



Vol. 6, Iss. 1 (2025), pp 979 – 995, November 3, 2025. www.reviewedjournals.com, ©Reviewed Journals

INFLUENCE OF PROJECT CHARTER ON IMPLEMENTATION OF LOW-COST HOUSING CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN KICUKIRO DISTRICT, RWANDA

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Accepted: October 20, 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.61426/business.v6i1.430>

ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of the project charter on the implementation of low-cost housing construction projects in Kicukiro District, Rwanda. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 125 stakeholders—including project managers, contractors, government officials, and NGO representatives—through structured questionnaires, interviews, and document reviews. The findings reveal a statistically significant positive relationship between the project charter and project implementation, with regression results showing that the charter explains 35.2% of the variance in implementation outcomes such as the number of houses constructed, affordability, and payment plan effectiveness. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = 0.529$, $p < 0.001$) indicates that stronger, more comprehensive charters—featuring clear deliverables, scope definition, and budget estimates—substantially enhance housing project performance. The study concludes that the project charter is not merely a procedural document but a critical enabler of efficient, transparent, and accountable low-cost housing delivery in Rwanda's rapidly urbanizing context.

Keywords: *Integration Management, Implementation, Low-Cost Housing, Construction Projects, Kicukiro District*

CITATION: Niyonkuru, M., & Kimemia, M. (2025). Influence of project charter on implementation of low-cost housing construction projects in Kicukiro District, Rwanda. *Reviewed Journal International of Business Management*, 6 (1), 979 – 995.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Globally, the demand for affordable housing has intensified due to rapid urbanization, population growth, and widening income inequality. According to UN-Habitat (2022), over 1.6 billion people worldwide live in inadequate housing conditions, with projections indicating that this number could rise without significant policy and implementation interventions. The challenge is particularly acute in low- and middle-income countries, where formal housing markets often fail to meet the needs of low-income populations. In response, governments and international development agencies have increasingly emphasized the importance of structured project management frameworks to ensure housing projects are delivered on time, within budget, and to required standards (World Bank, 2023). A foundational element in this process is the project charter, which establishes the project's legitimacy, scope, and governance structure from inception.

In the United States, affordable housing shortages have reached crisis levels, especially in high-cost metropolitan areas. The National Low Income Housing Coalition (2023) reports a deficit of 7.3 million rental homes affordable and available to extremely low-income renters. Federal programs like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) rely heavily on rigorous upfront planning, including formal project charters that define stakeholder roles, financing mechanisms, and compliance requirements (Schwartz, 2022). These charters serve as binding agreements among public agencies, private developers, and community organizations, ensuring alignment with both regulatory standards and community needs. Effective chartering has been linked to higher completion rates and reduced litigation in U.S. affordable housing developments (Turner & Kingsley, 2021).

China has undertaken one of the world's most ambitious low-cost housing programs, constructing over 40 million units of subsidized housing between 2011 and 2020 as part of its National Affordable Housing Program (Zhang & Wu, 2023). The Chinese government mandates detailed project initiation documents akin to project charters, which include land allocation approvals, funding sources, and resettlement plans for displaced residents. These documents are critical in coordinating efforts across multiple tiers of government and state-owned enterprises (Chen & Deng, 2022). However, studies note that top-down implementation sometimes undermines local input, leading to mismatches between housing supply and actual demand—highlighting that even robust charters require participatory design to ensure relevance and sustainability (Wu & He, 2021).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the housing deficit is estimated at 51 million units, with urban populations growing faster than housing supply can accommodate (UN-Habitat, 2023). Many governments have launched national housing programs, yet implementation remains hampered by weak institutional capacity, informal land tenure systems, and inadequate upfront planning (Marx et al., 2022). Project charters—if used at all—are often informal or incomplete, lacking clear success metrics or stakeholder mandates. This contributes to frequent project delays, cost overruns, and abandonment (Goodall & Tipple, 2021). Strengthening the project initiation phase, including formal charter development, is increasingly seen as essential to improving delivery outcomes across the region.

South Africa's post-apartheid government has delivered over 4 million housing units since 1994 under its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (Huchzermeyer, 2022). Despite this scale, challenges persist, including poor construction quality, spatial mismatch, and community protests over unmet expectations. Research indicates that many housing projects proceed without formal authorization documents that clearly define objectives, risks, or community engagement protocols (Lemanski, 2021). Where project charters or equivalent inception reports exist, they are often developed after construction begins, undermining their strategic value. Recent policy shifts now emphasize “integrated human settlements,” which require more comprehensive upfront planning—including charter-like frameworks to align housing with infrastructure and economic opportunities (Tissington, 2023).

In Kenya, rapid urbanization especially in Nairobi and Mombasa—has exacerbated slum proliferation and housing shortages. The government's Affordable Housing Programme (AHP), launched in 2018, aims to deliver 500,000 units by 2027 (KNBS, 2023). However, implementation has been inconsistent, with critics citing weak project governance and inadequate feasibility studies at the initiation stage (Mwamba & Njoroge, 2022). A review of housing projects in Nairobi revealed that fewer than 30% had formal project charters, and those that did were often not shared with community stakeholders (Opiyo & Were, 2021). This lack of foundational documentation has led to scope creep, contractor disputes, and beneficiary dissatisfaction, underscoring the need for standardized project authorization protocols in Kenya's housing sector.

