance project outcomes, managers need to have exceptional technical, interpersonal, and conceptual skills. A variety of general management abilities that are essential for successful project execution are included in management knowledge areas (PMI, Ed. 2021). Particular abilities such leadership, problem solving and risk management have a significant impact on project cost control and timeline adherence, particularly in the construction sector, claim Abdelmasseh et al. (2022). The necessity for managerial competence in a range of areas, including as planning, stakeholder interactions, resource mobilization, and training, has been emphasized by numerous studies carried out in Kenya. Managerial competences have a major impact on project performance. Research consistently shows that higher project success rates are associated with strong managerial skills (Charo & Gachengo, 2023). Despite the abundance of research on stakeholder involvement, resource mobilization and human capital and how these factors affect organizational effectiveness, there is still a great deal to learn about these dynamics in ASN-owned projects in Kenya.

1.8 Methodology

Research design is a logical model of proof that guides the researcher in gathering, evaluating, interpreting, and reporting data, claims Bryman (2002). In the same way that an architectural blueprint directs the development of a building, it improves the efficacy and coherence of the research. Think of it as a manual for research. A mixed method with convergent design was adopted in this study. The target population for this study comprised staff from 14 Assumption Sisters of Nairobi (ASN) projects located in six counties in Kenya. Kenya was specifically chosen based on evidence from Gitee (2024), which showed a pressing need for strategic intervention and performance improvements in some ASN projects. A sample size of 153 respondents was attained using Yamane Formula and purposively selected. Questionnaires and interviews were used for data collection.

Formula
$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where:

n is the sample size,

N is the total population size (number of staff across the 14 selected projects), and

e is the margin of error (commonly set at 0.05 for a 95% confidence level).

Substituting the values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{248}{1 + 248(0.05)^2} = 153$$

Thus, the sample size for this study is 153 respondents, which will be proportionately distributed across the 14 selected ASN projects, depending on the number of staff at each project site.

Data analysis: Descriptive and inferential statistics through SPSS version 27 and Nvivo 14 were used for data analysis. Frequency tables, pie charts and graphs were used for findings' presentation. Overall response rate was 95.1% as 138 out of 153 questionnaires were filled in and returned as illustrated in table 1 and 14 key informants were interviewed.

Table 1: Composition of Respondents

Role in the Project	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Consultant	1	0.7
Assistant Administrator	2	1.4
Team Member	135	97.8
Total	138	100

Source: Primary Data 2025

Human capital development and project performance

This sought to find out how well are staff trained and whether there are possible opportunities for continued training and capacity building.

Table 2: Responses on Human Capital Development

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
Employees are recruited based on experience from similar project	1 (0.7%)	11 (8.0%)	16 (11.6%)	71 (51.4%)	39 (28.3%)	2.01	0.888	Low perception
Employees are recruited based on academic qualification	9 (6.5%)	26 (18.8%)	11 (8.0%)	52 (37.7%)	40 (29.0%)	2.36	1.261	High perception
Job promotion is on merit	0 (0.0%)	4 (2.9%)	17 (12.3%)	52 (37.7%)	65 (47.1%)	1.71	0.794	Low perception
Employees are regularly trained on best project management practices	4 (2.9%)	29 (21.0%)	20 (14.5%)	64 (46.4%)	21 (15.2%)	2.50	1.076	High perception
Employees are constantly trained on the emerging project management themes.	4 (2.9%)	19 (13.8%)	25 (18.1%)	70 (50.7%)	20 (14.5%)	2.40	0.993	High perception
Workshops and seminars are available for all employees to attend	6 (4.3%)	24 (17.4%)	16 (11.6%)	67 (48.6%)	25 (18.1%)	2.41	1.106	High perception
Employees transfer knowledge gained from the training to the work place	6 (4.3%)	25 (18.1%)	11 (8.0%)	68 (49.3%)	28 (20.3%)	2.37	1.127	High perception
The project team is highly motivated	1 (7.0%)	8 (5.8%)	15 (10.9%)	58 (42.0%)	56 (40.6%)	1.84	0.890	Low perception

Grand Mean

2.20

Note: N=138, SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, Decision-Weighted Average/Grand Mean =17.6/8=2.20

Source: Primary Data 2025

Table 2 illustrated results on human capital development. Results gave a mean of 2.20. Seventy one respondents with the highest percentage of 51.4% disagreeing to the statement. Only one respondent with lowest percentage of 0.7% strongly agreeing to the statement. Majority expressed their disagreement with most statements. This necessitates the need for continuous training. This concurred with other studies. As highlighted by Amoah & Marimon (2021), that project managers need a mix of technical and interpersonal skills for successful execution, equally findings show that Staff and administrators need to continuous upgrading technical and interpersonal skills (Amoah & Marimon, 2021). High references in

human capital shows the dire need for continuous empowerment. This concurs with Pujianto, (2024) that training helps staff to integrate effectively and align their work to organization standards and their expectations (Pujianto, 2024). It also concurs with Charo & Gachengo,(2023) that development strengthens individuals' ability and contribute to overall project success (Charo & Gachengo, 2023)

Managerial skills and project performance

This sought find out how different managerial skill like leadership, coordination, problem- solving and planning influence project performance.

