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Abstract

This study investigated determinants of value money in education project in Rwanda the case of Building Learning Foundations Program funded by the government of the United Kingdom through department of international development. Specifically, the research assessed influence of accountability systems on value for money, to analyze the role of financial management practices on value money as well as investigated influence of inclusivity on value for money in education project. A descriptive research design was applied with a target population of 107 Building learning foundation personnel. Simple random sampling technique to obtain a representative group of eighty-four respondents in 2023 and primary was gathered using questionnaires, validity of research instrument was supported by Mount Kenya University supervisor, and the questions' reliability was assessed by pilot testing. A mixed method was applied for analyzing obtained data and findings were drawn. The independent variables of the study, accountability systems, financial management practices, and inclusivity frameworks were the major determinants of value money for considering findings dependent variable. According to the analysis of variance ($52.000 > 8.2984$), the estimated value was greater than the critical value, presenting that accountability systems, financial management practices and inclusivity frameworks had a strong correlation on the achievement of value for money. The model's significance value was less than 0.05. The correlation study confirmed the association between research variables showing a positive relationship between value for money and financial management practices with $r = 0.709$, $P 0.01$ and $r=0.439$ and P value of 0.01 linked to accountability systems and value for money was also substantial and show a relationship between inclusivity frameworks and value for money with $r=0.196$, $p 0.01$. Findings with suggest that determinants of value money have a strong correlation with success. This research proposed that further researches should be undertaken on the assessment of effectiveness of education programs in improving educational outcomes such as student performance, enrollment rates and access to quality education. The conclusions of the research are intended to assist the projects and organizations delivering the best possible value for money.

Keywords: *Determinants of Value for Money, Education Project, Building Learning Foundations Programme, Rwanda*

1. Introduction

Education was a pertinent factor of societal development, and investment in education projects is substantial across the globe, as governments, non-profit organizations, and private entities allocate significant resources to education initiatives, it becomes crucial to assess the value for money delivered by these projects.

In the realm of education projects, a significant problem lies in the effective identification and assessment of value for money determinants. Balancing the allocation of financial resources, ensuring optimal efficiency and effectiveness in educational initiatives, and maintaining accountability for outcomes pose challenges. The lack of clear methodologies and standardized criteria for evaluating value for money in education projects hinders the ability to measure and enhance the return on investment, potentially impacting the quality and equity of education delivery.

Moreover, Mardasmo (2021), the execution of the value for money in governmental entities had profits and amelioration adequate and quality services in order to selected right purposes and may decrease the cost of public may decrease the cost public as well as saving in using of inputs and costs and may decrease the cost of public services in using of inputs and as costs distribution that was was more concerned to public interest (Bradley,2013; Waspini *et al.*, 2022)

The term value for money denotes to the option use to achieve desired educational results. However, there was a need to conduct comprehensive research to understand the determinants that influence value for money delivery in education projects in Rwanda.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 General Objectives

The research examined determinants of value for money in education projects in Rwanda a case of Building Learning Foundations program.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the researcher was guided by specific objectives as well as:

- i To examine the accountability systems on value for money achievement.
- ii To analyze the role of financial management practices on value for money achievement.
- iii To investigate the influence of inclusivity on value for money achievement.

1.3 Research Questions

- i. What are accountability systems behind value for money achievement?
- ii. To what extent do financial management practices affect value for money achievement?
- iii. To what extent does inclusivity influence value for money achievement?

2.1 Empirical Review

2.1.1 Accountability and Performance

Accountability and performance are integral components of the value for money concept in the public sector. Accountability ensures that entities are responsible for their financial and operational decisions, while performance management ensures that resources are used

effectively to achieve desired outcomes. Together these elements promote the responsible and efficient use of public resources, ultimately leading to better value for money in public spending and service delivery.

