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Project Management Practices and Environmental Protection: A Case of Sebeya Landscape Restoration Pilot Program in Rwanda

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Abstract
This study assessed the influence of project management practices on effective environmental protection with Sebeya Landscape Restoration Pilot Program in Rwanda. A descriptive and correlation research design was adopted. The collected data revealed positive perceptions of proactive scope management practices. Effective communication practices highlighted strengths in regular reporting and cross-functional collaboration. Environmental risk assessment practices demonstrated positive trends. Building on the findings future research should focus on stakeholder engagement, crisis communication strategies, optimizing environmental risk assessments, and the long-term impact of proactive scope management in environmental restoration projects, aligning with practical implications for advancing project management in this field.
Key word: Environmental Protection, Project Management Practices, Scope Management Practices

INTRODUCTION

Despite the wealth of knowledge contributed by these studies and examples, a noticeable research gap remains, concerning the Sebeya Landscape Restoration Pilot Programme's unique context. This study aims to bridge this gap by conducting an exhaustive analysis of the program's project management practices. The aim of this research is to elucidate how these practices influence the overall effectiveness of environmental protection endeavors in the Sebeya region. By undertaking this research, we seek to contribute invaluable insights to both the fields of environmental conservation and project management, with practical implications for sustainable development initiatives in Rwanda and beyond.
The aim of this research is to assess the influence of project management practices on effective environmental protection with a case study of the Sebeya Landscape Restoration Pilot Programme in Rwanda.

2. Review of Related Literature:

2.1the Phenomenon Of Proactive Scope Management Practices

Critical success factors for projects, as outlined by Hwang and Tan (2022), include effective decision-making, adequate project resources, strong top management support, a skilled workforce, and seamless coordination among all participants. Project Management practices, as described by Sabini et al. (2019), involve considering environmental, economic, and social factors throughout a project's lifecycle, making project management practices a pivotal driver for effective protection (Banihashemi et al. 2017). In construction, an organization's culture is a key influencing factor that translates the project's vision into reality (Liu et al. 2020). Project management culture is closely aligned with the goals of the organizations involved (Naoum et al. 2015). To foster environmental protection effectiveness, a flexible and integrated approach is necessary, emphasizing cultural practices over rigid rules (Liu et al. 2014).

2.2 Communication Practices

Various factors influence environmental protection effectiveness practices, including leadership from top managers, stakeholder engagement, project management knowledge and skills, and the adoption of green project management practices (Meng et al. 2015, Bal et al. 2013, Hwang and Ng 2013, Robichaud and Anantatmula 2021). Stakeholder involvement is pivotal in achieving environmental protection effectiveness, and the success of project operations depends on it (Eberendu et al. 2019). Collaboration among project stakeholders can enhance project success by harnessing their collective knowledge and experience (Bal et al. 2013). However, inadequate communication can lead to misunderstandings and errors throughout a project's lifecycle (Harris et al. 2021).

2.3. Environmental Risk Assessment Practices

Maqbool and Amaechi (2022) shed light on the challenges in this domain, highlighting issues such as a lack of shared values in city policies, limited local adaptations, and poor implementation and maintenance of sustainability initiatives. Governance arrangements, as noted by Gouldson et al. (2016), sometimes fall short in promoting lower carbon electricity solutions. Reckien et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of financial support and international collaboration in driving climate change mitigation efforts. In rapidly growing cities that still heavily rely on high-carbon options, financial incentives play a vital role in encouraging the transition to cleaner and more sustainable alternatives. Additionally, field observations and case studies are conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the specific challenges faced by cities and governments. (Gouldson et al. 2016) These findings collectively underline the significance of addressing policy-related barriers to enhance environmental protection effectiveness.

2.4. Theoretical Framework

2.4.1.Triple Bottom Line Theory

This theory is highly relevant to your study as it offers a comprehensive framework for assessing the impact of project management practices on environmental protection. The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) theory emphasizes three key dimensions of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental. In the context of your research, TBL can serve as a valuable tool to evaluate not only how project management practices influence environmental outcomes but also how they affect the social and economic aspects of the Sebeya Landscape Restoration Programme in Rwanda. By considering all three dimensions, you can gain a more holistic understanding of the program's effectiveness.

