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### **The Influence of Strategic Planning on the Performance of Finn Church aid Educational Project in West Pokot County, Kenya**

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<p><b>Chief Editor</b> Web: <a href="http://www.ijssc.org">www.ijssc.org</a> Email: <a href="mailto:info@ijssc.org">info@ijssc.org</a></p> <p><b>Editing Oversight</b> Impericals Consultants International Limited</p>	<p><b>Abstract:</b> This study examines the influence of strategic planning on the performance of Finn Church aid educational projects in West Pokot County, Kenya. The study was anchored on Project Management Theory. This study adopted convergent parallel design and mixed research approach. The study targeted 174 participants comprising of 1 manager, 2 community leaders, 135 project staff and 36 teachers. Simple random sampling techniques was used to get the sample size. The study used descriptive statistics and correlation analysis to examine the influence of organizational management practices on the performance of Finn Church Aid educational projects in West Pokot County. Results showed that strategic planning (<math>M = 3.82</math>, <math>SD = 1.11</math>) positively impacted project performance. Hypothesis testing confirmed significant positive effects (<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>), highlighting the need for strengthened management practices and strategies to enhance long-term sustainability. The study recommend that Finn Church Aid should strengthen strategic planning to improve long-term benefits and sustainability of educational projects.</p> <p><b>Key words:</b> Strategic Planning, Performance, Finn Church Aid, Education, Project</p>
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#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Project performance is the ability of an organization to produce results as measured against intended targets. Cicea and Popa (2019) describe project performance as the sum of three distinct project outcomes: shareholder return, product market performance, and financial performance. According to Abdi (2022), performance reflects an organization's ability to execute its objectives through effective management techniques, robust governance, and a consistent dedication to obtaining the intended results.

The performance of projects can be judged using both financial and non-financial results (Kaplan & Norton, 2019). The balanced scorecard identifies major performance indicators such as financial results, client service and satisfaction indexes, learning, development, and organizational growth. Organizations

that adopt effective management practices aligned with stakeholder expectations achieve better outcomes and ensure long-term sustainability (Amiri & Beiranvand, 2020).

Globally, education is recognized as the foundation for development, self-reliance, and poverty reduction (Mukudi, 2004; World Bank, 2024). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) emphasizes education as a basic right, while the Education for All (EFA) initiative underscores universal access to quality education. Education projects are therefore central to alleviating poverty and fostering socio-economic progress. However, their success depends largely on how effectively management practices are implemented (Shenhar & Dvir, 2020).

The performance of FCA's educational projects can be evaluated through increased school enrollment, retention and completion rates, improved learning outcomes, and community participation. The projects provide a framework to address uninterrupted learning and re-enrolment of out-of-school children, while also focusing on capacity building for teachers and community awareness (Saddique, Chen & Plahar, 2020). Despite their positive impact, FCA's projects face challenges linked to external shocks such as drought and internal management gaps. Studies show that project failures in NGO sector are often linked to weak management practices such as inadequate planning, poor leadership, and insufficient monitoring systems (Jaoua, 2018).

Strategic planning provides the framework for project implementation by setting priorities, aligning resources, and ensuring focus on long-term objectives. According to Mahdjoub, Bluntzer, and Bertin (2019), organizations that consistently practice and adapt their strategies achieve better performance. In education projects, effective strategic planning ensures alignment between project goals and community needs, enabling sustainability and adaptability in challenging environments. However, research highlights that many education projects may fail at early stages due to poor strategic planning and lack of proper implementation frameworks (Ali & Qun, 2019).

In response, Finn Church Aid (FCA) has implemented education projects in Kenya to complement government and community efforts in addressing these challenges. The project provides a framework to ensure uninterrupted learning and re-enrolment of out-of-school children, while also focusing on capacity building for teachers and awareness creation within communities (Saddique, Chen & Plahar, 2020). These interventions are crucial in meeting the educational needs of marginalized groups. Unfortunately, Finn church aid education project in Kenya because of its complexity and multi-faceted, requiring management practices such as strategic planning, leadership and team management, performance in monitoring and control and training and development (Kitua, 2022).

