

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# AN ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT MANAGER'S LEADERSHIP SKILLS ON PERFORMANCE OF NGOS PROJECTS IN MARSABIT COUNTY, KENYA

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**Abstract:** Project managers assume a crucial role in shaping the design, development, and execution of projects. To excel in this capacity, project managers need to equip themselves with a comprehensive skill set, allowing them to effectively manage various stakeholders and guarantee project triumph. The present study sought to explore the influence of leadership skills possessed by project managers on the performance of projects within Marsabit County, Kenya, particularly within the context of NGOs. To accomplish this objective, Contingency theory provided the theoretical framework for the study. The research design encompasses both descriptive and explanatory elements, with stratified sampling serving as the methodology for selecting the projects under scrutiny. In this endeavor, a sample size comprising 160 respondents has been chosen. Structured questionnaires were disseminated to respondents to facilitate data collection, and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was employed to analyze the gathered data. The analysis involved employing statistical measures such as standard deviation, frequencies, mean, and percentages to elucidate the interrelationships between various study variables. Further, Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were carried out to unveil the intricate associations among these variables. The study revealed that while project leadership exhibited a positive correlation with project performance, this relationship did not reach statistical significance. The study recommends implementing robust project leadership skills like communication, engaging stakeholders throughout the project lifecycle, and adopting strategic problem-solving techniques and tools to address project challenges effectively.

**Keywords:** *Leadership, Contingency Theory, skills, performance, project.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Organizations frequently invest considerable resources in training programs, primarily focusing on hard or technical skills (Lewis & Boucher, 2013). Nevertheless, evidence suggests that the effectiveness of project managers extends beyond technical proficiency, encompassing essential soft skills. Especially within the NGO sector, project managers are tasked with leading intricate projects, necessitating adeptness in managing both project teams and stakeholders. Lewis and Boucher (2013) underscore the importance of non-technical abilities for project managers to steer their

teams successfully towards project completion. An effective project manager excels not just in project oversight but also in team management. Key soft skills identified for project leadership include project leadership itself, project communication, team building, and conflict management (PMI, 2017).

Managing people effectively requires a deep understanding and deployment of interpersonal skills, such as strong leadership, to ensure that team members perform their assigned tasks timely and with

the highest quality. Different leadership styles adopted by project managers can significantly affect team motivation. Nziva (2018) explored how various aspects of project leadership, including skills, experience, style, and control, impact the performance of international projects in Kitui County. Her findings indicated that these dimensions of leadership positively contribute to project outcomes.

Open and transparent lines of communication are essential in every workplace. When team members communicate honestly, openly, and clearly, trust is built, and trust is essential for project execution. Mkutano (2018) investigated project communication and how it impacted the performance of project within Nairobi County. In doing this the study looked at the communication connectivity, the availability of communication channels, the feedback loops and how regular information was being exchanged among different project team members.

In his study, Laszlo (2013) conducted an evaluation of the impact of project management soft skills within the Telecommunication sector in Hungary. The researcher evaluated communication using the type of channel used, how often communication occurred as well as the interpersonal skills in the project team. According to the study's findings, having the ability to prioritize, monitor progress, and make clear decisions are essential in the IT and telecommunications industries. The survey also found that other talents were less common but yet vital. Communication skills were included in this area.

Team building involves recognizing the diverse skills of team members and leveraging them, along with mastering integration and delegation techniques. In their study conducted in Malaysia, Ping and Cheng (2015) explored how team-building efforts impact team cohesion, trust, and overall project performance.

The researchers evaluated elements such as the cohesion of the team, the frameworks used for team building, the extent of team participation, and the level of trust among team members. They concluded that project managers should prioritize more frequent

and effective team-building activities and sessions. Such initiatives can enhance trust within the team and lead to better project performance.

Ensuring the project team collaborates amicably is dependent on the management and resolution of disagreements. It involves addressing team members' differing points of view and figuring out how to quell any unfavorable feelings that could surface from the project team. It seeks to have a team that manages and resolves workplace challenges and a project environment that avoids conflict.

Kagwiria (2019) examined impacts of strategies such as negotiation, third party intervention and compromise to investigated ways of dealing with conflict in the telecommunication industries in Kenya. Her research revealed a strong positive correlation between project performance and the negotiating approach, third party intervention strategy, and compromise technique.

