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Stakeholders' Participation and Performance of Donor Funded Projects in Rwanda. A Case of Schools and System Project in Save the Children

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Abstract

The general objective of this study was to assess the effect of stakeholders' participation on the performance of donor-funded projects in Rwanda. Specifically, the study seeks to find out the effect of passive participation of stakeholders on the performance of schools and system project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda, investigate the effect of interactive participation of stakeholders on the performance of schools and system project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda, and evaluate the effect of functional participation of stakeholders on the performance of schools and system project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda. The survey design collected data via the use of questionnaires, while the correlational approach investigated the connection between the variables under consideration. The target population of this study was 126, including 24 schools and system project staff, 72 Save the Children staff at district level, and 30 District education offers. The Solvin formula yielded a sample size of 96. The clusters were chosen based on the positions and categories of stakeholders in schools and system project to save children. The following tools were used to collect data for the study: a questionnaire and documentation research. To analyze the gathered data, the researcher used both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to show the effect and relationship between the variables. The statistics were computed by Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 23. It was shown that Passive participation (p=0.832) is not statistically significant in the performance of schools and system project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda, while interactive participation (p = 0.000) and functional participation (p= 0.000) are statistically significant in the performance of schools and system projects implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda. Therefore, this study recommends that Save the Children establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate stakeholder performance, holding them accountable for fulfilling their roles and responsibilities while also recognizing and rewarding their contributions.

Key words: *Stakeholders' participation, Passive participation, Interactive participation, Functional participation, Project performance*

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1. Introduction

Donor-funded projects in healthcare, farming, schooling, welfare, community growth, and building infrastructure have mostly benefited developing countries. Aid from donors is crucial in helping developing nations, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, deal with their complex issues. While donor-funded programs are given a lot of attention, several concerns have been voiced in the scientific and policy communities (Gregory & Jude, 2019). Despite the fact that most project managers spend the majority of their time contemplating how to achieve the project's goals, the majority of projects do not conclude on schedule. Every year, many projects throughout the globe crash and burn, costing businesses and governments tens of millions of dollars. Ameh and Ogundare's (2018) research shows that between 50 and 70% of projects in Kenya were delayed in some way due to problems with dependability and ineffective attempts to deal with unplanned events. Project delays, cost overruns, and bad planning all contribute to project failure in Rwanda; between 2009 and 2012, 65% of public projects were delayed, and 5.2% of these projects had cost overruns (Amandin & Kule, 2016).

Tumwebaze and Irechukwu (2022) looked into how important it was for stakeholders to be involved in the skills development project in Rwanda's Gasabo District. A total of 211 people out of a total of 400 were surveyed using a descriptive study approach. Participating individuals were picked using a combination of basic random selection and a census. A large majority of respondents (2.009 on a scale) agreed with the statement that stakeholder influence encourages the long-term viability of developing skills projects, and there was a significant and favorable connection between stakeholder influence and metrics such as satisfaction among beneficiaries (r = 0.928) and beneficiary ownership (r = 0.94). According to the findings of the second objective, stakeholders play an important role in ensuring the success of the skills expansion initiative. Stakeholder decision making is positively correlated with beneficiary satisfaction (r = 0.929, sig = 0.00), beneficiary ownership (r = 0.950, sig = 0.00), and recipients ongoing advancement (r =.962, sig = 0.00). Third-objective outcomes on input from stakeholders and knowledge growth project long-term viability in Gasabo showed a beneficial and statistically significant connection between stakeholder interaction and the satisfaction of beneficiaries (r = 0.930 and sig = 0.00), with beneficiary ownership (r = 0.951 and sig = 0.00), and with beneficiary continuous progress (r =.963 and sig = 0.00). It showed that with the help of the TVET graduates, the young unemployment rate dropped from 16.7% to 16.0% despite skills improvement initiatives and Workforce Development Authority initiatives.

Previous research on stakeholder participation and project performance has not specifically focused on the involvement and performance of stakeholders in schools and system projects implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda at the global, regional, or local level. Against the backdrop of the aforementioned circumstances, the researcher formulated the suggestion to undertake a study that focuses on the impact of the passive, interactive, and functional participation of stakeholders on the performance of donor-funded initiatives that are executed by Save the Children in Rwanda.