2.4.2. Resource-Based View Theory

Resource-Based View Theory, developed by Jay B. Barney in 1991, is another crucial theory for your study. This theory explores how organizations can gain competitive advantages by leveraging their unique resources and capabilities. In your research, RBV can be applied to analyze how project management practices function as a resource or capability within the organization. By examining how these practices contribute to effective environmental protection, you can assess their role in creating and sustaining a competitive advantage.

2.4.3. Diffusion of Innovation Theory

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory, pioneered by Everett M. Rogers in 1962, provides valuable insights into the adoption and spread of new ideas or practices within a social system. For your study, this theory is pertinent in examining how project management practices related to environmental protection are adopted and integrated into the Sebeya Landscape Restoration Program in Rwanda. By applying the Diffusion of Innovation Theory, you can identify the factors that influence the rate and extent of adoption of environmentally friendly project management practices within the organization.

3. Research Methodology

In the pursuit of this research study, a descriptive and correlational research design was employed. The research population for this study encompassed a diverse group of 34 individuals involved in the Sebeya Landscape Restoration Pilot Programme, occupying various roles, including project managers, day-to-day operations personnel, finance division members, and project technicians stationed at the headquarters.

The census sampling technique was exclusively employed, encompassing all participants, including project managers, day-to-day operations personnel, finance division members, and project technicians. This approach enhanced the representativeness and robustness of the study's findings, aligning with the recommendations of scholars such as Creswell and Creswell (2017) and Patton (2022) for in-depth exploration of complex phenomena while avoiding potential biases associated with purposive sampling.

Structured questionnaires were chosen for their efficiency in collecting quantitative data from a diverse group of participants, including project managers, day-to-day operations personnel, finance division members, and project technicians. Interviews were employed to delve deeper into participants' perspectives and insights, especially regarding the alignment of projects with environmental policies. Additionally, document analysis was utilized to extract valuable information from project-related documents and policy documents, providing cross-referencing and validation of data. Observations in the field were carried out to directly observe project activities and the practical application of environmental policies. These selected instruments collectively ensured a triangulated approach to data collection, enhancing the credibility and depth of the research findings. All instruments used were attached in the appendices for reference and transparency. For quantitative data, statistical software like SPSS or R was used to conduct descriptive statistics, regression analysis, and correlation analysis. This allowed for the quantitative assessment of the relationship between project management practices and environmental outcomes, aligning with the work of scholars like Kerzner (2017) on project management effectiveness. Qualitative data analysis followed the principles of thematic analysis and content analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2016) and Elo and Kyngäs (2018).

4.Research Findings And Discussion

Table 1 : Influence of Proactive Scope Management Practices

Statement	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %	TOTAL Mean	Std
Clear project objectives and goals are well-defined.		2 (5.88)	5 (14.71)	15 (44.12)	12 (35.29)	4.03	0.81
Scope change management is effectively implemented.		2 (5.88)	7 (20.59)	15 (44.12)	10 (29.41)	4.15	0.78
Stakeholder engagement is actively pursued.			9 (26.47)	17 (50.00)	8 (23.53)	4.26	0.73
Project scope changes are promptly communicated and documented.		2 (5.88)	6 (17.65)	16 (47.06)	10 (29.41)	4.12	0.80
Stakeholders are involved in scope decision-making processes.		2 (5.88)	6 (17.65)	16 (47.06)	10 (29.41)	4.12	0.80

The study presents insightful findings regarding the influence of proactive scope management practices. The data in Table 4.5 reflected respondents' perceptions on various statements related to proactive scope management, with responses categorized into strongly disagree (SD), disagree (D), neutral (N), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA). The mean and standard deviation are provided for each statement to gauge the consensus and variability in responses. Clear project objectives and goals being well-defined received a mean score of 4.03, indicating a generally positive perception, with a standard deviation of 0.81 suggesting moderate variability among respondents. Similarly, the statement on effective implementation of scope change management yielded a mean score of 4.15, signifying a positive sentiment, and a standard deviation of 0.78 indicating relatively low variability in responses. Stakeholder engagement being actively pursued scored a mean of 4.26, portraying a favorable view, with a standard deviation of 0.73 implying a more consistent response among participants. The prompt communication and documentation of project scope changes garnered a mean score of 4.12, signaling a positive outlook, and a standard deviation of 0.80 indicating moderate variability. Lastly, stakeholders' involvement in scope decision-making processes received a mean score of 4.12, denoting a generally positive perception, and a standard deviation of 0.80 suggesting moderate variability in responses.