According to Merickova *et al* (2020), it was evidenced that the indicators of success in education project relied on the value for money term, the research purpose was to present possible successful constructs in public grammar schools in Slovak Republic relying on the value for money term. For the adoption of value for money they decided to use education services owing to the fact that this sector of activity and its success stand for many prevalent issues in Slovakia. The research felt the execution of a system of assessing and monitoring the level of success in the education sector may stimulate system and the research demonstrated that the execution of a system of assessing and examining the level of success or learning outcomes in education may lead to high level of responsiveness to confirm adequate use of assets and convey the provision of education services into public sector accounting, underlined by a focus to be sure that those services stand for the value for money. However, a number of concept and practical issues were linked with the selection, plan and using performance constructs in educational sector. Thus, established value for money in education were hard to make comparison between various countries. The issue was just the discrepancies in education and schooling systems in various countries in the context of types of schools, longevity of studies, forms of studying. Finally, this was changed to gathering of various types of information and the generation of measurements that several were monitored and evaluated. Therefore, when choosing measurements, every state was guided by its own educational system and of course discrepancies would be established in the way the measurements and data or evidences were obtained by the country for monitoring them.

Gabriel (2022) studied aid for education with the focus on analysis of Rwanda basic education system, the study revealed that the distribution of assets in educational sector was improved while previously assessed the rate of allocating those resources in national budget was decreased. However, one meaning given by an officer in the ministry of economic planning and finance argued that Rwanda has been changing from capital to education projects of classes to accommodate many children and ensure higher educational quality and favorable learning outcomes. The justification for quality of education was long term accumulation that would be expressed in learning outcome and capacity development in Rwanda. In this regard, the government of Rwanda had decided to develop technical and vocational training education system in order to ensure education that generate problem to the society in comparison with formal or traditional education subject and school system.

In short, accountability ensures responsible and transparent management of resources, while performance focuses on achieving the best possible outcomes from those resources. Together, they contribute to the determination of value for money in education projects, ensuring that investments lead to positive and measurable impacts on education quality and access.

2.1.2 Financial Management Practices

The financial management called organizational finance, relies on decisions associating to the way in which much and what types of assets to obtain how to increase the capital expected to purchase the assets and the way in which to run so as to optimize its value and similar principles adopt to both for profit and not for profit institutions (Brigham, 2021). In essence, effective financial management practices in education project contribute directly to the determinants of value for money by ensuring the efficient use of resources, maximizing

the impact of investments, and promoting transparency and accountability in financial operations.

Financial management is an important pillar of the overall structures which contributes to the achievement of value for money, the absence of strong financial controls and strategic planning processes can prevent the achievement of value for money, particularly when available funds are misused within the organization. Managing finances was related to adequate economic assets, such as capital money and therefore, managing finances comprises the anticipation and obtaining financial assets and assigning assets in the transaction. Likewise any other operational management in an organization whether operation did not function well, the entire firm activities would be distributed and therefore inadequate financial management stop activities of the organization and that was the reason behind each organization will have a separate department to look after the financial aspects of the organization (Bhat, 2008).

2.1.3 Inclusive education

Inclusive education is an approach to education that focuses on providing equal education changes for all learners concerning their history, capabilities or disabilities. It is based on the principle that every student, including those with disabilities, should be educated in the same formal educational system behind their classmate. Inclusive educational system embodies the values of equity, diversity, and social inclusion. When viewed within the context of the value for money concept, it emphasizes the efficient and effective use of resources to achieve the goals of inclusive education.

Emmanuel (2018) studied elements that challenge success of learners with visual damage in two chosen schools in Rwanda. It has been carried out that teachers and learners given to visual impairments are not adequate owing to sharing obtainable learning resources. The financial issues are the pertinent constraints that produced the educational materials to be inadequate in these special schools and this lack of material challenges learning outcomes with visual impairments. Data demonstrated that all pupils accepted that there are other educational materials that are not adequate and they demonstrated that whether gave they could assist their learning in this special education system and stated other learning assets are computers & screen readers and special geographical devices, recorders, Brailino, walking cane, talking globes, swell graphic machine. Thus, the study evidenced that learning outcomes of pupils with visual impairment behind by inaccessibility of essential educational equipment's. Inclusive education is associated with improved academic performance and ensuring that unique needs are addressed, the efficient use of resources to support inclusion can result in higher return on investment through improved educational outcomes.

2.2 Research Gap

Emmanuel (2012) undertaken on factors influencing attainment of value for money and concluded that it is known that large amounts of funds from taxpayers are mostly used for procurement. It is of paramount important that this function be executed in an ethical manner through the organization and procedures outlined always be made with a view to secure maximum advantage of organization and recognized that organization needs to make sure that public funds provided are used effectively and this can be done if there is proper recognition of value for money principle in procurement and workers employed have required qualifications.

