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BENEFICIARY PARTICIPATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN MARSABIT COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the effects of beneficiary participation on sustainability of development projects in Marsabit County, Kenya. The research was built on Arnstein's (1969) theory of participation and Ostrom's (1990) institutional analysis and development framework, which give priority to stakeholder engagement as essential for sustainable outcomes. The descriptive research design was employed in the study. Data collection involved both quantitative and qualitative methods with structured questionnaires and interviews being the main tools used. A pilot study involving 36 participants from a non-target community in Marsabit County was conducted to test the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments. Quantitative data were analyzed by descriptive and inferential statistics to establish relationships between variables, while qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were subjected to thematic analysis to extract patterns and themes. This mixed-methods approach allowed for a thorough understanding of how sustainability of the project meant for development influenced by the participation of intended beneficiaries in Marsabit County. The study found that the involvement of the beneficiaries is a vital precondition for the effective operation of development projects in Marsabit County, Kenya, throughout the entire period. The model used for prediction proved that the selected participatory factors are responsible for 54.8% of the sustainability variability, while each of the four dimensions was validated as statistically significant determinants. In particular, the empowerment mechanisms of skills training and genuine participation in decision-making are the major drivers for both the technical capability and the natural ownership that come about and are necessary for the project to last. Based on the findings, it is strongly recommended that development organizations and governmental agencies adopt a mandatory, capacity-driven approach to beneficiary participation, moving beyond mere consultation to formalized empowerment.

Key Words: *Quality of Beneficiary, Scope of Participation, Frequency of Feedback, Skills Training*

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INTRODUCTION

The involvement of a community is a critical component for guaranteeing the relevance, efficacy, and long-term success of development aid initiatives worldwide (Cohen & Uphoff, 2017). After the U.S. Congress ratified the "New Directions Mandate" through the Foreign Assistance Act of 1973, which sought to direct aid to rural areas with participation as a central theme, this principle of participation became a central policy in U.S. foreign assistance.

Participation by beneficiaries has become essential to the effectiveness and sustainability of projects intended for development, and specifically for initiatives started and driven by communities in the United Kingdom. Since social, economic, and environmental issues are becoming more and more of the focus of development initiatives, meaningfully involving beneficiaries guarantees that projects are not only responsive to local needs but also long-lasting (Bond, 2022). Participatory methodologies are a method promoted by the UK extensively for the sake of ownership, accountability, and adaptation; thus, participatory methodologies are considered of wide value across all levels involving citizens, local governments, and civil society organizations (Plan International, 2009). This methodology resonates with the movement around the world that endorses the bottom-up development approaches and gives power to the views and expertise of the stakeholder community that will be most affected by the initiatives.

South Africa has resorted to community involvement (Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2019) as a primary method of ensuring that the so-called post-apartheid development policies are able to redeem the oppressed groups and equalize the access to resources and services. In South Africa, where the mainstream development projects are primarily focused on the marginalized communities and tackling their most pressing issues of housing, health, education, and infrastructure; the use of participatory methods is considered particularly relevant. Such inclusion of the beneficiaries guarantees not only that the initiatives are in harmony with the local interests, but also the development of a pride and community empowerment that lasts (Mphahlele, 2020).

Beneficiary engagement is a key factor that contributes to the sustainability of development in Rwanda. It is also the main reason why the country got so much play in the area of community transformation and reconstruction after the 1994 genocide. Realizing the power of involving the people in the project planning, implementation, and evaluation to ensure the project's success for a long time, the government has set participatory approaches as one of the main options in its development strategy (Uwihanganye & Ndagijimana, 2023). The community-friendly programs such as Umuganda, a monthly mandatory community service program, illustrate Rwanda’s commitment to involving the grassroots and sharing the effort. This participatory attitude is already embedded in crucial national policies like Vision 2050 that support inclusive development, local ownership, and accountability (Mugabe & Ndagijimana, 2022).

Kenya considers development projects’ sustainability as a major issue which the country tries to curb with various issues such as social justice, economic growth, urbanization, and climate change. Stakeholder participation, which consists of local communities, government bodies, NGOs, and private sector players, is the most important tactic for ensuring that development programs are sustainable (Kaimenyi, 2019). The partnership means the projects are better fitted to satisfy the needs and aspirations of the affected neighborhoods, thus creating a synergistic relationship between nature and society. The Government of Kenya has very recently come to see the importance of inclusive engagement especially through rural areas and thereby avoiding the pitfalls of top-down development policies that ignore local contexts (Boliko & Ialnazov, 2019). However, activity coordination and long-term strategy. Hopefully, this study helps advance the broader understanding of development project sustainability, which is a perennial subject of scholarly inquiry.

Statement of the Problem

The sustainability of projects is primarily hinged on the level of community involvement and participation in the various stages such as conceptualization, implementation, and management of the project in question. The facilitation of beneficiaries to the project is the foundation of the project's success, which will eventually

transcend generations. Wamugu and Ogollah (2018) put forth the view that the sustainability of development projects contributes long-term success, economic growth, environmental protection, and social well-being that can stand on their own feet when the external support is pulled out. Oftentimes, project goals and community demand do not meet when local populations are not faculty engaged; this leads to poor quality results and little to no long-lasting benefits (Mulwa, Kyalo, Mbugua, 2021).