The discussion regarding the essential skills for project managers, whether hard skills or soft skills, also known as people competencies, is increasingly recognizing the importance of soft skills in project performance. Both types of skills are pivotal in enhancing a project manager's ability to plan, execute, monitor, and evaluate projects effectively to ensure their success (Barna, 2013). Belzer (2014) highlights a correlation between interpersonal skills and the project life cycle, noting the historical focus on hard or technical skills and the growing emphasis on the significance of soft skills in a project manager's repertoire.

Given the evolving expectations from management and various stakeholders, the value of soft skills has never been more critical. The ability to navigate people dynamics and maximize each interaction is crucial for project leaders to develop and sustain a capable and confident team, which is key to the successful completion of projects (Muguchu, 2013).

PMI (2015) emphasizes that the skill level of a project manager has a direct effect on the outcome of a project. It further suggests that organizations equipped with highly skilled

project managers are more likely to achieve successful project results compared to those with less skilled project managers.

The inability of project teams to effectively utilize their expertise during project execution is a common factor contributing to project failures. According to Alshammari (2020), the presence of a proficient project manager and well-trained team members is crucial for the success of projects. A study on construction projects in Saudi Arabia found that only 30% adhered to their schedules (Assaf & Al-Heiii, 2019). Research on project delays in the construction sector in Nigeria by Owolabi et al. (2019) revealed that approximately 70% of projects faced delays. Similarly, Shanmugapriya and Subramanian (2020) found that up to 60% of NGO projects in India are encountering issues related to cost and time overruns.

In Kenya, projects are encountering challenges such as time and cost overruns, delays in completion, and subpar quality outcomes. Gathoni and Ngugi's (2016) investigation into Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects in Marsabit County revealed that only 20% of these projects were well-built, completed, and functioning. A third of the projects were poorly completed, and half of them were abandoned despite available funds. Marsabit County Government's urban planning publication in 2017 highlighted challenges, including cost overruns and delays, faced by various construction projects in the county.

Interestingly, these issues persist even when the projects are led by highly trained and qualified project professionals. Further, a study on the energy sector in Kenya conducted by Ndile, (2021) exposed instances where projects failed to meet expectations, experiencing delays, exceeding budget allocations, and resulting in poor quality outcomes.

In their 2020 study, Ackel, Kidombo, and Gakuu analyzed World Bank-funded projects in Kenya and discovered that project leaders who combine hard and soft skills significantly enhance the likelihood of project success. Specifically, the research indicated that leaders equipped with both types of skills are three times more successful in achieving project objectives. This finding underscores the importance of a balanced

skill set in project management, where technical expertise must be complemented by interpersonal and management abilities to optimize project outcomes.

While numerous international studies emphasize the importance of soft skills for project success, there's inconsistency in the literature regarding the impact of a project manager's soft skills on overall project performance. Some studies suggest a direct correlation between skills like transformational leadership and project performance, while others find no such connection. Similarly, communication skills, teamwork abilities, and leadership style are linked to project performance in some research, but not in others. These discrepancies may arise from methodological variations or diverse research contexts.

Despite considerable focus on identifying causes of time and cost overruns in Kenya, there's a notable lack of exploration into the role of project management soft skills. Existing research has not thoroughly investigated how soft skills are applied during project execution, particularly within the NGO sector. Consequently, the specific influence of project managers' soft skills on NGO project completion remains uncertain. Given these mixed results and gaps in research, further investigation is necessary to enhance understanding of soft skills' significance in project management. This study aims to address this gap and improve comprehension of leadership skills' crucial role in project management effectiveness.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Theoretical Literature

The Contingency Theory, developed by Fred Fiedler in 1958, suggests that the success of an organization relies on its ability to continuously adapt to environmental changes. This theory proposes that there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for leadership within organizations, as various external and internal factors influence leadership methods (Rodriguez, 2013). Fiedler argued that certain leadership qualities are particularly advantageous in times of crisis, requiring project managers to modify their approaches based on evolving project dynamics. He highlighted the significant impact of a project manager's leadership style on team productivity, a concept supported by research

indicating a clear link between specific leadership attributes and project outcomes.

According to the theory, it's essential for project managers to understand that each project presents unique challenges and, therefore, might benefit from different management styles. Fiedler (1967) pointed out the importance of project managers being sensitive to the distinct needs of each project, suggesting that various leadership styles might be more effective under different conditions.