According to Muduhu (2013), a researcher was undertaken to assess factors influencing the attainment of value for money and recognized that value for money to be achieved there must be a set of balance between low relative cost (economics), level of production and

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performance results. According to Chanhalima (2013) carried out a research on factors of value for money in procurement of operations of in public sector, the study conducted that procurement that designing and information communication utilization in procedure were the pertinent key factors of value for money in procurement and regardless the fact that there were different contribution of managing records in the attainment of value for ,money , outcomes of this research did not succeed to examine recording management of all procurement process was among determinants of value for money.

Even though various studies have identified the importance of achieving value for money in projects, less has been done in Rwanda education sector specifically on determinants of value for money. No study has been conducted focusing on accountability systems, financial management practices, robust monitoring, and evaluation systems as value for money determinants in education sector focusing on donor funded project. The study gap was completed.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

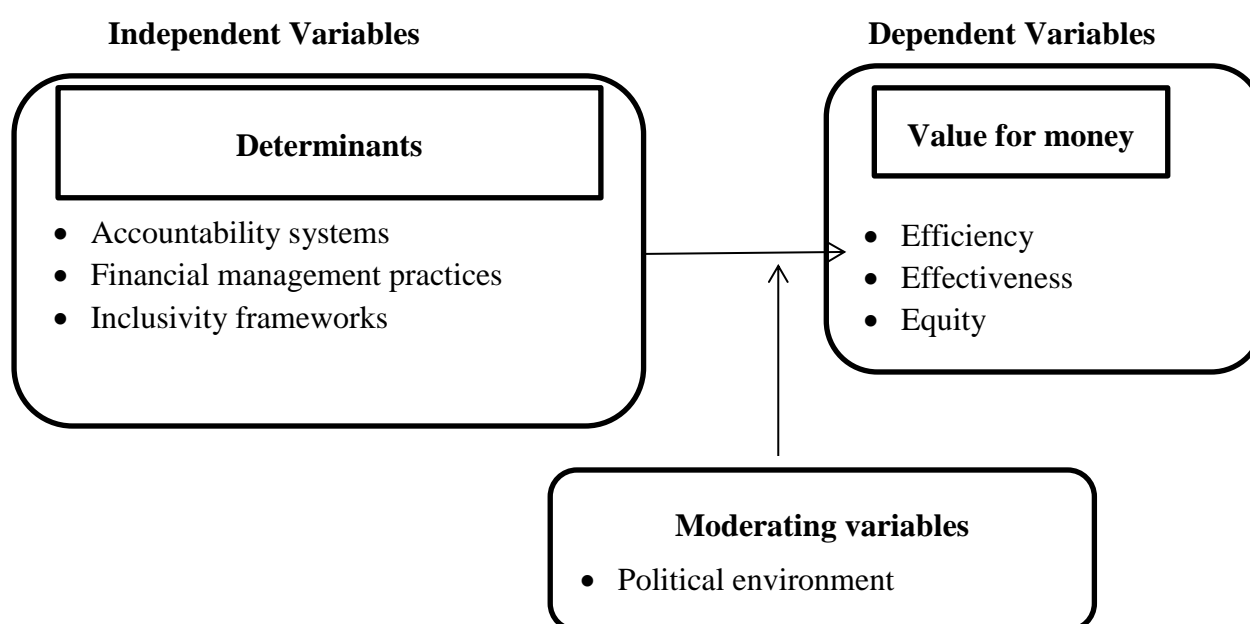


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2023)

Accountability systems are crucial in public sectors and organizations to efficiently allocate and utilize resources. They define roles, enforce responsibility, and encourage careful planning and monitoring, ensuring compliance, reducing waste, and seeking continuous improvements. Financial management practices are integral, aligning with effectiveness and value for money. Transparent, efficient, and regulation-compliant resource allocation and reporting enhance overall effectiveness and build stakeholder trust. Inclusivity frameworks, linked to equity as a value-for-money indicator, prioritize fair access, opportunities, and outcomes for all stakeholders. They advocate for equitable resource distribution, ensuring a fair share for everyone, a key element of value for money. These frameworks emphasize diversity and inclusion for better decision-making and effective resource allocation, addressing various stakeholders' needs and interests to achieve equity.