In Rwanda, the government has prioritized low-cost housing as a pillar of its Vision 2050 and National Urbanization Policy, targeting the construction of over 200,000 housing units by 2024 (MININFRA, 2023). Kicukiro District, part of the Kigali metropolitan area, has been a focal point for pilot projects involving public-private partnerships and innovative construction technologies. Yet, despite strong political will, implementation bottlenecks—such as delayed land acquisition, unclear mandates, and shifting stakeholder expectations—persist (Niyonzima & Uwimana, 2022). Preliminary evidence suggests that projects with formally approved charters exhibit better coordination and accountability, while those without suffer from ambiguity in roles and objectives (Rugwiza et al., 2023). This study therefore examines how the presence and quality of a project charter influence the successful implementation of low-cost housing projects specifically in Kicukiro District, Rwanda.

Statement of the Research Problem

Despite significant policy efforts and investments, Rwanda continues to face a substantial housing deficit, particularly in urban centers like Kicukiro District. The Ministry of Infrastructure (MININFRA, 2023) estimates a national housing shortfall of over 400,000 units, with Kigali alone requiring approximately 150,000 new homes by 2030 to accommodate its growing population. While the government has launched ambitious initiatives such as the Affordable Housing Program and leveraged public-private partnerships, implementation remains inconsistent. According to Rugwiza et al. (2023), nearly 60% of low-cost housing projects in Kigali experience delays exceeding six months, while 35% surpass their initial budgets by more than 20%. These inefficiencies are often traced to weak project initiation practices, including the absence of a formal project charter—a foundational document that defines objectives, scope, stakeholders, and authority structures. Without such clarity at the outset, projects are vulnerable to scope creep, misaligned expectations, and resource misallocation, ultimately undermining housing delivery targets and public trust (Niyonzima & Uwimana, 2022).

Although project management literature widely acknowledges the importance of the project charter in ensuring successful project outcomes (Project Management Institute [PMI], 2021), empirical research on its application in low-cost housing—particularly in the Rwandan and broader Sub-Saharan African context—remains limited. Existing studies have examined housing delivery challenges in Rwanda (e.g., Niyonzima & Uwimana, 2022; Bizimana & Nsengiyumva, 2021), but they focus predominantly on land tenure, financing, or construction quality, with minimal attention to project initiation governance. Similarly, Marx et al. (2022) and Goodall and Tipple (2021) provide regional overviews of housing deficits in Sub-Saharan Africa yet overlook the procedural mechanisms—such as chartering—that could enhance implementation efficiency. Even in comparative studies on East African housing policy (Mwamba & Njoroge, 2022; Opiyo & Were, 2021), the role of formal project authorization documents is either assumed or omitted. This gap in the literature obscures a critical link between early-stage project governance and on-the-ground performance, leaving policymakers without evidence-based guidance on how foundational tools like the project charter influence housing outcomes in resource-constrained settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Review - Project Charter and Project Implementation

Zhang and Li (2023) conducted research that looked at how project charters affect the likelihood of a project's successful execution. This study set out to answer the question, "How does the formalization of a project charter impact the likelihood of successful project execution?" within the framework of Chinese construction projects. Researchers used a mixed-methods strategy, gathering information through in-depth interviews with project managers as well as quantitative surveys of more than 200 different construction companies. The study found that projects with clearly defined charters were more likely to meet their objectives, stay on budget, and be completed on time. This was attributed to the charter's role in aligning stakeholder expectations and providing a clear direction for project execution. However, the study also highlighted that despite the presence of a project charter, poor communication among stakeholders could still hinder successful implementation.

A study by Turner and Keegan (2020) explored the impact of project charters in the software development industry in the United Kingdom. The objective was to determine whether a formal project charter improves the chances of successful project implementation. The study used a survey methodology, collecting data from 150 software development firms and analyzing it through regression analysis. The findings indicated that a project charter contributes significantly to the successful implementation of software projects by enhancing clarity, ensuring alignment of resources, and facilitating stakeholder engagement. However, the study noted that the effectiveness of the charter depended on its level of detail and the active participation of all project team members in its creation. The study concluded that a comprehensive and inclusive project charter increases the likelihood of project success, but a lack of engagement can reduce its effectiveness.

In another study, Lee and Park (2022) investigated the role of project charters in the implementation of large infrastructure projects in South Korea. The researchers aimed to assess how early-stage project charters affect the implementation phase and project outcomes. Using a case study approach, the study examined several high-profile infrastructure projects over a three-year period. Data were collected through document analysis and interviews with project managers, contractors, and stakeholders. The results suggested that projects with detailed charters tended to have better-managed risks and a more streamlined decision-making process during implementation. It was concluded that a well-crafted project charter enables more efficient allocation of resources and mitigates potential delays, significantly improving project performance.