Despite receiving substantial financial support from donors, a significant number of projects funded by donors in Rwanda fail to sustain their operations effectively once the sponsorship period ends. This persistent issue poses a challenge to the long-term impact and effectiveness of development initiatives. To address this problem, it is crucial to understand the underlying effect of stakeholders' participation on performance of donor funded projects Save the Children in Rwanda.

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1.2 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to assess the effect of stakeholders' participation on performance of donor funded projects in Rwanda.

Specific objective of the study

i. To find out the effect of passive participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda.
ii. To investigate the effect of interactive participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda.
iii. To evaluate effect of functional participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda.

1.3 Research hypotheses

The followings are the null hypotheses of the study formulated based on research objectives:

Ho1: Passive participation does not have a statistically significant effect on performance of schools and system project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda.

Ho2: There is no statistically significant effect of the interactive participation of stakeholders on the performance of schools and the system project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda.

Ho3: There is no statistically significant effect of functional participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda.

2. Literature review

Stakeholder Participation

Stakeholder involvement is a planned way to talk to stakeholders about policy decisions and the design and delivery of public services at any point in the policy cycle. Engaging stakeholders efficiently enhances lines of interaction between groups, generates and sustains buy-in for the project, provides insight for the business, lessens the likelihood of conflict and other problems that could derail the endeavor, and boosts the standing of both the business and the project (Berry *et al.*, 2019).

Project Performance

Project performance is a project's ability to meet its goals, objectives and targets within the time, budget, and resources that are available. It is important to measure and manage project performance to make sure the project is finished successfully and gives the desired results. A project's performance can be evaluated by various metrics, such as schedule variance, cost variance, quality, scope, and risk (Shenhar & Dvir, 2020).

Passive participation

Passive stakeholder participation is when a stakeholder knows about a project but doesn't do anything to help it reach its goals or achieve its objectives. People or groups who have a vested interest in the project's success but do not have the resources or motivation to actively take part in the project may be among these stakeholders. Stakeholders can get information, updates, and reports on the progress of a project or decision-making process when they participate passively. This increases their awareness and understanding of the project or process, which will help them make informed decisions in the future (Zikargae & Ali, 2017).

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Interactive participation

Participation by interactive stakeholders is a vital component of every successful project or endeavor. It requires communicating with a wide range of people and organizations that are engaged in or impacted by the project. Meetings, focus groups, surveys, and public forums are just a few examples of how stakeholders might be involved. There is a significance of interactive stakeholder engagement in project management. Engaging with stakeholders is important because it builds trust and makes them feel like they have a stake in the project (Namra *et al.*, 2023).

Functional participation

Functional participation means that stakeholders are actively involved in making decisions that are directly related to their areas of expertise or responsibilities. Functional participation is important because it makes sure that decisions are made based on a wide range of ideas and expertise instead of just a few people's opinions. This can lead to better decision-making outcomes and increased stakeholder satisfaction and buy-in (Alun *et al.*, 2019).

2.2 Theoretical framework

Stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theory was initially developed in 1984 by R. Edward Freeman. Freeman stated that corporations should not just concentrate on increasing shareholder profit but also on the interests and requirements of other stakeholders. Several researchers and practitioners expanded on the notion of stakeholder theory, such as Thomas Donaldson, who stressed the ethical and moral components of stakeholder theory, and Archie Carroll, who offered a framework of corporate social responsibility that included stakeholder theory (Freeman *et al*., 2020).

As the researcher aims to conduct a study on projects and want to provide suggestions to improve stakeholder engagement, their communication, their decision-making and their reputation found the stakeholder theory to be a useful framework. By taking a stakeholder-focused approach, researcher ensured that project outcomes align with the needs and expectations of all stakeholders, leading to more successful projects and increased stakeholder satisfaction.