3. Materials and Methods

The research employed a descriptive study design to explore and describe factors related to Value for Money (VFM) in an education project, allowing for a comprehensive examination of the topic (Siedlecki, 2020). Descriptive studies provide a detailed description, observation, and validation of gathered data, aiding in assessing associations among research constructs. This approach proved suitable, offering an in-depth understanding and clarification of the subject through diverse data sources aligned with the research objectives.

The target population consisted of employees of the Building Learning Foundations program, including five program managers, five finance staff, five monitoring, evaluation, and learning staff, and ninety-two administrative and program support staff (Creswell, 2012). The sample size of 84 respondents was determined using Sloven's formula, ensuring a 5% margin error with a 95% confidence level (Kothari, 2004).

The sampling technique employed was random selection, ensuring an impartial and representative group from the target population (Singh & Masuku, 2014). The data collection utilized self-administered questionnaires and face-to-face interviews to obtain accurate and corroborative information. The questionnaire, distributed in person, consisted of closed-ended questions to prevent bias, and respondents were given ample time to provide responses.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the data collection instruments, a pre-test was conducted, identifying possible errors and ensuring the instrument's consistency and appropriateness. The collected data were processed, categorized, edited, coded, and recorded using statistical software and Microsoft Excel. The results were presented through tables, figures, and percentage distributions, with narrative methods employed for analyzing interview responses (Sarandakos, 2018).

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the research process. Authorization letters from Mount Kenya University authorities and BLF management were obtained, and respondents had the autonomy to choose participation. The study ensured data privacy, confidentiality, and the use of gathered information solely for academic purposes, adhering to research ethics.

4.1 Presentation of findings

4.1.1 Influence of accountability systems on value for money achievement

The researcher examined the influence of accountability systems on value for money achievement.

Table 4.1: Accountability systems

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
Accountability systems are well established in the project.	-	16	27	28	13	3.21	1.054
Roles and responsibilities are clear within the project with respect to accountability.	1	9	19	19	36	3.95	1.097
Accountability mechanisms are effectively communicated to all employees of the project.	-	15	12	28	29	3.85	1.092
The level of transparency is well perceived in the organization.	20	42	-	10	12	2.43	1.356
The project has regular performance evaluations to monitor and measure accountability.	8	26	26	22	2	2.81	1.012
The project created significant value for the resource invested.	-	15	21	25	23	3.67	1.068
The project was completed within the scheduled timeframe.	3	28	4	30	19	3.40	1.262

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Results presented in Table 4.1 shows roles and responsibilities are clear within the project with respect to accountability (mean=3.95, SD=1.097), accountability mechanisms are effectively communicated to all employees of the project (mean=3.85, SD=1.092), the project created significant value for the resource invested (mean=3.67, SD=1.068), and accountability systems are well established in the project as evidence by mean of 3.21 and SD of 1.054, according to table 4.2 the project implementation were completed within the scheduled timeframe (mean=3.40, SD= 1.262). The participants in the study showed that the level of transparency is not perceived well in the project (mean=2.43, SD=1.356), and it was unclear whether the project has regular performance evaluations to monitor and measure accountability (mean=2.81, SD=1.012).

There were two participants in the study sample who responded to the interview guide questions, and the findings are summarized here: Determining value for money involves assessing whether a project has efficiently utilized its resources to achieve its intended objectives, several key determinants influence the evaluation of value for money; transparency and accountability this includes accurate reporting, effective monitoring, and responsible use of funds, long-term sustainability ensuring the continued benefits and impact of the efforts contribute to better value for money. The findings showed that the accountability systems in Building Learning Foundations ensure transparency, responsibility

as well as adequate utilization of asset thus influencing achievement of educational outcomes as well as value for money.

4.1.2 The role of financial management practices on Value for Money for Value Achievement

The contribution of financial management practices in value for money was to subject of this section.