The essence of Contingency Theory is that the effectiveness of leadership depends on the alignment of the leader's style with the demands of the situation. Fiedler emphasized the importance of fostering positive relationships between project leaders and their teams, as failure to do so could adversely affect project results.

Despite its widespread application, the Contingency Theory has faced criticism for certain ambiguities, making it challenging to empirically validate its principles fully. While the significance of leadership style in influencing project success is acknowledged, research by Gowan and Mathieu (2015) indicates an ongoing debate regarding the direct impact of specific leadership skills on project outcomes. The academic community, including Kissi et al. (2013), Mishra et al. (2017), and Yang et al. (2013), offers varied opinions on how different leadership styles contribute to project success, pointing out the need for further investigation into this area.

In the context of this study, the Contingency Theory serves as a foundation for examining how various leadership styles, considered as contingency factors, affect project performance. Wadongo & Abdel-Kader (2015) argue that for project leaders to excel, they must adopt leadership styles that are responsive to the unique challenges of their projects. Leadership effectiveness is highly context-dependent (Chakrabarti, 2022), highlighting the importance of exploring specific leadership styles that enhance project outcomes in the NGO sector. This research aimed to further understand the dynamic nature of leadership within project management, advocating for project managers to be flexible and open to adapting their leadership approaches beyond traditional norms, policies, and procedures.

## Leadership and Performance of Projects

Multiple studies have highlighted the significance of project leadership as a critical factor in determining the overall effectiveness of a project. Several studies, including Kariuki (2022) and Kiioh (2015), have shed light on the significance of leadership in the effective execution and implementation of projects. These studies have also highlighted the importance of leadership. Kariuki (2015) looked at the characteristics of projects, the efficiency of teamwork, and the project managers' leadership style, and how these aspects affected the development of water projects in Kenya.

Project managers provided main data, while project files provided secondary data, for this cross-sectional descriptive analysis. Project managers provided the primary data. The study results indicate that two key aspects that significantly impact a project's effectiveness are the leadership style shown by the project lead and the integration of team management. However, since the data was obtained from project managers a significant amount of time after the projects had been finished, some of the respondents were unable to recollect all of the specifics.

Additionally, qualitative measures were not taken into consideration in this research; this may have led to different findings; the only factors that were taken into consideration were time and money. The study that was carried out by Kissi and colleagues (2015) investigated the impact that the transformational leadership style of a project manager had on the overall performance of a project that was carried out in Rwanda.

According to the conclusions of the investigation, these outcomes were in agreement with themselves. For the purpose of data collection, the researcher decided to make use of questionnaires, and the sample size consisted of three hundred and fifty project managers. According to the findings, there was a connection between the transformational leadership competency of project managers and the level of performance achieved by the projects they managed. Among the data that was used in this study, which was acquired from project managers, the only thing that was left out was the input of the members of the project

team. As a result of this, there was a risk that the findings of the study would not be accurate since they were derived from a common source of data.

According to the findings of a research that was carried out by Kiih (2015), there is a correlation between effective leadership in project management and the achievement of fintech efforts in Kenya. The study was carried out utilising a descriptive technique, and both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were used in the process.

Consultations were carried out with a target audience of one hundred workers, which comprised senior managers, project managers, members of project teams, and consultants. These consultations were carried out via the use of a questionnaire. The goal of the study was to ascertain whether or not there is a significant link between the leadership aspects of project management and the accomplishment of information technology projects from a practical standpoint.

A project manager is expected to have strong leadership abilities, as stated by Kiih (2015). This is because the project manager is responsible for leading a varied group of team members while exercising only a limited amount of direct authority. Kiih (2015) makes the observation that the manner in which various stakeholders are led is directly related to the performance of the project. It is well acknowledged that effective project leadership is absolutely necessary for the successful completion of initiatives.

According to the findings of an analysis conducted by Nziva (2018) on project leadership and how it influences the execution of projects that are managed by Compassion International in Kitui County, there are four components of project leadership described. In this study, a descriptive design was used, and the sample size was 115. The population of respondents was 180. According to Nziva's findings, factors of leadership have a beneficial impact on the performance of the project. According to Nziva (2018), the size of the project is often the determining factor in the function that the leadership is playing; the smaller the project, the less important the leadership style is, and vice versa.

Therefore, it is more important for a project manager to have strong leadership abilities than it is for them to have management skills. However, since this research was based on a single non-governmental organization (NGO), the results cannot be generalized to a wider population.