Goal setting theory

The goal-setting theory was first introduced by Edwin A. Locke and Gary P. Latham in 1968. Since then, the theory has been widely studied and applied in various fields, including business, education, sports, and personal development. According to Locke and Latham, goals should be explicit, quantifiable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. They also stated that feedback and support from supervisors and coworkers might assist people in meeting their objectives and improving their performance (Latham & Locke, 2019).

The goal-setting theory helped this research, which aims to improve project performance and get better results, by giving it a framework. The idea helped to make sure that everyone involved in a project is working toward the same goals and that resources are used in the best way possible by setting clear goals, creating motivation and commitment, and encouraging responsibility and ownership.

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Theory of Change

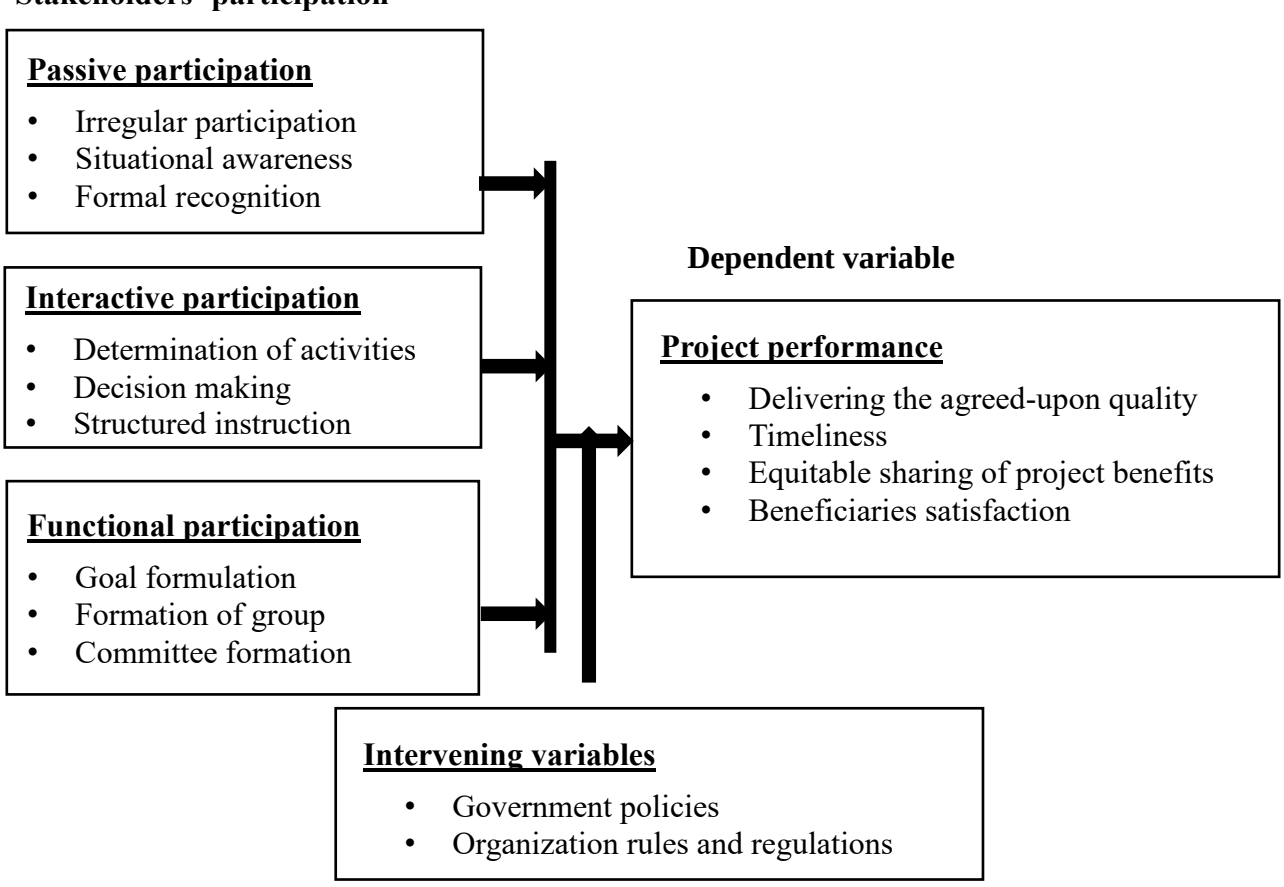
The Theory of Change (ToC) is a management and planning approach that describes how change happens and what actions are needed to achieve specific goals. The origins of the Theory of Change are difficult to trace, but it is believed to have been first used in the 1960s by the social science community in the United States. In recent years, the Theory of Change has gained popularity as a planning and evaluation tool in the fields of international development, social innovation, and philanthropy. The ToC approach helps organizations and communities to clarify their goals, identify the necessary steps to achieve them, and measure progress towards their desired outcomes (Connell *et al*., 2020).