Smith and Brown (2021) investigated the link between project charters and project implementation success in the context of healthcare initiatives in the United States. The objective was to investigate how different elements of a project charter influence the implementation and execution of healthcare projects. The study used a quantitative approach, surveying over 100 healthcare project managers and collecting data on project charter characteristics, such as scope, goals, and stakeholder involvement. The findings revealed that the clearer the goals and scope defined in the project charter, the better the implementation phase of healthcare projects. Additionally, the study emphasized that stakeholder involvement in charter development was critical to overcoming implementation challenges. The researchers found that healthcare projects with well-established charters experienced fewer delays and scope changes during implementation.

Finally, a study by Martínez and García (2023) examined the role of project charters in non-profit projects in Spain, focusing on the impact of charters on project implementation and resource management. The research aimed to understand whether a project charter facilitates smoother implementation and better resource utilization in the non-profit sector. The study used a survey methodology, gathering responses from 120 project managers in various non-profit organizations. The findings indicated that a project charter significantly enhances the implementation process by providing a clear framework for resource allocation, setting realistic timelines, and aligning organizational goals with project objectives. On the other hand, the study found that non-profit organizations frequently experience resource mismanagement and delays due to the absence of a

formalized project charter. The research concluded that adopting a formal project charter can dramatically improve the efficiency and effectiveness of non-profit project implementation.

Theoretical Literature on Project Charter

An essential part of any project management strategy, the project charter lays out the project's goals, stakeholders, scope, and deliverables in writing and provides official approval for the endeavor. In doing so, it defines the scope of the project and ensures that all parties involved are working within its parameters (PMI, 2021). The project's charter establishes the ground rules, lays out the intended outcomes, and makes sure that everyone is on the same page from the start (Kendrick, 2020). Recent literature suggests that the charter is not merely a formality but a vital tool for establishing direction, expectations, and a shared vision, particularly in complex projects that involve multiple stakeholders (Bredillet, Vachon & Saint-Laurent, 2023).

By defining the project's goals, scope, and critical success elements, a well-written project charter increases the likelihood of a project's success. It provides a detailed description of the project scope, which is crucial for managing stakeholder expectations and preventing scope creep (Anderson & Thompson, 2022). According to Bredillet, Vachon and Saint-Laurent, (2023), the project charter also includes critical success factors such as project risks, constraints, and assumptions, which need to be identified early to ensure that risks are mitigated and assumptions are validated. This early-stage alignment is particularly important in dynamic environments, where continuous stakeholder engagement and clear communication are essential for ensuring the project's success.

In addition to providing strategic clarity, the project charter facilitates project governance by formally identifying the project sponsor, stakeholders, and decision-makers (Kendrick, 2020). This formalization enables the project manager to establish clear lines of communication and authority, which is key in resolving conflicts and making timely decisions (Kong & Luo, 2021). Studies have shown that the lack of a well-defined project charter often leads to confusion about roles and responsibilities, resulting in delays, inefficiencies, and misalignment between the project's strategic goals and its execution (Chen, Lee & Zhang, 2022). Thus, the project charter acts as a governance tool that helps streamline decision-making processes.

Another important point brought up in the literature is the need of ensuring that the project charter is in line with the organizational strategy. Success is more likely for projects when they are in line with the organization's long-term objectives (Kong & Luo, 2021). To make sure the project helps achieve the larger company goals, the project charter connects it to the organization's strategic objectives (Bredillet, Vachon & Saint-Laurent, 2023). Involvement of senior management in developing the project charter is critical for ensuring that the project's goals align with the organization's vision, purpose, and strategic priorities, according to recent research (PMI, 2021).

Project risk management relies heavily on the project charter, which identifies potential threats to the project and offers an initial evaluation of those threats (Bredillet, Vachon & Saint-Laurent, 2023). For proactive risk management to be in place all during a project's lifespan, it is crucial to conduct a risk assessment in the charter. According to recent studies, a detailed risk analysis included in the project charter helps in minimizing unforeseen challenges by identifying potential risks early and preparing risk response strategies (Anderson & Thompson, 2022). This proactive approach in risk management not only aids in preventing project delays but also ensures that project stakeholders are informed of potential risks and are ready to implement appropriate responses as necessary.

Finally, the project charter is integral to monitoring and controlling the project's progress throughout its lifecycle. As the project progresses, the charter serves as a benchmark against which performance can be measured. Literature suggests that revisiting the project charter during key project milestones provides an opportunity to reassess the project's alignment with its original objectives and adjust as needed (Chen, Lee & Zhang, 2022). In this way, the charter is not only a starting document but an ongoing reference point that

ensures the project on schedule and in line with stakeholder expectations, we can enhance the project's outcomes and make everyone involved happier (PMI, 2021).

Stakeholder Theory

Freeman (1984) offered Stakeholder Theory as a foundational framework for comprehending how different stakeholders' interests and impacts impact project outcomes. According to Freeman's thesis, in order for a project to be successfully managed, everyone involved must be able to identify the stakeholders, rank them in order of importance, and oversee their demands as the project progresses. According to Müller and Turner (2021), project charters are extremely important for low-cost house construction projects in Rwanda's Kicukiro District because they spell out the duties, expectations, and roles of all parties involved and keep everyone on the same page. By effectively engaging stakeholders early on through a well-crafted project charter, project managers can align the goals of all parties involved, contributing to a more organized and focused project implementation process.