These are extremely important aspect that can have a profound effect on the performance of Finn church aid education project. According to Musyula, (2022) in analyzing the reasons for project failure in Kenya organization sector and found that management practices such as strategic planning, leadership and team management, performance in monitoring and control and training and development among others were the main cause of failure for 57% of the studied projects. It is against this background that this study sought to study organization management practices and performance of Finn church aid educational project in West Pokot, Kenya.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Many Non-Government (NGO) are designed to solve problem facing communities. NGO operate within budgets (Nagurney, Salarpour & Daniele, 2019). They must thus ensure that the funds at their disposal are utilized optimally. Jillo (2019) asserted that lack of appropriate knowledge of management practices has caused many projects funded by organizations to experience setbacks performance of the project setbacks. Management practices influence whether an organization flourishes, survives, or dies based on how stakeholders carry out their tasks. In tumultuous environments, the capacity to adapt new techniques swiftly and effectively may very well mean the difference between success and failure for the project (Odhiambo and Njuguna, 2021). Finn Church Aid (FCA) is one of the non-Governments and is a leading international organization that supports education in various regions, including West Pokot, Kenya (FCA, 2019). West Pokot, Kenya faces a multitude of educational challenges, such as inadequate learning resources, insufficient infrastructure, and low educational attainment. Despite FCA's active involvement in providing educational support in the region, there remains a gap in the development and implementation of a comprehensive management system for its education projects (Kogi, 2023).

The management practices employed by FCA had been insufficiently structured, leading to inefficiencies and suboptimal performance of the education projects. A national assessment by the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy Assessment Report 2023 revealed that the proportion of school-aged children (6–15 years) drop out of school in Kenya increased from 7.5 percent in 2021 to 8.5 percent in 2023. Notably, the highest rates of out-of-school children were found in seven of Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands counties, including West Pokot. This gap in management practices may hinder the overall impact of FCA's educational initiatives, affecting their sustainability and the improvement of the quality of education in West Pokot. The performance of FCA's educational project in West Pokot continues to face challenges despite the various interventions and activities undertaken. These projects, though beneficial, are not achieving their full potential due to the lack of effective management practices. This absence of a well-structured management system contributes to delayed project outcomes, inefficient use of resources, and a lack of measurable impact on educational performance. It was essential to explore how the management practices impact the success and performance of educational projects, and identify areas that need improvement to enhance their effectiveness (Wanjala, 2022). Addressing the gap in strategic management practices was crucial for improving the performance of FCA's educational projects in West Pokot. The research therefore sought to investigate the influence of strategic plans on the performance of the Finn Church Aid educational project in West Pokot, Kenya.