In another study conducted by Ahmed (2018), the researcher used secondary data, which consisted of reviewing a variety of published publications and journals. The study focused on leadership abilities that have an impact on projects in firms located in the United Kingdom. According to the results, there is a connection between transformational leadership and the levels of satisfaction that the members of the team have with the project under consideration.

This researcher relied only on secondary data sources; primary data would more accurately reflect first-hand experience and have more application. The setting in which this research was conducted is also significantly different from the one in which the present study is being conducted, which is one of the reasons why it is difficult to generalize the results.

Despite the fact that the findings of all of these studies were similar, there are problems associated with researchers examining a single firm and project managers evaluating their own leadership styles, which makes it impossible to take into account the perspectives of the project team. The findings do not provide a comprehensive perspective on the connection between high project success and effective leadership. In addition, there are context-specific variances in addition to methodological discrepancies, both of which produce gaps that required the present research to be carried out.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **The Materials**

This study utilized both explanatory and descriptive designs for a more comprehensive approach. Explanatory research establishes connections between concepts to understand causal relationships among variables, answering “why” questions. It expands upon descriptive data by providing further analysis and explanation from different perspectives (Saunders *et. al.*, 2017).

In contrast, descriptive research focuses on capturing the target population’s characteristics to enable hypothesis testing (Cooper & Schindler, 2018). Since the researcher lacked control over the variables, there was no manipulation. Kothari (2013) argues descriptive design enhances validity and reliability by minimizing bias. This research systematically described a situation or phenomenon in a population, addressing “what,” “where,” “when,” and “how” questions. Overall, utilizing both explanatory and descriptive designs provides deeper

insight through causal analysis as well as an accurate representation of the study population. Together, they strengthen the validity of the methodology. The study focused on a target population comprising 539 employees and a sample size of 160 respondents from the NGOs in Marsabit County, categorized into different sectors: health, relief, social justice, education, economic empowerment, and environment. The distribution across these sectors is detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Distribution of the target population of study**

Stratum	Population	Sample (15%)	No. of Respondents	Sample
Health	97	14	2	28
Environment	59	9	2	18
Education	67	10	2	20
Social Justice	60	9	2	18
Relief	104	15	2	30
Economic Empowerment	152	23	2	46
<b>Total</b>	<b>539</b>			<b>160</b>

Source: Marsabit County NGO Coordination Board (2023)

**Methods**

The study incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. For the qualitative aspect, responses were meticulously analyzed to pinpoint key insights and consistent themes. This analysis aimed to identify prevalent concepts, common patterns, behaviors, tendencies, and sentiments within the data (Bhatia, 2018).

On the quantitative side, data were summarized and examined using both descriptive and inferential statistics, with the assistance of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Techniques such as calculating frequencies, means, standard deviations, and percentages were employed. Additionally, correlation analyses were conducted to explore the relationships among variables, and multiple linear regressions were used to predict the interactions between the independent variable (project leadership skills) and the dependent variable (project performance). The results were visually presented through tables, figures, charts, and graphs.

Overall, a mixed methodology incorporating thorough qualitative analysis and descriptive and inferential quantitative techniques enabled robust examination of the research

questions. Careful data scrutiny elicited valuable insights.

The model took the below form:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \varepsilon$$

In this case:

- Y = Project Performance
- $\beta_0$ = Constant
- $\beta_1 - \beta_4$  = beta coefficients
- X1 = Project Leadership
- $\varepsilon$  = Error term

The researcher used normality, multicollinearity and homoscedastic diagnostic tests to ensure that the assumptions of regression will not be violated.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Response Rate**

The researcher distributed 160 questionnaires, receiving 142 fully completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 88.75%. According to Fincham (2018), a response rate of 60% or higher is considered acceptable and contributes to the reliability and accuracy of the data while reducing bias.

### Project Leadership

The respondents were asked to indicate the

kind of project leadership portrayed in their project teams. The results are as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Kind of project leadership**

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Excellent	29	20.5
	Good	58	40.8
	Fair	34	23.9
	Poor	21	14.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to the findings in Table 2, majority 40.8% of the respondents indicated that there was good project leadership, 23.9% of the respondents indicated that their organizations project leadership was fair while 20.5% of respondents indicated that their project leadership was excellent. There were 14.8% of the respondents who indicated that there was poor project leadership.