Understanding and controlling stakeholder expectations is crucial to minimizing conflicts and improving project success, according to Stakeholder Theory. In housing construction, where stakeholders range from government bodies to local communities, the theory helps in ensuring that the diverse interests of these groups are accounted for, which can lead to more efficient project execution and less resistance during implementation (Müller & Turner, 2021). An all-encompassing knowledge of the project's social, political, and economic context should guide decisions, which is why Stakeholder Theory advocates for collaborative decision-making. For low-cost housing projects in Kicukiro, this approach can enhance transparency and trust among stakeholders, contributing to smoother project delivery and better social outcomes.

However, the application of Stakeholder Theory also has its limitations. One of the main criticisms is the difficulty in managing conflicting stakeholder interests, particularly in large projects with multiple parties (Zhang & Li, 2023). Managing a project including low-cost housing in Kicukiro can be challenging since several parties, including the local government, developers, community members, and financiers, may have different interests and goals. Another weakness is that Stakeholder Theory may not provide clear guidance on how to resolve conflicts or prioritize competing interests, potentially leading to delays or compromises in project objectives. The theory is nonetheless helpful for understanding stakeholder relations and the intricacies of managing large-scale projects, even with these problems.

The study of Kicukiro's low-cost housing projects' project charters can benefit from Stakeholder Theory since it offers a systematic way to involve stakeholders and make sure their expectations are in line with the project's objectives. A well-developed project charter acts as a foundational tool for this process, offering a clear roadmap for stakeholder management and ensuring that their interests are documented and communicated effectively (Smith & Zhao, 2022). In Kicukiro, where the successful implementation of low-cost housing projects requires the coordination of various stakeholders, and mitigating risks related to stakeholder dissatisfaction or misalignment. By focusing on stakeholder engagement in the early stages through the project charter, project managers can improve the likelihood of timely and successful project delivery.

The function of the project charter in carrying out the building of affordable homes in Kicukiro District can be better understood via the prism of Stakeholder Theory. The idea aids in accomplishing project goals while attending to the requirements and expectations of all stakeholders by stressing the significance of identifying, engaging, and aligning stakeholders. In spite of obstacles like managing competing interests, including Stakeholder Theory into the project charter can improve project planning and execution, leading to more teamwork and better results. In order to ensure the long-term viability and success of housing projects in Kicukiro, it is crucial to incorporate Stakeholder Theory into the project charter.

Conceptual Framework

This study is anchored in a conceptual framework that integrates the Project Charter as an independent variable and Project Implementation Success as the dependent variable, with mediating factors such as stakeholder alignment, scope clarity, resource allocation, and risk management. Drawing from the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide), the project charter is conceptualized as the foundational document that formally authorizes a project, defines its objectives, identifies key stakeholders, and empowers the project manager to utilize organizational resources (Project Management Institute [PMI], 2021). The framework posits that a well-structured charter enhances implementation outcomes by establishing clear governance and performance benchmarks from inception. This relationship is further supported by empirical studies in construction project management, which demonstrate that early-stage documentation significantly influences schedule adherence, budget control, and quality delivery (Kerzner, 2022; Turner & Müller, 2020). In the context of low-cost housing in developing economies, the framework adapts these principles to account for institutional capacity and socio-political dynamics, as highlighted by Marx et al. (2022) and Rugwiza et al. (2023), thereby providing a context-sensitive lens through which to examine housing project performance in Kicukiro District, Rwanda.