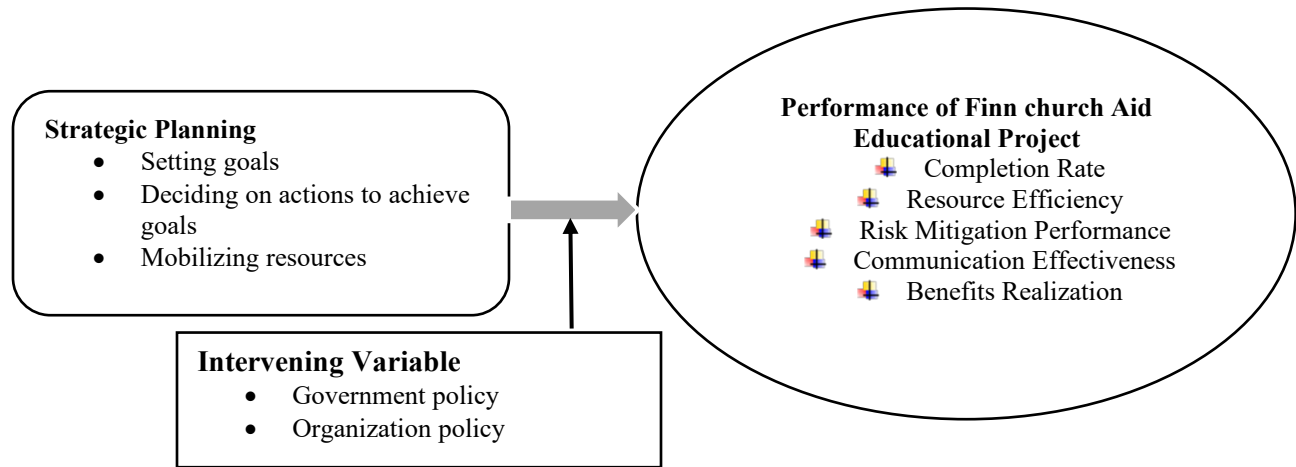
### 1.3 Study Objective

To examine the influence of strategic planning on the performance of Finn church aid educational project in West Pokot, Kenya.

## 1.4 The Conceptual Framework

*Independent Variable*

*Dependent Variable*



**Figure 1 :** *The Conceptual Framework*

Source : *Own Conceptualization, 2024*

## 1.6 Literature Review

In this section, theoretical and empirical literature reviews on the influence of strategic planning on the performance of educational projects are presented.

### 1.6.1 Theoretical Review

#### *Project Management Theory*

The Project Management Theory does not have a single definitive founder, as it evolved through contributions from multiple disciplines, including engineering, management, and organizational studies. However, Henry Gantt (1861–1919) is widely recognized as one of its early proponents, particularly for his invention of the Gantt Chart, a scheduling tool that revolutionized the visualization and tracking of project tasks (Kerzner, 2017). The theory gained momentum in the mid-20th century with the formalization of the Triple Constraint Model, which emphasizes the interdependence of scope, time, and cost in determining project success (Lock, 2020). This model posits that a change in one constraint inevitably affects the others, thereby requiring managers to strike a balance to achieve desired outcomes. The core assumptions of Project Management Theory are that projects are temporary endeavours aimed at achieving specific objectives, and their success depends on structured planning, resource allocation, monitoring, and evaluation (PMI, 2017). It assumes that by applying standardized tools, methodologies, and frameworks, project managers can enhance efficiency, minimize risks, and achieve quality results within defined constraints. In practice, this translates into breaking down complex activities into manageable tasks through tools such as the Work Breakdown Structure, facilitating oversight and accountability (Turner, 2016).

This theory is directly relevant to the current study on FCA's educational project in West Pokot, Kenya. FCA's initiatives, which focus on sustaining education in drought-affected communities, can only succeed when guided by effective management practices. Project Management Theory provides the lens to evaluate whether FCA applies systematic processes such as strategic planning to achieve its educational objectives (Lock, 2020). Despite its usefulness, Project Management Theory has faced several critiques. One major criticism is that it often assumes projects operate in stable environments with predictable risks, whereas in reality, projects especially in humanitarian and educational contexts like West Pokot face highly volatile and uncertain conditions (Crawford & Pollack, 2019). Moreover, the theory's focus on scope, time, and cost can sometimes overshadow critical qualitative outcomes such as community ownership, equity, or long-term sustainability (Winter & Szczepanek, 2018). It is also criticized for being too rigid and technical, potentially neglecting the human and social dynamics that shape project performance, particularly in community-based educational projects. Nonetheless, the theory remained highly relevant to this study as it emphasizes structured processes, systematic monitoring, and effective resource utilization factors that are essential in ensuring that FCA's educational projects achieve their objectives, despite operating in complex socio-economic and environmental conditions.

### ***1.6.2 Empirical Review***

#### ***Strategic Planning and Performance of Finn Education Projects***

Strategic planning entails defining the order in which objectives of the organization must be fulfilled so that it can attain its stated goals. Strategic planning often addresses mid- to long-term goals that span three to five years, but it can be extended (Mary, 2022). Cakmak and Tas (2022) evaluated Turkish contractor firms' strategic management strategies. According to the study, most contractor firms understand the concept of strategy and strategic management. Awino et al. (2022) investigated the effects of organisational strategy and outcomes on bank performance. The investigation discovered a substantial favourable association in strategic planning and organizational achievement. This study is significant because it has greatly added to the corpus of knowledge, particularly in strategic planning, where key elements from the study have individual connected to organizational performance.