Table 4.2: Financial Management Practices

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std.Deviation
Project demonstrates strong governance procedures.	2	26	-	30	26	3.62	1.279
The project has financial planning and budget settings.	3	28	4	30	19	3.40	1.262
The project monitors actual expenditure against budget.	-	22	2	40	20	3.69	1.108
The project has a strong internal control system, internal audit, and quality assurance.	-	33	22	14	15	3.13	1.128
Resources are allocated to the project to make the most impact	25	32	23	4	-	2.07	.875
All spending decisions are guided by Value for money principle.	1	15	20	25	23	3.67	1.068
The project ensures robust monitoring, reporting and accountability of expenditure.	2	4	15	26	37	4.17	.889

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Results indicated that project demonstrates strong governance procedures as evidence by a mean of 3.62 and SD of 1.279, the project has financial planning and budget settings (mean=3.40, SD=1.262) and the respondents agreed that the project monitors actual expenditure against budget by a mean of 3.69 and SD of 1.108. However, it was unclear whether the project has a strong internal control system, internal audit, and quality assurance (mean=3.13, SD=1.128), according to the findings the respondents were not quite confident with the fact that resources are allocated to the project to make the most impact by the mean response of 2.07, SD of .875. Respondents show a strong agreement that all spending decisions are guided by value for money principle which is in line with the donor requirements (mean=3.67, SD=1.068) and finally the respondents strongly agree that the

project ensure robust monitoring, reporting and accountability of expenditure (mean=4.17, SD=.889)

The interview guide response showed that financial management practices are integral to determination of value for money in program. Effective financial management that accepts were assets were adequate and monitoring and financial risks are managed. It also contributes to transparency, accountability, and sustainability, all of which are essential for assessing whether building learning foundations is delivering the intended outcomes in a cost-effective manner.

4.1.3 Influence of Inclusivity on Value for Money Achievement

The researcher investigated influence of inclusivity on value for Money achievement in the Building Learning foundations program. Findings were demonstrated in Table 4.4

Table 4.3: Inclusivity Frameworks,

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
The project provides specialized support and resources for students with disabilities.	4	14	15	38	13	3.22	1.055
The project ensures that all students with diverse cultural backgrounds or varied learning styles actively participate in the learning process.	3	7	19	36	19	3.95	1.097
The project provides learning materials in Multiple formats, like text, audio and to accommodate various learning styles and preferences.	-	12	15	32	25	3.84	1.091
The project has a clear mechanism for collecting data that assess the impact of inclusivity initiatives.	10	22	17	20	15	2.53	1.365
The inclusivity initiatives have helped identify the areas where resource allocation and processes can be optimized to improve value for money.	-	16	26	30	12	2.71	1.022
The project encourages collaboration and group work to promote peer support and shared learning experiences, fostering a sense of community.	3	12	11	35	23	3.68	1.069

Inclusivity initiatives create an environment where diversity is celebrated, and all students can thrive academically and socially. - 15 12 28 29 3.85 1.092

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Findings demonstrated that building learning foundations provide specialized support and resources for students with disabilities, this was done through its inclusive education component (mean=3.22, SD=1.055), The respondents also agreed that the project ensures that all students with diverse cultural backgrounds or varied learning styles actively participate in the learning process (mean=3.95, SD=1.097), and Building Learning foundations provides learning materials in multiple formats like text, audio and accommodating various learning styles as well as preferences (mean=3.84 SD=1.091) according to Table 4.3.

The findings shows that it was unclear with respondents’ disagreement regarding the clear mechanism for collecting data that assess the impact of inclusivity initiatives within the project and it was unclear whether the inclusivity initiatives have helped identify the areas where resource allocation and processes can be optimized to improve value for money as evidence respectively by mean of 2.53, SD of 1.365 and mean of 2.71, SD of 1.022.

The respondents agreed that the project encourages collaboration and group work to promote peer support and shared learning experiences, fostering a sense of community (mean=3.68, SD=1.069), and strongly agreed that inclusivity initiatives create an environment where diversity is celebrated, and all students can thrive academically and socially (mean=3.85, SD=1.092).

The findings from interview guide indicate that Building Learning foundations has mechanisms in place for collecting data that assess the impact of inclusivity initiatives, collecting data on inclusivity impact is essential for assessing and improving the project effectiveness in promoting diversity, equity and inclusion, therefore, the project conducted interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders to gather qualitative data, and these conversations provided deeper insights into inclusivity challenges and opportunities.

4.2 Regression Analysis

The regression analysis was utilized in this research by assessing the influence of accountability systems, financial management practices and inclusivity frameworks on value for money. The measures of regressions were recorded using a statistical product & services solutions (SPSS) Version 21.