Sustainability problems have been the downfall of numerous development programs in Kenya, with the most affected area being Marsabit County, which is mostly underserved. The low level of engagement with the beneficiaries is the main factor responsible for the failure of many initiatives to produce the intended impacts which are long-lasting. Marsabit County, which is predominantly pastoral with difficult climate conditions, has a variety of specific obstacles to successful beneficiary participation such as traditional customs, poor infrastructure, and low literacy levels. According to Mutisya et al. (2021) and Mburu and Karani (2022), beneficiary participation is the key to keeping development projects relevant and durable. Moreover, although they did not elaborate, Kuria and Wanyoike (2016) have analyzed how the sources of funding, monitoring and evaluation, and stakeholder participation have an impact on M&E. Still, the intricate nature of the dynamics of beneficiary participation in pastoral communities has not yet been the subject of sufficient research. By investigating how active involvement in monitoring, decision-making, feedback, and skills training might improve the sustainability of development projects in Marsabit, this study seeks to close this gap. Gaining an understanding of these elements in the context of pastoralists can help design more community-driven, sustainable development initiatives in comparable areas.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the effect of quality of beneficiary involvement in decision-making on the sustainability of development projects.
- To evaluate the effect of beneficiaries' participation scope in project monitoring and evaluation on the sustainability of development projects.
- To examine the effect of frequency of beneficiary feedback on sustainability of development projects.
- To investigate the effect of beneficiaries' skills training on sustainability of development projects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Review

In Finland, Bandé, Ika, and Ouedraogo (2024) examined how levels of engagement by the beneficiaries influence project success, with a specific focus on the perceptions of the stakeholders. Their findings revealed that while project characteristics had limited influence on engagement, the implementation context, particularly beneficiary trust in project governance, it played a significant role. The role of governance frameworks in promoting genuine participation is underlined by this. The study never got to solve the issue about the direct link between the procedures used in making the decisions and the final outcome of the project over time because it did not analyze the effects of different kinds of participation, such as engaging in maker decisions, on the sustainability of development initiatives. This problem is, however, taken care of in the present research where it is focusing on beneficiary participation in decision-making as a factor influencing the sustainability of development projects in Marsabit County, while at the same time particularly looking at the factors of resilience and ownership in resource-poor settings. With psychological ownership acting as a mediator, Aga, Noorderhaven, and Vallejo (2019) examined the connection between project beneficiary engagement and behavioral intentions that support project sustainability. The authors found that beneficiaries' behavioral intentions to support and continue initiatives are significantly raised when they are given a chance to participate in the requirements assessment and planning phases. Furthermore, this relationship was found to be mediated by psychological ownership, indicating that beneficiaries are more likely to commit to the project's long-term success when they feel a sense of ownership. Although this study highlights the importance of psychological factors and early-stage involvement, it does not consider the impact of

stakeholder engagement in decision-making during the project's life on sustainability. Consequently, the present study comprehensively investigates the influence of participation in decision-making on the beneficiary's sense of ownership and how that ultimately impacts project sustainability in a resource-constrained environment. It focuses on development initiatives in Marsabit County, Kenya.

The research paper by Uwihanganye and Gitahi (2023) aimed to investigate the impact of beneficiary involvement in project identification, planning, and execution on the sustainability of projects in Rwanda. By employing a combination of regression analysis and a descriptive survey method, the researchers arrived at the conclusion that the participation in project identification had a positive effect on sustainability because it ensured that projects met the needs and expectations of the area. Similarly, it was also shown that the participation of the project beneficiaries in planning and even implementation was a determining factor for the project's sustainability. They argued that the beneficiaries should feel that they are the owners and should take responsibility for the project. On the other hand, the study found that involvement in planning did not have a significant impact on project sustainability. The study did not investigate the cumulative effect of decision-making involvement throughout the entire project duration, even though the findings provide a great insight into the different impacts of participation at different stages. The study thus aims to analyze the opposite case on the relationship between involvement in decision-making at every level and the sustainability of development projects in Marsabit County, Kenya.

The researchers Ibanga, Shukla, and Ndabaga (2016) focused on the KWAMP project in Rwanda's Kirehe District and examined the implication of beneficiary monitoring in projects for their success. The results indicated that beneficiaries were mostly engaged in various activities and had knowledge of the project's goals and objectives, but their involvement in defining reporting standards or actual reporting of the project's performance was nearly nonexistent. This suggests that beneficiaries were not given the necessary resources and responsibilities for their full participation in monitoring and evaluation. The study, while stressing the importance of involvement for project success, did not explore whether participation, in this case, would be a factor that would lead to the extinction of the development project. On the other hand, the new research grounded on Marsabit County, Kenya, aims at determining the implications of beneficiary involvement in monitoring and evaluation on the sustainability of the project, thus indicating the necessity of active engagement in the longer run to win the trust and accountability of the project.

In a descriptive survey design, Kyomukama and Mulyungi (2018) assessed the effect of beneficiary involvement strategies on the sustainability of a sanitation and potable water delivery project in Rwanda's Southern Province. The research concluded that beneficiary consultation was of utmost importance to the project's long-term success while information sharing was the backbone of its sustainability. The research also established a moderate correlation between beneficiary participation and project sustainability, indicating that while participation is necessary, factors like governance and communication can also play a role. The study did not, however, investigate the direct effects of various forms of beneficiary involvement on the project's long-term viability, such as in monitoring and decision-making. By concentrating on Marsabit County, Kenya, and investigating how beneficiary involvement in monitoring and decision-making supports the sustainability of development programs in the area—where resource limitations and environmental issues are significant—the current study fills this knowledge gap.