Bakar et al. (2021) examined strategic management practices in Malaysian construction enterprises. The research findings revealed that the majority of enterprises practicing strategic management have a defined objective, a winning plan to attain the target, and a strong mission statement to drive the organisation to success. However, the study was done in Malaysian construction companies using a survey method. Taiwo and Idunnu (2020) investigated how strategic planning affects organisational performance and survival. The study identified a number of characteristics that influence organisations' strategic planning processes.

Kathama (2022) investigated the association between strategic planning methodologies and the performance of Kenya's state-owned enterprises. The study revealed that state enterprises used a variety of strategic planning tactics that improved corporate performance, albeit the effect was not statistical significance at the 5% level of confidence. As a result, the study failed to establish a significant influence of strategic planning on business success, despite the fact that the model was fit with equal confidence. This could imply that some of the practices would have had a higher influence if the researcher modelled the strategic planning practices separately rather than lumping them all together as a single variable when running the regression model.

### 1.7 Research Methodology

**Research Design:** This study adopted a convergent parallel research design and Mixed method approach which involves the simultaneous collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. In this approach, the quantitative component employed structured questionnaires to generate measurable data from a broad pool of respondents, thereby identifying patterns and relationships among key variable such as the strategic planning. At the same time, the qualitative component used semi-structured interviews to provide deeper insights into participants' experiences, perspectives, and contextual realities influencing project implementation (Bryman, 2019).

**The Study Area:** The study was conducted in West Pokot country, Kenya. The county spans 132 miles from north to south and has an area of about 9,169.4 squares kilometres, according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2019). Turkana County lies to the north, Baringo County to the east, Elgeyo-Marakwet County to the southeast, Trans Nzoia County to the south, and Uganda to the west, encircling West Pokot County. As 2019 census, the county's population is 621,241. West Pokot County's economy is mostly cantered on cattle farming and agriculture.

**Target Population:** The target study subjected employees in Finn church Aid Education projects in West Pokot, Kenya. The study targeted a population of 138 participants comprising of 1 manager, 2 community leaders (chief and assistant chief), 135 project staff who are involved in running Finn Church Aid Education project in West Porkot Country (FCA report, June, 2024, January).

**Table 1: Target Population**

Category	Target population
Manager	1
Community leaders	2
Project staffs	135
Total	138

**Source: Researcher, 2025**

**Sampling Techniques:** Simple random sampling techniques and purposive sampling techniques were used in this study.

**Sample Size:** The number of participants or observations in a sample size is denoted by Verma and Verma (2020). Various formulas can be used to calculate sample size. Yamane formula was used in this study to determine sample size of project staff. Yamane (1967) provides a simplified formula to calculate sample sizes. Yamane formula is presented as follows.

$$n = N \div (1 + Ne^2)$$

Whereas, n is the sample size, N is the population size (in this case, 135), and e is the required degree of confidence (at 95% = 0.05). The sample size was consequently calculated as follows.

$$100 = 135 \div (1 + 135 \times 0.05^2).$$

The sample size of projects staff was 100.

Purposive sampling techniques was used to sample 1 manager, 2 community leaders. Therefore, the sample size of this study was 103 respondents as shown in Table 2.



**Table 2: Sample Size Distribution**

Category	Population (N)	Sample Size (n)	Sampling Technique
Project Staff	135	100	Yamane Formula
Manager	1	1	Purposive Sampling
Community Leaders	2	2	Purposive Sampling
Total	138	103	—

**Source:** *Researcher, 2025*

**Data Collection Instruments:** In this study questionnaire and interview guide was used. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions designed to gather information from respondents while interview guides is a set of questions or topics used to guide interviews when selecting participants for qualitative studies. Questionnaire was used to collect data from project staff who are respondents who directly involved in or impacted by the management practices and performance outcomes of FCA's education projects. Interviews were used to collect data from project managers and community leaders to gain a deeper understanding of the study.