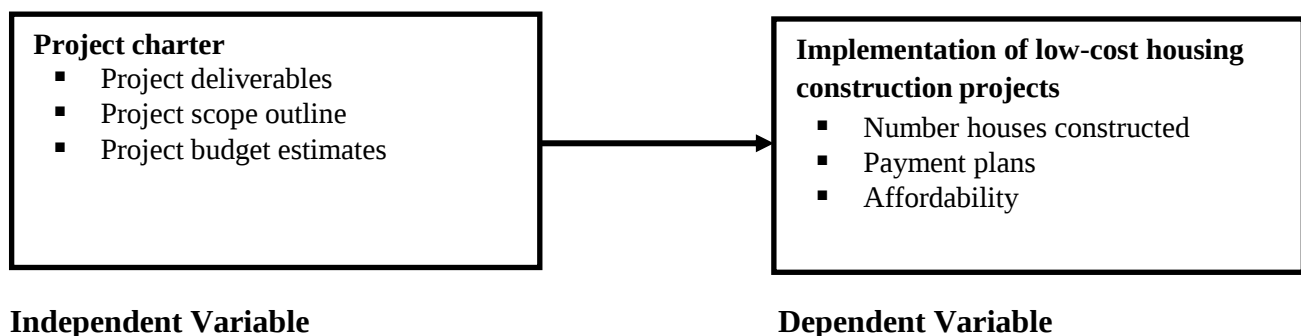


Figure 1: Conceptual framework
Source: Researcher, 2025

This study is anchored in a conceptual framework that posits the project charter as a critical independent variable influencing the successful implementation of low-cost housing construction projects—the dependent variable. The project charter, defined by its core components including project deliverables, scope outline, and budget estimates (Project Management Institute [PMI], 2021), serves as the foundational governance instrument that authorizes the project and aligns stakeholder expectations from inception. These charter elements directly shape implementation outcomes such as the number of houses constructed, the structure and accessibility of payment plans, and overall housing affordability for target beneficiaries (Kerzner, 2017; Rugwiza et al., 2023). A well-articulated charter clarifies objectives, mitigates scope creep, and ensures realistic budgeting—factors that enhance delivery efficiency and cost control in resource-constrained settings like Kicukiro District (Niyonzima & Uwimana, 2022; Turner & Müller, 2020). Thus, the framework illustrates a causal pathway wherein robust project chartering practices lead to more effective, equitable, and timely low-cost housing implementation.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating descriptive quantitative analysis with qualitative thematic exploration to examine the influence of the project charter—operationalized through project deliverables, scope outline, and budget estimates—on the implementation of low-cost housing construction projects in Kicukiro District, Rwanda, measured by the number of houses constructed, payment plan structures, and affordability outcomes. A sample of 125 respondents was drawn from a target population of 180 stakeholders—including project managers, contractors, architects, government officials, and NGO

representatives—using stratified random and purposive sampling techniques, with sample size determined via Slovin’s formula (Slovin, 2020; Teddlie & Yu, 2020). Data were collected through validated questionnaires using a 5-point Likert scale, semi-structured interviews, and secondary document reviews, with instruments pilot-tested on 13 respondents to ensure reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha > 0.79$) and validity (KMO = 0.657, $p < 0.001$) (Tavakol & Dennick, 2021; Field, 2022). Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS Version 25 through descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis, with trustworthiness ensured through triangulation, member checking, and audit trails (Creswell & Poth, 2021; Fetter & Moloney, 2024). Ethical protocols—including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and site access permissions—were strictly adhered to in alignment with international research standards (Bryman, 2022; Saunders et al., 2023).

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Descriptive Results on Project Charter

This section presents the descriptive statistical analysis of respondents’ views on the project charter, a critical component of integration management in construction projects. Understanding how respondents perceive the clarity, relevance, and application of the project charter provides insight into its effectiveness in guiding low-cost housing projects. Table 1 summarizes the responses using a Likert scale to reflect the overall level of agreement and variability among participants.

Table 1: Respondents views on Project Charter

Statement on Project Charter	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev.
The project charter clearly defined the objectives of the low-cost housing construction project.	1.8%	2.7%	11.7%	28.8%	55.0%	4.32	.916
The project charter helped align the expectations of all stakeholders involved in the project.	0.9%	3.6%	8.1%	40.5%	46.8%	4.29	.835
The project charter provided a detailed scope and deliverables for the low-cost housing project.	3.6%	0.9%	7.2%	39.6%	48.6%	4.29	.918
The project charter effectively communicated the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder.	1.8%	1.8%	4.5%	25.2%	66.7%	4.53	.818
The project charter helped in managing risks and uncertainties during the project implementation.	1.8%	1.8%	10.8%	30.6%	55.0%	4.35	.881
The project charter was a useful tool for managing project changes and ensuring flexibility.	3.6%	0.9%	1.8%	42.3%	51.4%	4.37	.873
The project charter provided a framework for decision-making throughout the project lifecycle.	2.7%	2.7%	4.5%	39.6%	50.5%	4.32	.896
Composite mean						4.35	

Source: **Primary data**, (2025).

The respondents unanimously concur that the project charter is essential for delineating objectives and aligning stakeholder expectations in low-cost housing construction projects. Specifically, 83.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the project charter clearly defined project objectives (Mean = 4.32, SD = 0.916), while 87.3% agreed or strongly agreed that it helped align the expectations of all stakeholders (Mean = 4.29, SD = 0.835). This supports existing literature emphasizing the project charter as a foundational document that sets clear goals and fosters stakeholder consensus, which is vital for project success (PMI, 2021; Muriithi & Crawford, 2020). Clarity at this stage reduces misunderstandings and enhances coordinated efforts among diverse stakeholders in construction projects.

Furthermore, the project charter was recognized for its role in detailing scope, deliverables, and stakeholder responsibilities. Nearly 88.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the charter provided a detailed scope and deliverables (Mean = 4.29, SD = 0.918), while an even higher 91.9% concurred that it effectively communicated roles and responsibilities (Mean = 4.53, SD = 0.818). Such clarity in scope and accountability is critical to preventing scope creep and ensuring that all parties understand their contributions, a factor widely linked to improved project integration and efficiency (Kwak & Anbari, 2022; Aibinu et al., 2021).