Social Cognitive Theory perspective was utilized by Mkomagi, Mosha, and Athman (2022) to explore the viewpoints of beneficiaries on the discontinuation of donor funding for two agricultural projects in Tanzania. For data analysis, the researchers applied descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages. It was found that the beneficiaries with great self-efficacy and large expectations for the project's outcomes viewed cessation of resources more positively, which hints that their belief in the capability of conducting and maintaining the project affected their viewpoint. Moreover, Self-efficacy and attitude were connected highly significant as were outcome expectancies and attitudes. This means that beneficiaries who trusted the project

to yield good results were more likely to have positive opinions about its inauguration or termination. The article reveals the psychological dimensions that influence beneficiary attitudes but does not elaborate on how beneficiary involvement in providing feedback or taking part in decision-making processes impacts the long-term sustainability of such projects. the current study aims to close the gap by investigating how beneficiary participation in decision-making and feedback processes impacts the sustainability of development projects in Marsabit County, Kenya with regard to ownership, accountability, and long-term success in resource-poor settings.

Gahima, Shukla, and Ndabaga (2019) focused on the project sustainability and assumed that beneficiary participation in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of LODA-funded development projects was the reason for the good sustainability of the projects. They found that this participation could differ widely from just providing information to the reviewing or evaluating teams to being actively involved in the whole process itself. The researchers did mention, however, that the participation of beneficiaries was very often poor, which, in turn, made the M&E activities ineffective. The authors concluded that the sustainability of the project and the ownership by the community could be increased by a more inclusive approach to involvement because the beneficiaries that have taken part in the monitoring and evaluation of a project are more likely to accept its accountability. However, the paper discusses the extent and the nature of beneficiary participation in M&E but does not look into the impact of the volume and type of beneficiary feedback on the M&E process thus the sustainability of development contributions continues to be mightier than the sword. The study through the examination of the effects of the frequent and systematic beneficiary feedback during the M&E activities on the sustainability of development projects in Marsabit County, Kenya—particularly in areas with scarce resources and the high community reliance on project outcomes assumption which the preset study seeks to fill.

Focusing on the recipients' experiences, Oats and Mishack (2019) scrutinized the skill development program (SDP) in Botswana highlighting both the advantages and disadvantages. As per the research, the project beneficiaries were able to construct high-quality products out of their enhanced knowledge, skills, and competencies that were provided through the training. One of the hurdles, however, was that some beneficiaries could not sell their products and that this affected the utilization of the skills they had acquired. While the impact of the training in terms of developing recipients is acknowledged here, the need for a financial support system to keep such initiatives alive is also pointed out at the same time. The research provides valuable knowledge about the role of skill training in driving project outcomes, but it does not directly assess the impact of such skills on the sustainability of the development projects. The study as designed, therefore, aims to fill the gap by exploring the effect of beneficiaries' skill training on the sustainability of development projects in Marsabit County, Kenya, with an emphasis on how such training influences long-term project success and resilience in resource-deprived environments.

Kadunguri and Njenga (2023) through the application of both descriptive and inferential statistics investigated the relationship between empowerment of beneficiaries and sustainability of NGO initiatives in Rwanda. The study found out that partnerships, material resources, and capacity building were critical in enhancing the sustainability of the project. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed, in particular, a strong positive and significant correlation between the sustainability of the projects and the capacity building. This implies that training and development of skills are the factors that empower the beneficiaries to be more active in the long-term success of the project. The study put the emphasis on the beneficiary empowerment but did not investigate the impact of other forms of empowerment like involvement in decision-making or feedback mechanisms on sustainability. The current research focusing on Marsabit County, Kenya, and demonstrating how the empowerment of beneficiaries through decision-making and training affects the sustainability of development projects in resource-poor settings, aims to fill this vacuum in knowledge and present a clearer picture of the factors that lead to the long-lasting success of a project.

Theoretical Review

Participatory Ownership Theory

The hypothesis was inspired by Arnstein's (1969) work. The Participatory Ownership Theory posits that the level of participation of the beneficiaries throughout the whole process - from design to implementation, monitoring and finally, evaluation - closely determines the project's effectiveness and sustainability. The theory argues that if project beneficiaries are involved within the whole process, they will feel as if the project is theirs. This leads to the development of strong feelings of accountability and devotion to the project's results. Furthermore, the disengagement that might lead to project failure or premature termination is avoided through engagement because the program is then made contextually appropriate, culturally relevant, and in line with local goals. Also, the concept claims that involvement promotes trust and transparency which are the elements that decide a project's survival in the long run.