In this study, the Theory of Change (ToC) used to help plan, carry out, and evaluate projects. The ToC method is especially useful for big, complicated projects where it is important to know what changes are happening and why, as well as how they are happening. The ToC method helped project managers get a better understanding of the environment in which their projects run and come up with strategies that are more in line with the results and goals of the project.

2.3 Conceptual framework

It is a map for the hypotheses of the research. It lays out the research questions, goals, and hypotheses, as well as the variables, connections, and assumptions that guided the research like a road map.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



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The figure 1 describe the variables under study and its indicators. Independent variable of this study is stakeholder participation under that variable there are sub variables including passive participation, interactive participation and functional participation. Passive participation of stakeholder indicated by irregular participation, situational awareness and formal recognition.

For interactive participation of stakeholders indicated by determination of activities, decision making and structured instruction. While functional participation of stakeholders indicated by goal formulation, formulation of group and committee formulation. All those mentioned sub variables and its indicators had effect of project performance and it measured by assessing delivering the agreed upon quality, timeliness, equitable sharing of project benefits and beneficiaries satisfaction.

3. Research methodology

It details the survey's methodology and the procedures for selecting and collecting samples. It continues by detailing the steps that taken to gather data, transform it, and examine it to draw conclusions. The survey design collected data via the use of questionnaires and interviews, while the correlational approach investigates the connection between the variables under consideration analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Target population of this study was 126 including 24 schools and system project staff, 72 Save the Children staff at district level and 30 District education offers. The Solvin formula used to calculate the sample size since it provides a simple technique for doing so. Researcher used the formula below to figure out how many people to include in the research.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n represents the sample size, N represents the population size, and e represents the margin of error (0.05). When applied to the provided sample, this formula yields a sample size of 96.

$$n = \frac{126}{1 + 126(0.05)^2} = \frac{126}{1 + 126(0.0025)} = \frac{126}{1 + 0.315} = \frac{126}{1.315} = 96$$

Cluster sampling involved selecting groups, or clusters, of participants from the population. The clusters were chosen based on position and categories of stakeholders of schools and system project in save the children.

To make sure the study is done right, exact questions were used to study each goal. Questionnaire, interview and documentation research were used as tools of data collection.
To analyze the data gathered, the researcher used Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) statistical methodology. The researcher used a descriptive and correlational technique in this study. The frequency, proportion, and percentage values for each component were used in the descriptive analysis. A regression equation used to describe the connection between a reliant variable and a set of determinants in a dataset.

In a linear regression model, the equation take the form of:

$Y = b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + \varepsilon$

Where:

Y is the dependent variable (Project performance)

x_1: passive participation of stakeholders

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x_2: interactive participation of stakeholders

x_3: functional participation of stakeholders

b_0 is the intercept or constant term

b_1, b_2 and b_3 are the coefficients or slopes associated with each independent variable

ε = error term

4. Research findings

This chapter concentrated on research findings and data analysis. The findings on the research objectives were presented using descriptive (percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential analysis with the assistance of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The researcher distributed 96 questionnaires to respondents. From the 96 distributed questionnaires, 87 were filled and returned, representing 90.6% of the response rate, while six questionnaires were unreturned, representing 6.3%, and three were returned but incomplete, representing 3.1%. Unreturned questionnaires were explained by a delay in respondents filling out questionnaires because some selected respondents were not present during the data collection period, and the researcher determined that a response rate of 90.6% is adequate for data analysis and discussion.