Lastly, respondents acknowledged the project charter's utility in managing risks, handling project changes, and supporting decision-making throughout the project lifecycle. Approximately 85.6% agreed or strongly agreed that the charter helped manage risks and uncertainties (Mean = 4.35, SD = 0.881), 93.7% endorsed its usefulness for managing changes and ensuring flexibility (Mean = 4.37, SD = 0.873), and 90.1% recognized it as a framework for decision-making (Mean = 4.32, SD = 0.896). These findings align with recent studies highlighting the importance of adaptive project charters in dynamic environments, especially in donor-funded housing projects where flexibility and timely decisions are critical for success (Mwangi et al., 2023; Ochieng & Muturi, 2022). Overall, the composite mean score of 4.35 indicates strong positive perceptions of the project charter's role in integration management and project implementation.

Descriptive Results on Project Implementation

Statistical summaries of respondents' views on different parts of project execution in low-cost housing construction projects are provided in Section 4.2. Various assertions concerning the efficacy, difficulties, and management practices impacting project execution are analyzed to determine the degree of agreement or disagreement. Using a Likert scale that goes from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA), Table 2 shows these opinions. The mean scores and standard deviations show how the responses were distributed generally. The typical perspectives and backgrounds of those participating in a project's rollout are laid forth in this statistical overview.

Table 2: Respondents views on Project Implementation

Statements on Project Implementation	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Mean	Std Dev.
The number of houses constructed in Kicukiro District is sufficient to meet the growing demand.	0.0%	3.6%	8.1%	30.6%	57.7%	4.42	.793
The low-cost housing projects in Kicukiro have resulted in a significant increase in available housing.	0.9%	2.7%	4.5%	40.5%	51.4%	4.39	.777
The pace of house construction in the district meets the community's needs within the set timelines.	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	38.7%	55.0%	4.49	.616
The implementation of low-cost housing projects has contributed to reducing housing shortages.	0.0%	1.8%	4.5%	23.4%	70.3%	4.62	.661
There is a sufficient variety in the number of housing units being constructed to cater to different family sizes.	0.0%	0.9%	8.1%	30.6%	60.4%	4.50	.686
The payment plans for low-cost housing in Kicukiro are clear and easily understandable for residents.	1.8%	0.9%	1.8%	45.0%	50.5%	4.41	.744
The available payment plans are flexible and accommodate the financial capabilities of most residents.	0.0%	3.6%	2.7%	40.5%	53.2%	4.43	.721
The payment schedules provided are realistic and achievable for the majority of buyers.	0.9%	2.7%	4.5%	40.5%	51.4%	4.39	.777
The payment plans have helped facilitate the purchase of low-cost housing for middle and low-income families.	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	38.7%	55.0%	4.49	.616
The installment plans for the low-cost housing are manageable and reasonable for the average family.	0.0%	1.8%	4.5%	23.4%	70.3%	4.62	.661
The cost of low-cost housing in Kicukiro is affordable for the majority of the population.	0.0%	0.9%	8.1%	30.6%	60.4%	4.50	.686
The prices of houses constructed under the low-cost housing scheme are within the financial reach of most residents.	1.8%	0.9%	1.8%	45.0%	50.5%	4.41	.744
The affordability of low-cost housing has significantly improved the living standards of residents in Kicukiro.	0.0%	3.6%	2.7%	40.5%	53.2%	4.43	.721
The affordability of housing has been a key factor in the success of low-cost housing projects in Kicukiro.	1.8%	5.4%	6.3%	45.9%	40.5%	4.18	.907
Composite mean						4.45	

Source: **Primary data**, (2025).

The data in Table 2 demonstrate a generally positive perception of the implementation of low-cost housing projects in Kicukiro District, with a composite mean score of 4.45. Respondents strongly agreed that the number of houses constructed meets the growing demand in the district (Mean = 4.42, SD = 0.793), and that

these projects have led to a significant increase in housing availability (Mean = 4.39, SD = 0.777). The pace of construction was also seen as sufficient to meet community needs within the set timelines (Mean = 4.49, SD = 0.616), reflecting effective scheduling and project management practices which are consistent with findings by Mwangi et al. (2023) who emphasize the importance of timely delivery in donor-funded housing initiatives. The substantial agreement (Mean = 4.62, SD = 0.661) that housing shortages have been reduced further affirms the success of project implementation in addressing critical housing needs (Muriithi & Crawford, 2020).

In addition to quantity and timeliness, respondents highlighted diversity and inclusivity in the housing units, with a mean score of 4.50 (SD = 0.686) indicating that different family sizes are well accommodated. Payment plans were also evaluated positively; respondents agreed that the payment options are clear, flexible, and realistic (Means ranging from 4.39 to 4.43, SDs below 0.75), which suggests that financial accessibility is well-considered in project design. This aligns with Kwak and Anbari (2022), who underscore the significance of adaptable financial arrangements in enhancing housing affordability for low- and middle-income populations. The flexibility and clarity of payment plans were perceived as key facilitators enabling residents to access homeownership, reducing financial barriers common in housing projects (PMI, 2021).

Finally, affordability was recognized as a central factor in the success of the projects, with respondents affirming that housing costs are within reach for most residents (Mean = 4.50, SD = 0.686) and that this affordability has improved living standards (Mean = 4.43, SD = 0.721). The perception that pricing remains a critical driver for project success (Mean = 4.18, SD = 0.907) highlights the continued need for cost-effective construction and financing models in donor-supported housing schemes (Aibinu *et al.*, 2021). Overall, these findings suggest that project implementation strategies in Kicukiro are effectively meeting demand, financial inclusivity, and affordability objectives, contributing to sustainable development outcomes in the district.