**Data Analysis Techniques:** Quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were employed to summarise responses and provide an overview of project performance indicators. Inferential statistics were then applied to test relationships between the study variables. Qualitative data, which was collected through interviews, was analysed thematically. The responses were first transcribed and then carefully read to identify meaningful segments that were subsequently coded. From the coded data, themes were developed around the main study variables. This thematic analysis provided deeper insights into participant experiences and contextual factors, capturing subjective perspectives that could not be fully explained by numerical analysis. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings under the convergent parallel design enabled triangulation, whereby statistical patterns from the quantitative data were compared and corroborated with the thematic insights from the qualitative data. This approach ensured a more comprehensive understanding of how strategic planning practices influence the performance of the Finn Church Aid Educational Project.

## 1.8 Study Findings

### *Rate of Response*

The study determined the total number of participants who actively engaged by completing and submitting the questionnaires, as well as those who participated in interviews. The response rate analysis is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Response Rate**

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Project Manager		
Response	1	100%
Community leaders		
Response	2	100%
Project staffs		
Response	100	100%
Total	103	100%

**Source:** *Field data, 2025*

From the Table 3, findings indicate a 100% response rate across all categories of respondents, including the project manager, community leaders, and project staff. This suggested a high level of participant engagement and commitment to the study. The absence of non-responses enhances the reliability and accuracy of the data, ensuring that the findings were representative of the entire study population. Furthermore, the successful response rate reflected an effective data collection process, likely facilitated by clear instructions, timely follow-ups, and well-structured research methodologies. With no missing responses, the study avoids non-response bias, which could have otherwise affected the validity of the results. Daikeler et al. (2020) noted that return rates exceeding 50% are considered acceptable for analysis and publication, with rates over 60% deemed good, over 70% very good, and over 80% exceptional (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2008; Daikeler et al., 2020).

#### ***Respondents Profile in the Projects***

The study examined the roles of respondents within the Finn Church Aid educational project in West Pokot, Kenya to understand how different categories of personnel contributed to the project's management and performance. The respondents were asked to indicate the position they hold in the organization. Findings were presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Respondents Profile in the Projects**

Respondents	Frequency	Percent (%)
Project Manager	1	1.0
Field Officer	1	1.0
Community leader	1	1.0
Project staff	100	97.1
Total	103	100.0

**Source:** *Field data, 2025*

The findings presented in Table 4 illustrate the distribution of respondents based on their roles within the Finn Church Aid educational project in West Pokot, Kenya. The majority of the respondents (97.1%) were project staff, while 1.0% each were project managers, field officers, and community leaders. The dominance of project staff suggested that the study captured insights from individuals directly involved in the implementation of the project's activities. These staff members play an important role in ensuring that educational programs run efficiently, making their perspectives valuable in assessing organizational management practices and project performance.

The project manager, field officer, and community leader each accounted for a smaller proportion of respondents (1.0% each). Despite their lower representation, their roles are essential in decision-making, community engagement, and overseeing project execution.

#### ***Strategic Planning and Performance of Finn Church Aid Educational Projects***

The study sought to examine how strategic planning influences the performance of the Finn Church Aid Educational Project in West Pokot, Kenya. The respondents were asked to respond by indicating the extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement in rating how strategic planning influences the performance of Finn church aid education project in West Pokot on a Likert scale of 1-5 where 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree. Findings were presented in Table 5.