Table 1: Effect of passive participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda

	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	Std. Dev.
	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%		
Stakeholders had limited opportunities for input or feedback.	19	21.8	35	40.2	2	2.3	29	33.3	2	2.3	2.54	1.22
Stakeholders were invited to project events and meetings, but had limited opportunities for active participation or decision-making.	21	24.1	46	52.9	4	4.6	13	14.9	3	3.4	2.20	1.07
Stakeholders were informed of project decisions after they were made, rather than being involved in the decision-making process.	26	29.9	32	36.8	17	19.5	10	11.5	2	2.3	2.19	1.06
Stakeholders were not provided with clear roles or responsibilities for their involvement in the project.	16	18.4	49	56.3	6	6.9	12	13.8	4	4.6	2.29	1.06
Stakeholders were not adequately incentivized or motivated to actively engage in the project.	28	32.2	48	55.2	4	4.6	5	5.7	2	2.3	1.90	.89
Overall											2.22	1.06

Table 1 represents findings regarding the effect of passive participation of stakeholders on the performance of the Schools and System Project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda. The results showed that significant percentage of respondents disagree 40.2% and 21.8% who

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strongly disagreed that with the statement, indicating that they believed stakeholders had opportunities for input or feedback. The majority of respondents Disagree (52.9%) and (24.1%) who strongly disagreed with the statement, indicating that they believed stakeholders had limited opportunities for active participation or decision-making. The majority of respondents strongly disagreed 29.9% and disagreed 36.8% that stakeholders were informed of project decisions after they were made, rather than being involved in the decision-making process. The majority of respondents strongly disagreed 18.4% and disagreed 56.3% that stakeholders were not provided with clear roles or responsibilities for their involvement in the project. The majority of respondents strongly disagreed 32.2% and disagreed 55.2% that stakeholders were not adequately incentivized or motivated to actively engage in the project.

Based on overall very low mean of 2.22 and standard deviation of 1.06 which indicated heterogeneity of responses it is evident that there is a consistent perception among respondents that in passive participation stakeholders had limited opportunities for input, feedback, decision-making, clear roles, and adequate incentives or motivation.

Table 2: Effect of interactive participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda

	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	Std. Dev.
	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%		
Interactive participation entails stakeholders collaborating with the project team.	3	3.4	4	4.6	2	2.3	35	40.2	43	49.4	4.27	.97
Interactive participation sometimes lead to conflicts between stakeholders and the project team.	32	36.8	18	20.7	36	41.4	1	1.1	0	0.0	2.06	.91
Stakeholders had the opportunity to ask questions and receive timely responses from the project team.	4	4.6	5	5.7	2	2.3	16	18.4	60	69.0	4.41	1.09
The project team worked collaboratively with stakeholders to achieve project goals and objectives.	3	3.4	7	8.0	2	2.3	26	29.9	49	56.3	4.27	1.07
Interactive participation reflects a high level of ownership and commitment to project success	4	4.6	8	9.2	2	2.3	30	34.5	43	49.4	4.14	1.13
Overall											3.83	1.03

Table 2 shows the respondents' perspectives on the effect of interactive participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda, whereby 40.2% agree and strongly agree 49.4% that interactive participation entails stakeholders collaborating with the project team. Moreover, respondents represented by 36.8% strongly disagree agree and 41.4% were neutral that interactive participation sometimes lead to conflicts between stakeholders and the project team. Also majority of respondents 69.0 strongly agree that the project team worked collaboratively with stakeholders to achieve project goals and objectives. Furthermore, majority of respondents 56.3% strongly agree that the project team worked collaboratively with stakeholders to achieve project goals and objectives.

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Finally, a large number of respondents 34.5% agree and 49.4% strongly agree that interactive participation reflects a high level of ownership and commitment to project success.

The interviewee shared his experience on the potential benefits of interactive participation on the performance of schools and system projects;

> *The potential benefits of interactive participation on performance of the schools and system projects are not only to participate on different activities developing country in this domain but also to serve the community as a good citizen of Rwanda and to stimulate the schools leaders to improve the school performance and system projects in order to reach various goals set by the police makers.*

The mean of 3.83 ratings indicate that respondents generally agreed or strongly agreed with the positive statements regarding effect of interactive participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda. The standard deviations indicate that there was some variability in the responses, indicating responses are from different categories.