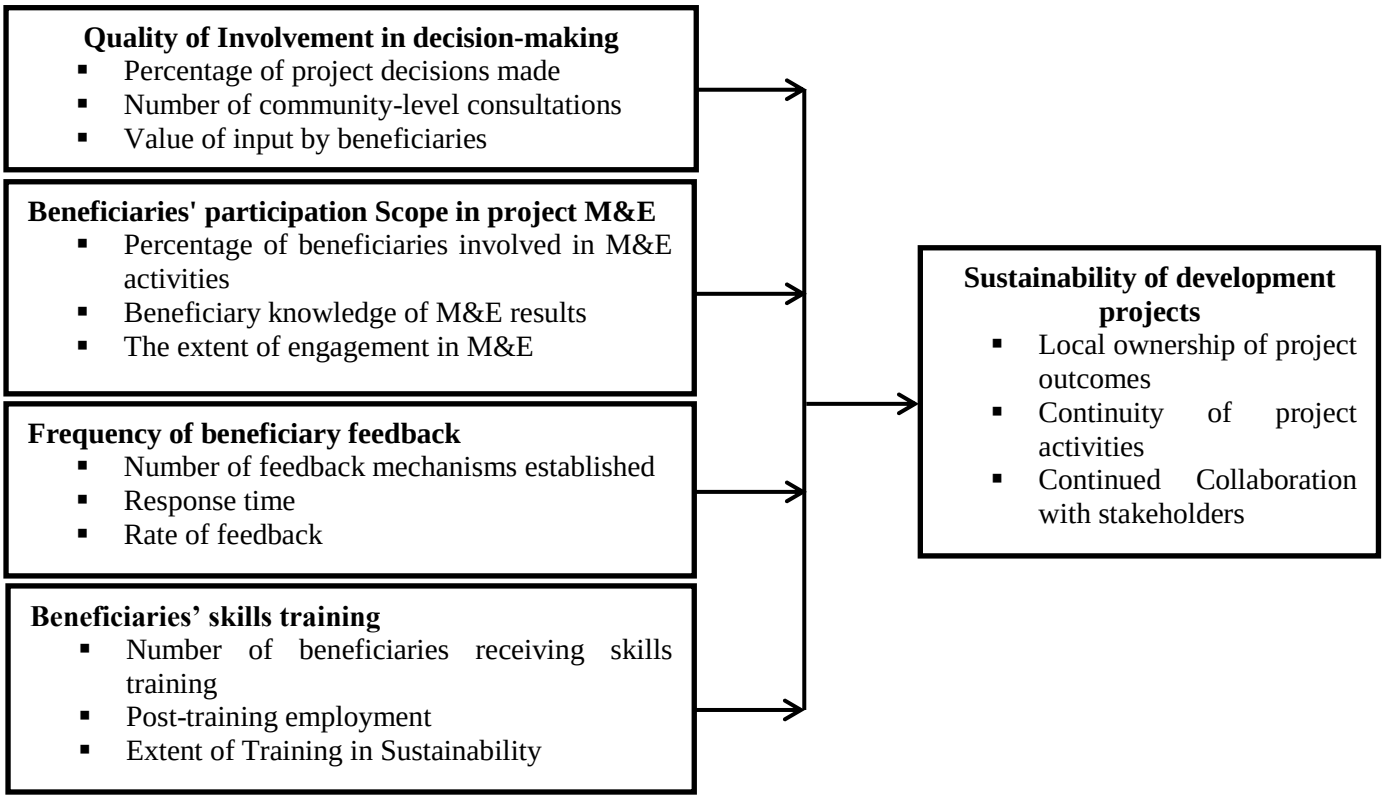
Mosley (1988) through his support of participatory rural evaluation, which illustrates how significant local engagement intertwines project objectives with community needs, thus, creating ownership and sustainability, strengthens the argument. He argues that the projects without community participation tend to fail due to the mismatch with local priorities. On the other hand, Cleaver (2001) questions this optimistic view, asserting that community participation does not necessarily mean ownership if community power relations are not settled. She warns that even in participatory processes, marginalized groups may still be excluded and, therefore, the inclusiveness of development interventions would be undermined. Supporting the tenets of this theory, Oakley and Marsden (1984) speak about participatory development leading to self-reliance by bettering the community's skills for both maintaining and changing the initiatives. However, they give a very important point that when the communities are loaded with work but not given aid from outside organizations, then the sustainability will be affected negatively.

Resource Mobilization and Adaptation Theory

The theory was introduced by Ostrom (1990). It states that the presence of the community's ability to call up its natural, human, and financial resources as well as to adapt outside inputs to local conditions is the main factor deciding the sustainability of development programs. The theory is that projects are successful when these users are empowered to manage resources, to keep infrastructure intact and to modify the project with respect to local socioeconomic and environmental conditions. It emphasizes the necessity for the training of local staff and the encouragement of inventiveness, especially in resource-scarce places like Marsabit County. The proposition is that the development programs get more powerful and sustainable by being tailored to the local needs over time.

Ostrom's (1990) backing for the main point of the theory comes from her study of non-excludable resource control. She points out that local communities are often able to develop sustainable management systems if they have the resources and the right to do so. The emphasis on resource mobilization and adaptation as the main factors for sustainability is in line with Ostrom's community action theories. In rural and neglected areas in particular, the development of local capacity and tapping the local resources increase the longevity of development programs according to Bebbington (1999) who expands on this. He, however, warns that external interventions must not impose incompatible methods or technologies which will burden the local systems. Cleaver (2012) by highlighting that often sociopolitical systems and cultural factors make hard the management of resources and adaptation of projects brings out the difficulty of the simplistic idea that communities will easily adjust external inputs.