**Table 5: Response on the Strategic Planning and Performance of Finn Church Aid Educational Projects n=100**

Statement	1 (SD) F (%)	2 (D) F (%)	3 (N) F (%)	4 (A) F (%)	5 (SA) F (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Setting goals as strategic management practices result in a reduction in turn-around time in the project	7 (7.0)	3 (3.0)	8 (8.0)	51 (51.0)	31 (31.0)	3.96	1.09
There are no decisions on actions to achieve project goals that support repeat funding by donors are made	5 (5.0)	3 (3.0)	4 (4.0)	7 (7.0)	81 (81.0)	4.56	1.02
Strategic management practices result in superior offerings by the bank	4 (4.0)	2 (2.0)	7 (7.0)	61 (61.0)	26 (26.0)	4.03	0.90
Strategic planning of the project has reduced cases of complaints from the employees	6 (6.0)	3 (3.0)	3 (3.0)	15 (15.0)	73 (73.0)	4.46	1.05
Strategic planning practices does not support development processes that are client-friendly	60 (60.0)	27 (27.0)	6 (6.0)	3 (3.0)	4 (4.0)	1.64	0.93
Strategic planning in deciding on actions to achieve goals has improved the performance of the project	1 (1.0)	7 (7.0)	4 (4.0)	59 (59.0)	29 (29.0)	4.08	0.82
Strategic planning in deciding on actions to achieve goals has not improved the performance of the project	42 (42.0)	26 (26.0)	5 (5.0)	24 (24.0)	3 (3.0)	2.20	1.28
There is no adequate resource allocation for the project that has enhanced the performance of education tasks and activities	14 (14.0)	13 (13.0)	9 (9.0)	18 (18.0)	46 (46.0)	3.69	1.47
Strategic planning on resource allocation is matched with the project objective	11 (11.0)	11 (11.0)	14 (14.0)	28 (28.0)	36 (36.0)	3.67	1.33
<b>Combined Mean &amp; Std. Dev.</b>						<b>3.81</b>	<b>1.11</b>

**Source:** Field Data, 2025

Table 5 presents respondents' perceptions of how strategic planning influences the performance of the Finn Church Aid educational project in West Pokot County. The overall results show a combined mean score of  $M = 3.81$  and a standard deviation of  $SD = 1.11$ , indicating that most respondents expressed agreement across the nine indicators, with moderate variability in responses.

On the statement that setting goals as a strategic management practice reduces project turnaround time, 31 (31.0%) strongly agreed, 51 (51.0%) agreed, 8 (8.0%) were neutral, 3 (3.0%) disagreed, and 7 (7.0%) strongly disagreed. The mean score ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) indicates broad consensus that goal setting enhances efficiency. This supports Cakmak and Tas (2022), who emphasized that strategic planning improves time management and operational outcomes.

For the statement that decisions on actions to achieve project goals support repeat donor funding, 81 (81.0%) strongly agreed, 7 (7.0%) agreed, 4 (4.0%) were neutral, 3 (3.0%) disagreed, and 5 (5.0%) strongly disagreed. This yielded the highest mean score ( $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ), reflecting strong consensus that strategic planning fosters sustainability through donor confidence. This finding aligns with Taiwo and Idunnu (2020), who argue that strategic actions build accountability and encourage continuous donor support.

When asked whether strategic management practices result in superior offerings, 26 (26.0%) strongly agreed, 61 (61.0%) agreed, 7 (7.0%) were neutral, 2 (2.0%) disagreed, and 4 (4.0%) strongly disagreed.

The mean ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) confirms that respondents perceived planning as enhancing project quality, consistent with Kathama (2022), who noted that effective strategies improve service delivery in educational initiatives.

On whether strategic planning reduced employee complaints, 73 (73.0%) strongly agreed, 15 (15.0%) agreed, 3 (3.0%) were neutral, 3 (3.0%) disagreed, and 6 (6.0%) strongly disagreed. This statement achieved a high mean of  $M = 4.46$  ( $SD = 1.05$ ), suggesting planning fosters internal harmony, supporting Taiwo and Idunnu's (2020) assertion that structured planning reduces workplace inefficiencies.

With respect to whether strategic planning does not support client-friendly processes, 60 (60.0%) strongly disagreed, 27 (27.0%) disagreed, 6 (6.0%) were neutral, 3 (3.0%) agreed, and 4 (4.0%) strongly agreed. The very low mean ( $M = 1.64$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ) shows respondents overwhelmingly rejected the claim, suggesting that Finn Church Aid's strategic planning indeed supports client-centered service delivery.