Table 2 : Influence of Effective Communication Practices

Statement	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %	TOTAL Mean	Std
Regular reporting and feedback mechanisms are in place.		3.00 (1)	9.00 (3)	47.00 (16)	41.00 (14)	3.91	0.97
Cross-functional team collaboration is encouraged.		3.00 (1)	9.00 (3)	56.00 (19)	32.00 (11)	3.74	1.05
Crisis communication plans are well-prepared.		6.00 (2)	9.00 (3)	44.00 (15)	41.00 (14)	3.44	1.17
Communication channels are open for all team members.		3.00 (1)	9.00 (3)	50.00 (17)	38.00 (13)	3.47	1.12
Progress updates and performance metrics are transparently shared.		3.00 (1)	9.00 (3)	53.00 (18)	35.00 (12)	3.56	1.11

The findings reveal crucial insights into the influence of effective communication practices within the context of the Sebeya Landscape Restoration Pilot Programme in Rwanda. Regular reporting and feedback mechanisms emerge as a strength, with 47% of respondents acknowledging their presence, earning a mean score of 3.91 and a standard deviation of 0.97. Cross-functional team collaboration is also perceived positively, with 56% of respondents indicating encouragement of such collaboration. The mean score is 3.74, with a standard deviation of 1.05, suggesting a moderately consistent perception across respondents. However, the preparedness of crisis communication plans appears to be an area for improvement, as only 44% of respondents acknowledged their effectiveness, resulting in a mean score of 3.44 and a relatively high standard deviation of 1.17. The openness of communication channels for all team members is moderately acknowledged, with 50% of respondents indicating accessibility, yielding a mean score of 3.47 and a standard deviation of 1.12. Lastly, the transparency of progress updates and performance metrics sharing is perceived positively by 53% of respondents, earning a mean score of 3.56 and a standard deviation of 1.11.

Table 3 Effects of Environmental Risk Assessment Practices

Statement	SD %	D %	N %	A %	SA %	TOTAL Mean	Std
Identification of environmental risks is thorough.		1 (2.94)	5 (14.71)	20 (58.82)	8 (23.53)	4.09	0.96
Risk quantification and prioritization are well-executed.		1 (2.94)	4 (11.76)	22 (64.71)	7 (20.59)	4.24	0.89
Contingency planning for environmental risks is effective.		1 (2.94)	5 (14.71)	21 (61.76)	7 (20.59)	4.18	0.92
Environmental risk assessments are conducted regularly and updated.			4 (11.76)	20 (58.82)	10 (29.41)	4.35	0.87
The organization's response to identified environmental risks is swift and effective.			4 (11.76)	19 (55.88)	11 (32.35)	4.47	0.81

Source: Primary Data (2023)

The identification of environmental risks demonstrated a positive trend, with a mean of 4.09 and a standard deviation of 0.96. Participants generally perceived that the identification process was thorough, as indicated by the relatively high percentage (58.82%) in the "Agreed" category. Similarly, risk quantification and prioritization received favorable evaluations, with a mean of 4.24 and a standard deviation of 0.89. The majority (64.71%) of respondents perceived these practices as well-executed. Contingency planning for environmental risks also reflected positive sentiments, with a mean of 4.18 and a standard deviation of 0.92. The "Agreed" category garnered the highest percentage (61.76%), suggesting that participants found the contingency planning to be effective. However, environmental risk assessments' regularity and updates received more varied responses, with a mean of 4.35 and a standard deviation of 0.87. While a considerable percentage (58.82%) agreed that assessments were conducted regularly, there was room for improvement. Lastly, the organization's response to identified environmental risks was generally perceived as swift and effective, with a mean of 4.47 and a standard deviation of 0.81. A significant portion (55.88%) of respondents fell within the "Agreed" category, indicating satisfaction with the organization's responsiveness.