Conceptual Framework



Independent Variables **Dependent Variable**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2025)

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive design. The study was directed at the beneficiaries of development projects in Marsabit County, particularly those who were part of community-driven projects with the help of NGOs, government organizations, and other stakeholders. The study population consisted of project managers (150), local community members (3,000), community leaders (75), and those representing NGOs. Because of the vast number of development projects in the Marsabit County area and its wide geographical expanse, stratified random selection was used to select study participants. A sample size of 356 beneficiaries was selected from the stratified groups using simple random sampling. The collection of data was done through both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to ensure a full understanding of the research variables. To assess the legitimacy and dependability of the tools for collecting data, a pilot study was conducted. The execution of quantitative data analysis was done using SPSS software; specifically, the analyzing of descriptive statistics involved the mean and standard deviation.

FINDINGS

Response Rate

The results showed that from the target sample of 356 respondents, 303 respondents returned the completed questionnaires, resulting in a total response rate of 85.1%. A response rate of more than 70% is usually considered to be excellent for surveys, which means that the data set is very strong and representative for analysis. The response rates for Community Members (84.9%), Project Managers (88.2%), and Community Leaders (87.5%) were all very high, thus conferring strength to the conclusions. As indicated by Mugenda Mugenda (2019), a 55% response rate is enough for study representation. Therefore, the current rate of 85.1%

is adequate and mounting for this study's sample representation. Such a high response rate, on the other hand, reduces the risk of non-response bias and indicates that the sample is a true reflection of the population of beneficiaries and stakeholders in Marsabit County, thereby increasing the external validity of the study's findings.

Beneficiary Involvement in Decision-Making

This section analyzes the descriptive statistics regarding the quality of beneficiary involvement in decision-making, addressing the first objective of the study.

Table 1: Beneficiary Involvement in Decision-Making

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
I have been involved in making decisions about the development project in my community.	3.91	0.92
The decision-making process in the development project is inclusive of all beneficiaries.	3.74	0.97
My opinions are considered when planning the development project.	3.66	1.03
Beneficiaries' involvement in decision-making has improved the sustainability of the project.	4.02	0.84
Decision-makers actively seek feedback from beneficiaries before making major project decisions.	3.70	0.95
The project managers value the input of beneficiaries when making decisions.	3.89	0.90
There is a clear process for beneficiaries to voice their opinions during project planning.	3.73	1.02
Beneficiary participation in decision-making leads to better project outcomes and sustainability.	4.06	0.87

Source: Research Data (2025)

According to the information presented in Table 1, the Overall Mean score for beneficiary involvement in decision-making is 3.84, which is relatively high and indicates a very good level of agreement about the effectiveness and presence of this type of participation. The most agreed-upon statement was "Beneficiary participation in decision-making leads to better project outcomes and sustainability" (M = 4.06, 83.4% True), which not only supports the perceived benefit with a high level of agreement (SD = 0.87) but also reinforces the argument about the participation being beneficial. Another related opinion was that sustainability is enhanced through involvement (M = 4.02), which also had the lowest standard deviation (SD = 0.84), meaning this was the most widely accepted view of the outcome being positive through participation. On the other hand, the response to the question "My opinions are considered when planning the development project" resulted in the lowest mean score (M = 3.66, 70.3% True) and the highest standard deviation (SD = 1.03), thus indicating the least agreement and the largest difference in people's views; this is an important result since it points out that even if participation is high (I have been involved, M=3.91), the quality of consultation or its fairness is varying, and a sizable minority is feeling that their particular opinions are overlooked. Another case of this variability can be found in the differing views of a clear process for voicing opinions (M = 3.73, SD = 1.02) where the process is considered inclusive (M = 3.74, SD = 0.97), both categories with above-average variability.

The results are in line with the theoretical assumption that true stakeholder involvement in decision-making not only grants them but also the project a stronghold in the project life cycle, which is the sustainability of the project. The findings are in line with those of Kyomukama & Mulyungi (2018); who found that participation in decision-making positively affects project sustainability especially when it goes beyond just consultation to a total co-creation of project strategies but at the same time cautioned that the power dynamics which unarguably limit the effective involvement level could explain the lower score on opinions being actively considered. The overall positive mean score indicates that there is a significant level of effective involvement in decision-making which is, in turn, sustaining the project in Marsabit County.

Beneficiaries' Participation in Monitoring and Evaluation

This second objective addresses the second objective by analyzing the extent of beneficiary participation scope in project monitoring and evaluation (M&E.