When considering whether strategic planning in deciding on actions to achieve goals improved project performance, 29 (29.0%) strongly agreed, 59 (59.0%) agreed, 4 (4.0%) were neutral, 7 (7.0%) disagreed, and 1 (1.0%) strongly disagreed. The mean ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ) indicates positive perceptions, confirming that goal-driven planning enhances project outcomes.

Conversely, when asked if strategic planning had not improved project performance, 42 (42.0%) strongly disagreed, 26 (26.0%) disagreed, 5 (5.0%) were neutral, 24 (24.0%) agreed, and 3 (3.0%) strongly agreed. This resulted in a low mean ( $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ), further reinforcing the positive role of planning.

On resource allocation, responses were mixed: 46 (46.0%) strongly agreed, 18 (18.0%) agreed, 9 (9.0%) neutral, 13 (13.0%) disagreed, and 14 (14.0%) strongly disagreed with the claim that inadequate resources enhanced project activities. The mean ( $M = 3.69$ ,  $SD = 1.47$ ) indicates moderate agreement but with high variability, reflecting ongoing resource challenges.

Finally, on whether resource allocation matched project objectives, 36 (36.0%) strongly agreed, 28 (28.0%) agreed, 14 (14.0%) neutral, 11 (11.0%) disagreed, and 11 (11.0%) strongly disagreed. This produced a mean of  $M = 3.67$  ( $SD = 1.33$ ), suggesting alignment between planning and objectives, though with differing perceptions.

The qualitative findings revealed that strategic planning significantly enhanced project efficiency and accountability within the Finn Church Aid Educational Project. Respondents noted that goal-setting provided clarity of direction, which helped in reducing turnaround time and aligning project activities with donor expectations. They emphasized that decisions linked to project goals improved the chances of sustaining repeat donor funding by demonstrating transparency and measurable impact.

Participants also highlighted that strategic planning minimized employee complaints by improving communication and clarifying responsibilities, thereby boosting morale and productivity. Furthermore, respondents mentioned that resource allocation, when aligned with project objectives, strengthened implementation of educational tasks and activities, though some raised concerns about inadequate resource distribution, which occasionally slowed down processes.

The findings show strong agreement that strategic planning significantly improved project turnaround time, donor confidence, employee satisfaction, and service quality. However, issues surrounding resource adequacy remained mixed, pointing to potential constraints in project implementation.

The quantitative results revealed that strategic planning had a mean score of  $M = 3.82$  ( $SD = 1.11$ ), indicating overall agreement that planning positively affects project performance. Respondents emphasized that proper planning enhanced completion rates, resource allocation, and risk mitigation. However, some expressed concern over delays in execution and occasional mismatch between plans and local realities. Qualitative responses highlighted that while FCA engages in participatory planning, beneficiaries felt that more inclusive consultations with parents and community leaders could further improve outcomes. These findings align with Cakmak and Tas (2022) and Taiwo & Idunnu (2020), who argue that strategic planning provides clarity, minimizes wastage, and enhances efficiency. Similarly, Kathama (2022) emphasizes that weak planning structures often result in project underperformance.

### 1.9 Conclusion

Strategic planning was found to be a crucial factor in enhancing project efficiency, reducing turnaround time, and improving stakeholder satisfaction. However, concerns regarding donor funding sustainability and resource allocation emerged, indicating the need for better financial planning and resource management strategies.

### 1.10 Recommendations

**Policy Recommendation:** The project should adopt comprehensive policies that promote strategic planning. Policies should also emphasize sustainable funding, stakeholder engagement, and staff capacity building to ensure long-term project effectiveness and community impact.

**Practice Recommendation:** In practice, the project should implement structured planning and financial management systems, enhance leadership training and participatory decision-making, strengthen monitoring and control mechanisms, and provide regular staff development programs. Additionally, improving communication frameworks and fostering community involvement will enhance transparency, efficiency, and sustainability of project outcomes.

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