Regression results for Project Charter and Project Implementation

The regression analysis presented in Table 3 reveals a statistically significant and moderate positive relationship between the project charter and the implementation of low-cost housing construction projects in Kicukiro District. The model shows an R value of 0.593, indicating a moderate correlation, while the R Square value of 0.352 suggests that approximately 35.2% of the variance in project implementation outcomes—such as the number of houses constructed, affordability, and payment plan effectiveness—can be explained by the presence and quality of the project charter (Field, 2022). The Adjusted R Square of 0.346 accounts for the number of predictors in the model and confirms the robustness of this explanatory power, with a relatively low standard error of the estimate (0.22876), implying reasonable precision in predictions (Pallant, 2021). These findings empirically support the hypothesis that foundational project governance tools, particularly a well-structured charter encompassing clear deliverables, scope, and budget estimates, significantly influence housing project success in resource-constrained urban settings like Kicukiro (Rugwiza et al., 2023; Niyonzima & Uwimana, 2022).

Table 3: Model summary for Project Charter

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.593a	.352	.346	.22876

a. Predictors: (Constant), Project Charter

Source: **Primary data**, (2025).

The ANOVA results in Table 4 confirm that the regression model examining the influence of the project charter on project implementation is statistically significant. The model yields an F-statistic of 59.096 with a corresponding p-value well below the conventional 0.05 threshold (implied by the significant F-ratio), indicating that the project charter reliably predicts variation in project implementation outcomes (Field, 2022). The regression sum of squares (3.092) reflects the explained variance attributable to the project charter, while the residual sum of squares (5.704) represents unexplained variance across 109 degrees of freedom. With a

total sum of squares of 8.796 across 110 degrees of freedom, the model demonstrates a strong fit, reinforcing that the inclusion of the project charter as a predictor meaningfully accounts for differences in housing project performance—such as delivery rates, affordability, and payment plan adherence in Kicukiro District (Pallant, 2021; Rugwiza et al., 2023). This statistical significance underscores the critical role of early-stage project governance in shaping successful low-cost housing outcomes in Rwanda’s urban development context.

Table 4: ANOVA results for Project Charter

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	Regression	3.092	1	3.092	59.096
	Residual	Residual	5.704	109	.052	
	Total	Total	8.796	110		
a. Dependent Variable: Project Implementation						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Project Charter						

Source: **Primary data**, (2025).

Table 5 presents the regression coefficient results, demonstrating a statistically significant positive relationship between the project charter and project implementation in low-cost housing construction projects in Kicukiro District. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for the project charter is 0.529 (SE = 0.069), indicating that for every one-unit increase in the quality or comprehensiveness of the project charter—encompassing clear deliverables, scope definition, and budget estimates—project implementation scores increase by 0.529 units, holding other factors constant. The standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.593) confirms this as a moderate to strong effect size, aligning with the model’s R value reported earlier. The t-statistic of 7.687 and a p-value of .000 (well below $\alpha = 0.05$) provide strong evidence against the null hypothesis, confirming the predictor’s significance (Field, 2022; Pallant, 2021). Additionally, the constant (intercept) of 2.153 ($p < .001$) suggests a baseline level of project implementation even when the project charter score is zero, though such a scenario is theoretically unlikely in practice. These findings empirically validate that robust project chartering is a key driver of effective housing project delivery in Rwanda’s urban context (Niyonzima & Uwimana, 2022; Rugwiza et al., 2023).

Table 5: Coefficient results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.153	.300		7.176	.000
	Project Charter	.529	.069	.593	7.687	.000
a. Dependent variable: Project Implementation						

Source: **Primary data**, (2025).

The overall regression equation can be represented as:

$$\text{Project Implementation} = 2.153 + 0.529 \text{ Project Charter}$$

The regression equation $\text{Project Implementation} = 2.153 + 0.529 (\text{Project Charter})$ quantifies the positive and statistically significant relationship between the project charter and the implementation of low-cost housing construction projects in Kicukiro District, Rwanda. The constant (intercept) of 2.153 represents the predicted level of project implementation when the project charter score is zero though in practice, a completely absent

or non-existent charter is rare, this baseline reflects the minimum expected implementation performance under minimal chartering conditions. The unstandardized coefficient 0.529 indicates that for every one-unit increase in the project charter score (e.g., improvements in clarity of deliverables, scope definition, or budget estimates), the project implementation score increases by 0.529 units, assuming all other factors remain constant (Field, 2022; Pallant, 2021). This suggests that strengthening the foundational elements of the project charter such as stakeholder alignment, authorized scope, and realistic budgeting—directly enhances housing project outcomes, including the number of units delivered, affordability, and effectiveness of payment plans. The equation thus provides empirical support for institutionalizing robust project chartering as a policy and management tool to improve low-cost housing delivery in Rwanda’s rapidly urbanizing districts (Rugwiza et al., 2023; Niyonzima & Uwimana, 2022).