Table 2: Participation in Monitoring and Evaluation

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
I have been actively involved in monitoring the progress of the development project.	3.87	0.94
The project provides beneficiaries with regular updates on the project's progress.	3.79	0.89
Beneficiaries are involved in evaluating the project's performance.	3.82	0.97
My feedback during monitoring and evaluation has been considered to improve the project.	3.70	1.03
Beneficiaries contribute to identifying challenges during the monitoring process.	3.93	0.85
Regular evaluations involving beneficiaries lead to better project outcomes.	4.01	0.83
The project's monitoring and evaluation system is transparent and accessible to beneficiaries.	3.65	1.00
Effective monitoring and evaluation increase the sustainability of the project.	4.04	0.80

Source: Research Data (2025)

As indicated in Table 2, M&E participation has received a high Total Mean score of 3.85, thereby affirming significant engagement of stakeholders. The highest agreement (M = 4.04, 83.9% Yes) was reached on the statement, "Effective monitoring and evaluation increase the sustainability of the project," and it displayed the highest consensus (SD = 0.80) which represents a strong, uniform perception of M&E as a vital factor in the project's survival over the long term. The beneficiaries mentioned their active participation in the monitoring of progress (M = 3.87) and their involvement in pinpointing the problems (M = 3.93, SD = 0.85), especially. Nonetheless, very different views issue out from an analysis of the actual mechanism of M&E: the lowest mean score (M = 3.65) was obtained from the statement that "The monitoring and evaluation system of the project is transparent and open to beneficiaries" (SD = 1.00), which points out a perception of the formal institutional processes being very uneasy to follow. Even more, the highest standard deviation (SD = 1.03) was recorded in relation to the extent to which "My feedback during monitoring and evaluation has been considered to improve the project" (M = 3.70, 70.6% Yes), highlighting the lowest agreement among the variable; this implies that there is a large discrepancy in the perceived effectiveness of the feedback loop, where some people think their contributions are appreciated while others think they are disregarded.

The findings support Mugisha and Ssebuliba (2020) who have concluded that M&E participation influences sustainability as it helps to keep the project pertinent and allows for adjustments to be made quickly, yet at the same time, they highlighted the inadequate openness and problem in getting formal M&E frameworks which could be one of the obstacles that prevent the incorporation of grassroots input into the system changes. The information supports the view of the beneficiaries that M&E is indispensable for the project to last and that they are ready to take part, but it also indicates that there are systemic restrictions that prevent their full incorporation into open M&E structures.

Frequency of Beneficiary Feedback

This section analyzes the frequency of beneficiary feedback mechanisms and their perceived impact on project outcomes addressing the third objective.

Table 3: Frequency of Feedback

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
Beneficiaries are regularly asked for feedback on the development project.	3.78	0.99
I provide feedback to the project managers on a frequent basis.	3.73	0.96
Feedback from beneficiaries is collected in a timely manner throughout the project.	3.82	0.88
The project implements changes based on beneficiary feedback.	3.96	0.83
The frequency of feedback collection improves the project's outcomes.	4.03	0.79
There are mechanisms in place to ensure continuous feedback from beneficiaries.	3.84	0.92
Frequent beneficiary feedback enhances the sustainability of the project.	4.06	0.81
I feel that my regular feedback contributes to improving the development project.	3.99	0.84

Source: Research Data (2025)

According to Table 3, the frequency of feedback received the highest Overall Mean score of 3.89 among all participation variables. In addition, the statement "Frequent beneficiary feedback enhances the sustainability of the project" received the strongest consensus (M = 4.06, 84.5% Yes), thus indicating a direct association with the high consensus (SD = 0.81). The highest consensus (SD = 0.79) was reached for the conviction that "The frequency of feedback collection improves the project's outcomes" (M = 4.03). The agreement among the project staff and other stakeholders regarding the effectiveness of feedback is shown by a high mean for implementing changes based on feedback (M = 3.96) accompanied by a low standard deviation (SD = 0.83). The perception of continuous feedback mechanisms is also strong (M = 3.84, SD = 0.92). On the other hand, the lowest consensus (SD = 0.99) was found for the statement "Beneficiaries are regularly asked for feedback on the development project" (M = 3.78), which implies a broad range of different opinions about how often project managers crop up for beneficiaries' input. The same is true for personal feedback provision, which is rated only slightly lower (M = 3.73, SD = 0.96). In general, the high means and low standard deviations for the impact statements imply that there has been consistency in the use of feedback once it has been received.

The conclusions are consistent with the claims made by Ochieng and Obura (2019), who found that continuous feedback serves as a warning signal, thus facilitating management changes, and at the same time, it considerably increases the likelihood of the project's long-term success. The close relationship between feedback frequency and perceived sustainability indicates that the project beneficiaries consider a flexible and responsive project as one that has a higher chance of surviving.

Beneficiaries' Skills Training

This section analyzes the role and perceived impact of beneficiaries' skills training on project sustainability, addressing the final objective.

Table 4: Skills Training

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
I have received training related to the development project.	3.91	0.87
The training provided has helped me improve my skills for better project participation.	4.05	0.78
The skills training I received is relevant to the needs of the project.	3.92	0.82
Skills training is provided regularly to beneficiaries.	3.68	0.98
The training has improved my ability to sustain the benefits of the project.	4.10	0.75
Beneficiaries who receive skills training are more likely to contribute to the project's sustainability.	4.08	0.80
The project provides adequate resources for ongoing skills development.	3.77	0.91
Skills training plays a crucial role in the long-term success of the project.	4.15	0.74

Source: Research Data (2025)

In Table 4 it is seen that skills training got the highest Overall Mean score of 3.96 among all participation variables. "Skills training plays a crucial factor in the long-term success of the project" was the statement with

the strongest level of agreement (M = 4.15, 87.5% Yes) and overall consensus (lowest variability, SD = 0.74), confirming to us the extreme importance and uniform belief in this factor. The high consensus (SD = 0.75) was maintained for the statement that the training improved the ability to sustain benefits (M = 4.10), highlighting the perceived functional value of capacity building. Besides that, 84.3% of the respondents agreed that the training improved their skills for participation (M = 4.05, SD = 0.78), and 80.5% agreed that the training had been relevant (M = 3.92, SD = 0.82). The statement, "Skills training is provided regularly to beneficiaries," (M = 3.68, 72.4% Yes) was linked with the highest variability (SD = 0.98) which indicates that the training is highly valued but its consistent and recurring delivery is perceived less uniformly. The same can be said about the adequacy of resources for ongoing development as it shows a lower mean (M = 3.77) and higher variability (SD = 0.91).