Table 3: Responses on Management kills

Item	SA	A	N	DA	SD	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision
There is effective coordination of project activities	5 (3.6%)	25 (18.1%)	48 (34.8%)	43 (31.2%)	17 (12.3%)	2.70	1.022	High perception
Project activities are carried out in accordance with the project management plan	11 (8.0%)	26 (18.8%)	39 (28.3%)	52 (37.7%)	10 (7.2%)	2.83	1.073	High perception
There exist effective knowledge management practices	7 (8.0%)	25 (8.0%)	22 (8.0%)	57 (8.0%)	27 (8.0%)	2.48	1.148	High perception
Project activities are closely monitored and controlled	12 (8.7%)	26 (18.7%)	18 (13.0%)	56 (40.6%)	26 (18.8%)	2.58	1.237	High perception
Project changes adhere to formulated procedures for review and approval	5 (3.6%)	14 (10.1%)	20 (14.5%)	67 (48.6%)	32 (23.2%)	2.22	1.032	Low perception
There is an internal financial control system	1 (0.7%)	13 (9.4%)	26 (18.8%)	53 (38.4%)	45 (32.6%)	2.07	0.979	Low perception
Each task is well budgeted	2 (1.4%)	5 (3.6%)	17 (12.3%)	63 (45.7%)	51 (37.0%)	1.87	0.87	Low perception
Grand Mean						2.39		

Note: N=138, SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, Decision-Weighted Average/Grand Mean=16.75/7= 2.39

Source: Primary Data 2025

Table 3 presents respondents' perspectives on the application of management skills in ASN projects. The decision-making guideline for each item is determined by a weighted average of 2.39. If the mean score exceeds 2.39, it suggests a strong perception, while a score below that indicates a weaker perception. A significant number of respondents felt that project activities were well-coordinated, executed according to the project management plan, and closely monitored. Majority of the participants (71.4%) pointed out that leadership, planning and policy implementation were critical for improving performance, with a clear link between empowered leadership and higher outcomes. This concurs with Nyanduku & Kyalo, (2023) that management skills play a pivotal role in project success (Nyanduku & Kyalo, 2023).

A significant number of respondents felt that project activities were well-coordinated, executed according to the project management plan, and closely monitored. Additionally, they believed that knowledge management practices were effective. Participant 9 argued that:-

“Managers need to employ their skills without reservation guided by commitment to the common good. They should be models to commitment to articulating the directions they give. Continuous empowerment is essential as the market trends keep changing. Teams need to think outside the box and embrace other possible ways to bring in more funds to the project. Proper planning of project activities leads to success hence increased performance” (Part 09, 2025).

We used an ordinal regression model to explore how various project management knowledge areas like human capital development, management skills, stakeholder engagement, and resource availability affect the chances of project performance falling into a higher or lower category, where 2 means Disagree, 3 is Neutral, and 4 stands for Agree. You can find the model summary results for the multiple ordinal regression output in Table 4

Table 4: Multiple Ordinal Regression

		Parameter Estimates					95% Confidence Interval	
		Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	Df	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Threshold	[PPM = 2]	2.578	.870	8.787	1	.003	.873	4.283
	[PPM = 3]	5.232	.968	29.233	1	.000	3.335	7.129
Location	Human Capital Development	.681	.342	3.959	1	.047	.010	1.351
	Management Skills	1.003	.271	13.721	1	.000	.472	1.533

Link function: Logit.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Source: Primary Data 2025

Findings revealed that developing human capital and improving managerial skills are key factors that significantly influence project performance. In respect to human capital development, the results were quite telling that for every unit increase in this area, the chances of a project being rated in a higher performance category jumped by about 1.976 times (parameter estimate=0.681, $p<0.05$). This clearly indicated that investing in employee education, skills, and experience can really boost how successful a project is perceived to be. Among all the factors, management skills had the most substantial effect (parameter estimate=1.003, $p<0.001$). In fact, the chances of achieving better project performance rose by approximately 2.727 times with each unit increase in management skills ($\exp(1.003)$). This underscores the vital role that effective planning, coordination, leadership, and decision-making play in driving project success. This study found out that there was positive relationship between human capital development, resource availability and stakeholder engagement and project performance. Findings revealed that investing in employee education, skills, and experience, improving management skills, and ensuring resource availability are key factors that significantly influence project performance. Enhanced human capital, sufficient resource allocation, proficient management, and stakeholder involvement contribute far more. Projects can succeed and excel on innovation, agility, and strategic edge to a competition for these are the foundational pillars for long-term audacity.

In reference to the findings, the study recommended that;

- i. On human capital development, ASN need to roll out a standardized recruitment and a structured induction process and offer regular professional training and up skilling programs that focus on project management practices in order to enhance human capital development.
- ii. It is crucial to establish promotion policies that reward merit and create incentive schemes designed to boost staff motivation and retention.
- iii. ASN should make monitoring and evaluation (M&E) a regular part of her processes. This means setting up M&E frameworks that include key performance indicators (KPIs) for every type of project. Training M&E officers and ensuring that there are enough funds for tracking performance is crucial.
- iv. To enhance management system, ASN need to focus on building the skills of her project leaders and institutionalize management systems and policies across all projects. This includes investing in training for key areas such as budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting. It is also crucial to set up and maintain strong financial control systems for all ASN projects with the help of budgets and strategic plans.

Further research could explore how the culture in faith-based organizations influences staff motivation and the overall success of their projects. Further research could also examine how effective stakeholder engagement strategies can significantly impact the long-term sustainability of development projects in faith-based settings. Also explore on other knowledge areas like procurement, risk management and integration management influence project performance. Findings from this study confirms the general rule of thumb in project management. There have been important theoretical and empirical additions in the field of project management as a result of creating competency frameworks, knowledge management models, managing resources, and engaging stakeholders.

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