The correlation coefficient value is the percent of variation in the dependent value for money indicators that can be justified for all independent variables, or the level to which changes in the dependent variable can be supported by changes in the independent variables (Accountability systems, financial management practices and inclusivity frameworks

Table 4.4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjust R Square	Std.Error of the Estimate
	.779	.608	.566	.434

a. Predictors: (Constant), Accountability systems, financial management practices, Inclusivity frameworks

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Findings indicated that at the 95% confidence range, the value of adjusted r square was 0.566, showing that there was a variance of 56.6% in value for money indicators. The R was association coefficient indicates the association between the research variables and described from information presented in Table 4.4 that there was a positive association between the research from Table 4.5 that was strong positive between the research variables as demonstrated by the value of 0.779.

Analysis of Variance

SPSS generated the ANOVA Tests to assess the level of association between the variables under study and the extent to which the predictor factors explained the variance independent variable.

Table 4.5: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Square	df	Mean of Square	F	Sig
Regression	105.653	4	26.41325	52.000	.003 ^b
Residual	24.86	48	0.5179		
Total	27.835	52			

a. Dependent Variable: Value for money indicators

b. Predictors: (Constant), Accountability systems, financial management practices and inclusivity frameworks

Critical value = 8.2984

Source; Primary Data (2023)

Information presented demonstrated that the linear regression had a significance level of 0.3%, implying that information was perfect for giving a concluding remarks to the constructs of the population as the p-value was <0.05. The computed number (52.000 > 8.2984) was greater than the critical value, presenting that accountability systems, financial management practices and inclusivity frameworks have a significant influence on the achievement of value for money since level of significance was < 0.05.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The correlational analysis was adopted to measure the amount and orientation of correlations between the dependent and independent variables. The correlation might be anything between -1 and one.

Table: 4.6: Correlation Analysis

	Value for money indicators	Accountability systems	Financial management practices	Inclusivity Frameworks
Value for money indicators	Pearson Correlation 1			
	Sig.(2-tailed)			
Accountability systems	Pearson Correlation .439**	.324**	1	
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000		
Financial management practices	Pearson Correlation .709	.545**	.445**	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	
Inclusivity Frameworks	Pearson Correlation .196**	1		
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000

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

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Statistical method used to investigate the four variables: Value for money (Indicators), Accountability systems, financial management practices and Inclusivity frameworks were correlation coefficients. Table 4.6 shows that the greatest important connection was found between the financial management practices and value for money ($r = 0.709$, $P 0.01$). The $r = 0.439$ and P value of 0.01 link among accountability systems and value for money was also substantial. Inclusivity frameworks and value for money had relationship ($r = 0.196$, $P 0.01$).

5.1 Conclusion

The researcher determined determinants of value for money in education project in Rwanda in order to attain the three research questions are formulated and what are the accountability systems behind value for money achievement, secondly to what extent do financial management practices value for money performance and the last, to what extent does inclusivity influence value for money achievement.

Relying on these questions, findings that accountability systems form the foundation for achieving value for money by ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently, risks are managed, and project activities align with established goals and budgets. The systems promote transparency, data-driven decision-making, and the responsible use of resources to maximize value and outcomes. The results also revealed that financial management practices significantly affect value for money achievement by influencing resource allocation, cost control, risk mitigation, therefore the project is more likely to achieve its objectives efficiently, maximizing the value derived from the available resources. And lastly inclusivity significantly influence value for money in an education project by improving learning outcomes, reducing dropouts, enhancing teacher effectiveness, fostering innovation, supporting the emotional well-being of students, promoting efficient resource allocation, engaging stakeholders, addressing inequalities, and fulfilling legal and ethical standards. With inclusivity as a priority the project achieved value for money by maximizing the benefits derived from educational investments.

5.3 Recommendations

In light of the research findings, recommendations are made for each study objective. To enhance the influence of accountability systems on value for money achievement, the project should conduct stakeholder engagement analysis, gathering feedback from various

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stakeholders. Financial management practices can be improved by ensuring efficient resource use, conducting financial audits, and examining internal controls. For inclusivity, a comprehensive needs assessment is advised, involving the community in decision-making. Further research is suggested in related areas, focusing on specific aspects of education projects in Rwanda and conducting cost-benefit analyses to evaluate economic efficiency and social benefits. Collaboration with local institutions, government agencies, and NGOs is encouraged for future studies.

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