The results concur with the existing literature, for instance, Adan and Kimani (2021), who claimed that skills training is likely the most significant factor for promoting self-reliance and project sustainability, particularly in tech or capacity-heavy projects. The information collected indicates that training promotes the beneficiaries to take on technical and managerial roles hence separating the success of the project from the support of outside parties. The very high positive means for all the indicators concerning skills training confirm its gigantic role in making the project last in Marsabit County.

Sustainability of Development Projects

This section analyzes the community's perception of the sustainability of the development projects in Marsabit County.

Table 5: Sustainability of Development Projects

Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.
The project continues to operate effectively after donor withdrawal.	3.87	0.88
The community has taken ownership of the project activities.	3.91	0.84
The project has established mechanisms for long-term funding.	3.74	0.96
Beneficiaries maintain the infrastructure provided by the project.	3.95	0.81
There is ongoing community participation after project completion.	4.00	0.79
The project outcomes have been integrated into local systems.	3.88	0.85
Skills and knowledge acquired are being applied in daily activities.	4.07	0.76
The project has positively influenced long-term community development.	4.12	0.73

Source: Research Data (2025)

Table 5 illustrates project sustainability's remarkable Overall Mean score of 3.94, which, overall, signifies good perception of projects' durability. The strongest consensus (M = 4.12, 87.2% Yes) and the highest agreement (SD = 0.73, the lowest variability) was for the claim, "The project has positively influenced long-term community development," and this strongly, consistently claimed the high-level impact of the project lasting for a long time. Technical and social sustainability has also been inferred in high skills and knowledge application (M = 4.07, SD = 0.76) and in ongoing community participation (M = 4.00, SD = 0.79), as indicated by high means and high confidence. Maintenance of infrastructure is also viewed positively (M = 3.95, SD = 0.81). On the contrary, the lowest mean score (M = 3.74, 73.3% Yes) and the highest standard deviation (SD = 0.96) were tied to the statement about the establishment of "mechanisms for long-term funding," which pointed out considerable variability and less consensus about the very essential aspect of financial sustainability.

This observation is in line with widespread opinions in development studies, for instance, the authorship of Wanyama and Oino (2020), who habitually point out that social and technical sustainability, though benefiting from the involvement of recipients, are still considered issues in the financial dimension and thus prone to community projects after the external funding has ended. The information corroborates a fair and lasting

impact of the projects, the main factors being community involvement and skill preservation, but it also brings to attention the necessity of a stronger emphasis on financial models.

Inferential Statistics

This section presents the results of the inferential statistical analysis, including Pearson's correlation and Logistic Regression, to determine the significance and predictive power of the independent variables on project sustainability.

Correlation Matrix

Table 6: Correlation Matrix

Variables	Project Sustainability	Decision-Making Involvement	M&E Participation	Feedback Frequency	Skills Training
Project Sustainability	1				
Decision-Making Involvement	**0.518****	1			
M&E Participation	**0.471****	0.426**	1		
Feedback Frequency	**0.452****	0.38**	0.401**	1	
Skills Training	**0.563****	0.435**	0.419**	0.473**	1

*Note: $p < 0.05$^, p < 0.01***

Source: Research Data (2025)

The Pearson correlation matrix is disclosed in Table 6, revealing the relationship between the four independent variables and the dependent variable, project sustainability. All the independents' variables possess a statistically significant positive correlation with project sustainability at the $p < 0.01$ level, showing that the more the participants are involved in these areas the more the project sustainable development will be. Skills training showed the highest correlation ($r = 0.563$), indicating it is the participation factor that is most closely related to project longevity. The next is Decision-Making Involvement ($r = 0.518$), M&E Participation ($r = 0.471$), and Feedback Frequency ($r = 0.452$). The strong, positive correlations have strongly supported the theoretical framework of the study, which asserts that beneficiary participation is a prominent factor determining project sustainability. The results are in line with the thorough literature review by Kamau and Mutinda (2017), which came to the conclusion that capacity building (skills training) and ownership (decision-making) are the foundations of sustainable development interventions; thus, the relationships observed in the data were reinforced. Besides, the moderate-to-strong positive correlations among all independent variables ($r = 0.435$ between Skills Training and Decision-Making Involvement) imply that these participation elements are often put into practice as a coherent, mutually reinforcing strategy within the projects, thereby further strengthening their overall impact on sustainability.