The section below illustrates the level of agreement on how project leadership impacts performance of NGOs projects in Marsabit County. The study used a scale of 1-5, where 1 represented strongly disagree (SD), 2- Disagree (D), 3- Neutral (N), 4- Agree (A) and 5 being Strongly Agree (SA). The data analysis was performed using means and standard deviation and results presented in the Table 3.

**Table 3: Responses on project leadership**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
A project manager directs as well as guides his team in designing appropriate standards during the project design phase	142	1	5	3.63	0.925
Project leadership assists in planning, organizing, delegating and task allocation within the project team	142	1	5	3.56	0.900
Project leader ensures that there is a contingent’s plan for managing risks that may occur during the project life cycle	142	1	5	3.76	0.914
Project leader monitors the entire project cycle as well as putting in place an action plan to the project team which leads to better project performance.	142	1	4	3.59	0.810
Project leadership builds and sustain effective communication among different stakeholders	142	1	5	3.65	0.851
Valid N (listwise)	142				

According to the Table 3, the results indicate that respondents generally agreed on various aspects related to project management. They acknowledged that a project manager played a crucial role in setting appropriate standards during the project design phase (M = 3.63, SD = 0.925). Furthermore, project leadership was perceived to be effective in tasks such as planning, organizing, and delegating within the project team (M = 3.56, SD = 0.900). Additionally, it was noted that project leaders ensured the establishment of

a contingency plan for managing risks (M = 3.76, SD = 0.914) and monitored the project cycle while providing actionable plans to the team (M = 3.59, SD = 0.810). Moreover, project leadership was seen as instrumental in fostering effective communication among stakeholders (M = 3.65, SD = 0.851). These findings align with Nziva's (2018) research on leadership's impact on project performance in international organizations in Kenya. Similarly, they are consistent with the conclusions drawn by Kissi *et. al.* (2015),

which highlighted a positive correlation between project managers' leadership style and project performance.

**Project Performance**

To measure the performance of the projects,

the study participants were requested to indicate their level of agreement regarding time taken, budget utilized and the quality of output realized. The findings are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4: Responses on project performance**

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
All projects are completed and delivered within the allocated time	142	1	5	2.95	0.888
Projects that are completed have utilized the set budget/ resources	142	1	5	3.90	0.960
Completed projects are of the required quality	142	1	5	3.50	0.987
Valid N (listwise)	142				
Aggregate				3.216	0.912

According to the data presented in Table 4, respondents were neutral that projects are typically completed and delivered within the designated timeframe (M=2.95, SD=0.888), while others expressed a neutral stance or disagreed, suggesting that not all projects adhere to their allotted schedules. Factors such as extended project durations contributed to delays in project execution and completion beyond initial projections.

However, respondents agreed that projects were completed within the predetermined budget (M=3.90, SD=0.960) and met the required quality standards (M=3.50, SD=0.987). The overall mean score of 3.216 indicates a mixed response among respondents regarding project performance metrics.

Despite variations in completion time, more than half of the respondents affirmed that projects effectively utilized their allocated

budgets and achieved the desired quality output. These findings align with the research conducted by Karuranga and Mulyungi (2018), who emphasize the importance of project managers' focus on improving technical expertise while also recognizing the significance of soft skills, often overlooked by organizations, in enhancing project performance.

**Correlation Results of Study Variables**

To delve deeper into the strength of the linear connection among the study variables, the research employed Pearson correlation analysis. This examination evaluated the correlation between project manager's leadership skills and the performance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) projects in Marsabit County. Correlation analysis is critical in statistical analysis since it clearly indicates the strength as well as the direction of relationship between the variables. The results are depicted in the table provided as Table 5.

**Table 5: Pearson correlation analysis**

		Leadership skills	project performance
Leadership skills	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	142	
project performance	Pearson Correlation	.772**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	142	142

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

The results from the correlation analysis presented in the table 5 above reveal a

favorable association between the leadership skills of project managers and the overall project performance within NGOs.

Project leadership skills ( $r= 0.772, p=0.000$ ), had a strong positive relationship with performance of projects. This means that the relationship between project leadership and project performance was not as strong as that of the other three variables.

**Regression Analysis**

In order to determine how the predictor variables influenced the dependent variable-project performance, multiple regression analysis was performed. Average scores of project managers’ leadership skills were used as the independent variable while average scores of project performance were used as the dependent variable.