Table 4 Correlation Analysis Between Project Management Practices and Environmental Protection

		Project Management Practices	Environmental Protection
Project Management Practices	Pearson Correlation	1	0.831**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	34	34
Environmental Protection	Pearson Correlation	0.831**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	34	34

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The correlation reveals a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between project management practices and environmental protection in the context of the Sebeya Landscape Restoration Pilot Programme in Rwanda. The Pearson Correlation coefficient ($r = 0.831$, $p < 0.001$) signifies a highly significant and positive linear relationship between Project Management Practices and Environmental Protection. This indicates that, as project management practices improve, there is a corresponding substantial enhancement in environmental protection efforts within the Sebeya Landscape Restoration Pilot Programme. The correlation is particularly noteworthy as it signifies a robust association at the 0.05 significance level (2-tailed), underscoring the reliability and validity of the findings. The p-value of .000 indicates a level of significance well below the conventional threshold of 0.05, providing strong evidence against the null hypothesis and reinforcing the conclusion that the observed correlation is not due to chance. This suggests that effective project management, as implemented in the Sebeya Landscape Restoration Pilot Programme, plays a crucial role in positively influencing environmental protection outcomes. The correlation coefficient of 0.831 (>0) indicates a high degree of positive linear relationship between the two variables, reinforcing the idea that the better the project management practices, the more successful the environmental protection initiatives.

5.Discussion of Findings

The findings align with the work of Turner and Zolin (2022), who emphasize the crucial role of clear project objectives in minimizing scope ambiguity. The positive sentiment towards effective implementation of scope change management (mean = 4.15, SD = 0.78) resonates with Kerzner's (2017) assertion that proactive scope change management is integral to project success. The call for improvement in crisis communication preparedness (mean = 3.44, SD = 1.17) aligns with research by Pinto and Rouhiainen (2021) on the significance of proactive crisis management. These results underscore the need for a robust communication strategy, supported by cross-functional collaboration, as discussed by Schwalbe (2018), to enhance project success. The highly significant and positive Pearson correlation coefficient ($r = 0.831$, $p < 0.001$) supports the argument put forth by researchers like Shenhar and Dvir (2017) that effective project management positively influences project outcomes. The correlation coefficient of 0.831 indicates a high degree of positive linear relationship, aligning with the research of Schwalbe (2018), which emphasizes the integral role of project management in achieving project goals. The low p-value of .000 substantiates the conclusion that the observed correlation is not due to chance, supporting the work of Meredith and Mantel (2022) on the statistical validation of research findings.

6. Conclusions, And Recommendations

The evaluation of environmental risk assessment practices reveals positive trends in risk identification and prioritization but underscores the necessity for more regular assessments to address the dynamic nature of environmental risks. In answering the overarching research questions, this study affirms the integral role of well-defined project objectives and effective communication strategies in achieving successful environmental restoration projects. It also emphasizes the necessity for continual and regular environmental risk assessments to adapt to the dynamic nature of environmental challenges. Overall, this research contributes valuable insights to the intersection of project management and environmental protection, offering practical implications for the Sebeya Landscape Restoration Pilot Programme and potentially informing similar projects worldwide.

Recommendations

Project managers should prioritize the development and communication of well-defined project objectives, ensuring clarity and alignment among stakeholders to minimize scope ambiguity. To adapt to the dynamic nature of environmental risks, there is a critical need for project teams to conduct regular and comprehensive environmental risk assessments, emphasizing continual improvement and learning. Moreover, project managers and stakeholders should capitalize on the demonstrated correlation between effective project management practices and positive environmental outcomes, underscoring the importance of investing in robust project management methodologies. Future research endeavors could explore the specific mechanisms and interventions that contribute to the nuanced landscape of stakeholder engagement in environmental restoration projects.

i. Investigating the factors influencing stakeholder involvement could provide deeper insights into achieving a more consistent and effective collaboration among project participants.
ii. Furthermore, future studies may delve into the optimization of environmental risk assessments by
iii. Moreover, longitudinal studies could track the long-term impact of proactive scope management practices on project success, providing a comprehensive understanding of their sustained influence.

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