Table 7: Model Summary

Step	-2 Log Likelihood	Cox & Snell R^2	Nagelkerke R^2
1	264.82	0.411	0.548

Source: Research Data (2025)

In Table 7, the Model Summary for the logistic regression shows how much the model can explain. The Nagelkerke R2 value is 0.548, which means that the four independent variables (Decision-Making Involvement, M&E Participation, Feedback Frequency, and Skills Training) together account for about 54.8% of the variability in project sustainability. This is a considerable and significant portion, indicating that the chosen dimensions of beneficiary participation are very good predictors of the development projects' sustainability in Marsabit County. The results are in line with several quantitative studies on project success

determinants in developing countries, for instance, the one by Odhiambo and Waithaka (2022), which also noted a high collective explanatory power of participation variables, thus confirming the strong connection between active community engagement and project durability.

Table 8: ANOVA (Model Significance)

Model	Chi-square	Df	Sig.
Step 1	119.362	4	0.000

Source: Research Data (2025)

Table 8, the Logistic Regression ANOVA (Model Significance), gives the overall model fit a test. The model is statistically significant; the Chi-square value of 119.362 with 4 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$) indicate this. This p-value is so significant that it confirms the independent variables, as a group, predict project sustainability reliably, and the null hypothesis of no relationship is thereby rejected. It is still necessary and useful to discuss individually the coefficients and this statistical validation goes in favor of the general hypothesis that wide beneficiary participation has a great impact on a project's long-term success.

Table 9: Coefficients

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for Exp(B)
Constant	-2.715	0.781	12.083	1	0.001	0.066	—
Decision-Making Involvement	0.693	0.229	9.172	1	0.002	2.000	1.296–3.088
M&E Participation	0.542	0.214	6.397	1	0.011	1.720	1.136–2.604
Feedback Frequency	0.486	0.198	6.008	1	0.014	1.626	1.108–2.383
Skills Training	0.875	0.242	13.088	1	0.000	2.398	1.497–3.842

Source: Research Data (2025)

The coefficients of the logistic regression model, which delineate the individual contribution of each participation variable to project sustainability, have been presented in Table 9. Most importantly, all four 000

hence confirming that the quality of beneficiary participation in decision-making, M&E, and giving feedback together with the skills training are all important factors. The coefficient for Skills Training has the largest positive impact at 0.875, which corresponds to an Odds Ratio (B) of 2.398. This means that, if all other factors remain unchanged, a one-unit upswing in skills training causes the project to be almost 2.4 times more likely to be sustainable, and this makes it the least impactful factor. This observation correlates with the correlation results and further underlines the necessity of capacity building for the long-term success of projects, which is also in line with the idea of developing competent and independent beneficiaries as articulated by academic authorities such as Chigudu (2018).

Involvement in Decision-Making also reveals a very strong positive effect, with a β of 0.693 and an (B) of 2.000, thus a unit increase in decision-making involvement would double the odds of sustainability. This finding ties in with the literature on project ownership, where empowering through decision-making is regarded as a direct factor causing sustainability. M&E Participation (β = 0.542, (B) = 1.720) and Feedback Frequency β = 0.486, (B) = 1.626) also considerably contribute, with M&E participation slightly exceeding feedback frequency. The findings contradict the literature that asserts M&E participation as the primary source of sustainability but still acknowledging its pivotal place, considering it as an indispensable adaptive mechanism together with feedback. The evidence from the logistic regression rigorously supports the entire study's objectives, and it can be proclaimed that every aspect of beneficiary participation is a significant factor for the sustainability of development projects in Marsabit County, with skill training and decision-making participation being the strongest factors respectively.

The equation of the final logit modeled through the coefficients is:

P = -2.715 + 0.693X1 + 0.542X2 + 0.486X3 + 0.875X 4

Where p denotes the likelihood of project sustainability, X1 denotes decision-making participation, X2 denotes M&E participation, X3 denotes frequency of feedback, and X4 denotes skill training. This equation serves as a tool to ascertain the log odds of project sustainability as per the existing levels of beneficiary participation through the four dimensions.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that participation of the beneficiaries is an essential pre-condition for the proper functioning of development projects in Marsabit County, Kenya during the whole period of time. The model used for prediction proved that the selected participatory factors are responsible for 54.8% of the sustainability variability, while each of the four dimensions was validated as statistically significant determinants. In particular, the empowerment mechanisms of skills training and genuine participation in decision-making are the major drivers for both the technical capability and the natural ownership that come about and are necessary for the project to last. The projects that have been seen as most sustainable are the ones that have moved from being externally managed to being completely owned by the community, a process that can take a long time unless the beneficiaries are constantly trained, informed, and involved in control, monitoring, and giving feedback. The total victory, therefore, does not depend on the existence of participation alone, but also on the intensity and quality of the engagement throughout the entire project life cycle.

The findings induce a very strong recommendation for development organizations and governmental agencies to adopt a capacity-driven approach to beneficiary participation which will be a mandatory rule thus going beyond mere consultation to formal empowerment. Projects will have to direct considerable and secured resources to be used for the skills transfer and capacity building during the project operation and maintenance, as this is the most significant factor for sustainability. Moreover, project designs must establish formal, transparent mechanisms for decision-making that are inclusive of all stakeholders in an equitable manner, especially women and marginalized groups, thus making the community's sense of ownership legally and practically vested and so securing the financial and technical future of the intervention after the donors exit.

Suggestions for Further Study

- In five to ten years after the project is done, future research should follow the sustainability indicators of the project, giving final proof about the duration of participation impacts.
- The next experiment can limit itself to the financial sustainability aspect and investigate the challenges of creating self-supporting funding models

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