**Table 6: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.849 <sup>a</sup>	0.760	0.753	0.549

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership skills  
 b. Dependent Variable: Project Performance

The findings in Table 6 suggest that the regression model adequately fits the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. With an adjusted R-square of 0.753, it reveals that the combined influence of project manager's leadership skills explains 75.3% of the variance in NGO project performance in Marsabit County.

Table 7 below illustrates the analysis of variance (ANOVA) results of the regression analysis performed. ANOVA is useful in predicting the impact of project manager’s leadership skills, communication skills, stakeholders’ management skills and problem-solving skills on the performance of NGOs projects in Marsabit County.

**Table 7: Analysis of variance**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
1	Regression	120.844	3	26.948	102.376	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	148.279	138	0.561		
	Total	169.122	141			

a. Dependent Variable: Project Performance  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership skills

Table 7 reveals that the regression model holds statistical significance, indicating that the collective impact of project manager's leadership skills significantly influences project performance ( $F= 102.376, p= 0.000$ ). This underscores the model's suitability for

forecasting and predicting how project managers' soft skills affect NGO project outcomes in Marsabit County. The p-value of 0.000, lower than the acceptable critical value of 0.05, further confirms this significance.

**Table 8: Coefficients of the regression model**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.014	0.335		10.750	0.933
	Leadership Skills	0.086	0.089	0.543	5.823	0.223

a. Dependent Variable: Project Performance

Table 8 illustrate the coefficients of project manager’s leadership skills as predictors of project performance. The analysis above shows that project managers leadership skills ( $\beta = 0.086, p = 0.223$ ) is not a significant predictor of the dependent variable-project performance since its p value is greater than

0.05. The regression model equation formula is therefore:

$$Y= 0.014 + 0.086X_1 + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y= Project Performance

$X_1$  = Leadership skills  
 $\varepsilon$  = Error term

The equation presented above illustrates that, while keeping other variables constant, a unit change in leadership skills would cause 0.086 variation in project performance within the NGO sector in Marsabit County. These findings align with various studies. For instance, Karurunga and Mulyungi (2018) established a significant correlation between effective communication, team cohesion, and project performance.

Similarly, Peng and Cheng (2015) emphasized the importance of project managers initiating stakeholder management activities and participation sessions, which fostered team trust and enhanced project outcomes. Conversely, the results diverged from those of Kissi et al. (2015), who found a positive and significant association between project managers' leadership skills and performance. Contrarily, in this study, project leadership was not identified as a significant predictor of project performance.

## CONCLUSION

While the study concluded that leadership skills positively impact project performance, it also found that leadership alone may not significantly predict project success. Therefore, NGOs should not solely rely on a project manager's leadership skills to enhance project performance. Instead, the study suggests that project managers should focus on coaching, mentoring, empowering, and inspiring project team members to perform to their fullest potential.

In summary, effective adoption of leadership skills by project managers is crucial for driving the performance of NGO projects in Marsabit County. By emphasizing leadership development, NGOs can enhance their project outcomes and contribute to meaningful impact in the community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Project success hinges not only on technical proficiency but also on the cultivation of leadership skills, or people skills. The study recommends prioritizing the development and integration of leadership skills to enhance project outcomes. Specifically, NGOs should place greater emphasis on fostering effective communication among team

members. Moreover, the study advocates for creating a supportive environment where stakeholders can collaborate, share resources, and establish agreements to address conflicts of interest. It further suggests that project employees should actively engage stakeholders throughout all project phases, with the implementation of a comprehensive communication plan to sustain stakeholder interest.

Projects play a pivotal role in fostering economic growth in Kenya, aligning with the Government's commitment to national development outlined in its Vision 2030 plan. Therefore, the findings of this study carry significant implications for various stakeholders, including the government, implementing agencies, and the general public. By establishing statistically significant correlations between managers' leadership skills and project performance, the study highlights the potential for projects to be completed within stipulated timeframes and budgets when leadership skills are effectively utilized.

Consequently, the study's recommendations hold promise for policymakers to consider revising educational policies, with a focus on integrating soft skills into training programs, particularly at the tertiary level. This adjustment would ensure that individuals entering the workforce are adequately equipped with both technical expertise and soft skills, which are essential for success in today's professional landscape. Ultimately, such initiatives can contribute to enhanced project outcomes, bolstering Kenya's economic development efforts and advancing the welfare of its citizens.

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