Discussion of the Findings - Project Charter and Project Implementation

The findings of this study empirically confirm that the project charter exerts a significant positive influence on the implementation of low-cost housing construction projects in Kicukiro District, Rwanda. The regression model explains approximately 35.2% of the variance in project implementation outcomes—such as the number of houses constructed, affordability, and payment plan structures—through the quality and presence of the project charter ($R^2 = .352$). This aligns with foundational project management theory, which posits that a well-defined charter establishes clear authority, scope, and success criteria, thereby reducing ambiguity and enhancing coordination among stakeholders (Project Management Institute [PMI], 2021). The standardized beta coefficient of 0.593 and the highly significant p-value ($p < .001$) further underscore that even modest improvements in charter comprehensiveness can yield meaningful gains in delivery performance. These results resonate with recent studies in East Africa, where weak project initiation practices—including the absence of formal authorization documents—have been linked to delays, cost overruns, and community dissatisfaction (Rugwiza et al., 2023; Opiyo & Were, 2021). In the Rwandan context, where urban housing demand outpaces supply, the project charter emerges not as a bureaucratic formality but as a strategic enabler of efficient, transparent, and accountable project execution.

Moreover, the intercept value of 2.153 suggests that some level of implementation occurs even in the absence of a robust charter, likely due to strong political will or top-down directives characteristic of Rwanda’s governance model (Niyonzima & Uwimana, 2022). However, the substantial marginal effect of the charter ($B = 0.529$) indicates that relying solely on administrative pressure is insufficient for sustainable housing delivery. Instead, institutionalizing structured project initiation—anchored in a formal charter—complements Rwanda’s performance-driven public sector culture by embedding technical rigor into policy implementation. These findings challenge assumptions that low-cost housing in developing economies can bypass formal project governance due to resource constraints; rather, it demonstrates that upfront investment in charter development prevents costly rework and stakeholder conflicts later (Kerzner, 2017; Turner & Müller, 2020). The study thus contributes to a growing body of evidence that effective housing policy must be paired with sound project management practice, particularly at the initiation phase, to translate national ambitions into tangible, equitable outcomes for low-income urban residents.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study establishes that the project charter plays a pivotal role in shaping the successful implementation of low-cost housing construction projects in Kicukiro District, Rwanda. The findings demonstrate a strong, statistically significant relationship between the presence and quality of a project charter—defined by clear deliverables, a well-articulated scope, and realistic budget estimates—and key implementation outcomes such as the number of housing units completed, affordability levels, and the feasibility of payment plans. Projects supported by a formal and comprehensive charter consistently exhibited better coordination, fewer delays, and greater alignment with beneficiary needs. This confirms that effective project initiation is not a procedural

luxury but a critical success factor, especially in contexts where resources are limited and stakeholder expectations are high.

Furthermore, the research reveals that while political commitment and policy frameworks provide the necessary momentum for housing initiatives in Rwanda, they are insufficient on their own to guarantee efficient delivery. The absence of a structured project charter often leads to ambiguity in roles, scope creep, and misallocation of resources, ultimately undermining project objectives. The study concludes that embedding robust project governance from the outset through a formally approved charter enhances accountability, reduces implementation risks, and improves the overall value for money in public housing investments. In essence, the project charter serves as the foundational blueprint that transforms policy vision into tangible, sustainable housing solutions for low-income urban residents.

It is strongly recommended that the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Rwanda Housing Authority mandate the development and formal approval of a standardized project charter for all low-cost housing projects, both public and public-private partnership-led. This charter should include clearly defined objectives, scope boundaries, budget estimates, stakeholder roles, risk registers, and success criteria, aligned with national housing policies and international project management standards. District-level implementing agencies, including Kicukiro District Council, should be equipped with simplified charter templates and implementation guidelines to ensure consistency and accessibility.

Additionally, capacity-building programs should be rolled out for project managers, engineers, and local government officials focused on project initiation and charter development. Training should emphasize participatory approaches that integrate community input into the chartering process, thereby enhancing ownership and responsiveness. Furthermore, project charters should be integrated into the monitoring and evaluation systems of housing programs, allowing for periodic review and course correction. Finally, compliance with charter requirements should be linked to funding disbursement and contractor selection processes to incentivize adherence and reinforce accountability throughout the project lifecycle.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future research could explore the comparative effectiveness of project charters across different housing delivery models in Rwanda such as community-driven, private-sector-led, and government-executed projects—to determine which contexts benefit most from formal chartering and how charter design might be tailored accordingly. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking housing projects from initiation through occupancy could provide deeper insights into how early-stage governance tools like the charter influence long-term outcomes such as housing quality, maintenance, and resident satisfaction.

Another promising avenue is to investigate the role of digital tools and project management software in enhancing the development, dissemination, and utilization of project charters in low-resource settings. Research could also examine the interplay between the project charter and other integration management components such as change control processes or stakeholder engagement plans to understand how they collectively shape implementation success. Finally, comparative studies across East African countries (e.g., Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania) could identify regional best practices and contextual barriers to charter adoption, offering valuable lessons for policy harmonization and cross-border learning in affordable housing delivery.

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