Table 3: Effect of functional participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda

	SD		D		N		A		SA		Mean	Std. Dev.
	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%	fi	%		
Stakeholders were provided with clear roles and responsibilities for their involvement in the project.	3	3.4	8	9.2	2	2.3	39	44.8	35	40.2	4.09	1.05
The project team effectively trained and supported stakeholders to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in the project.	3	3.4	3	3.4	2	2.3	23	26.4	56	64.4	4.44	.96
Stakeholders had the necessary resources and support to effectively engage in the project.	3	3.4	3	3.4	1	1.1	59	67.8	21	24.1	4.05	.84
Stakeholders were held accountable for fulfilling their roles and responsibilities in the project.	6	6.9	8	9.2	5	5.7	51	58.6	17	19.5	3.74	1.09
The project team recognized and valued the contributions of stakeholders to the project.	5	5.7	6	6.9	3	3.4	38	43.7	35	40.2	4.05	1.11
Overall											4.08	1.01

The findings in Table 3 revealed the respondents' views on effect of functional participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda. Such as 44.8% agree and 40.2% strongly agree that Stakeholders were provided with clear roles and responsibilities for their involvement in the project. Therefore, 64.4% strongly agree that the project team effectively trained and supported stakeholders to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in the project. Also, 67.8% agree that stakeholders had the necessary resources and support to effectively engage in the project. Meanwhile, 58.6% of respondents agree that stakeholders were held accountable for fulfilling their roles and

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responsibilities in the project. Furthermore, 43.7% agree and 40.2% strongly agree that the project team recognized and valued the contributions of stakeholders to the project.

The findings indicate that majority of respondents agree and strongly agree that there is positive effect of functional participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda. The percentage are supported by overall mean of 4.08 as high mean which is evidence on existence of the facts with standard deviation of 1.01 indicate the heterogeneity of responses on mentioned statements.

Table 4: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.930	5.020		1.580	.118
	Passive participation	.077	.362	.013	.213	.832
	Interactive participation	1.740	.319	.418	5.462	.000
	Functional participation	1.654	.246	.512	6.715	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Project performance

In a linear regression model, the equation take the form of:

$Y = b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + \varepsilon$

Project performance = 7.930 + 0.077(Passive participation) + 1.740(Interactive participation) + 1.654 (Functional participation) + 5.020

The Coefficients Table 4 provides information about the estimated coefficients for each predictor variable in the regression model. The coefficient for passive participation is 0.077. The t-value associated with this coefficient is 0.213, and the p-value is 0.832, which is not statistically significant. Therefore, there is no statistically significant effect of passive participation on the performance of schools and system project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda. This finding supports the null hypothesis Ho1. The coefficient for interactive participation is 1.740. The t-value associated with this coefficient is 5.462, and the p-value is < .05, which is statistically significant. Therefore, there is a statistically significant positive effect of interactive participation on the performance of schools and system project. This finding contradicts the null hypothesis Ho2. The coefficient for functional participation is 1.654. The t-value associated with this coefficient is 6.715, and the p-value is < .05, which is statistically significant. Thus, there is a statistically significant positive effect of functional participation on the performance of schools and system project. This finding contradicts the null hypothesis Ho3. The results indicate that interactive participation and functional participation of stakeholders have statistically significant positive effects on the performance of schools and system project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda. However, passive participation does not have a significant effect on project performance, supporting the null hypothesis Ho1.

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Table 5: Test of hypotheses

Hypothesis Formulated	Beta (β)	ρ – values	Decision
Ho1: Passive participation does not have a statistically significant effect on performance of schools and system project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda.	.077	.832	Confirmed
Ho2: There is no statistically significant effect of the interactive participation of stakeholders on the performance of schools and the system project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda.	1.740	.000	Rejected
Ho3: There is no statistically significant effect of functional participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda.	1.654	.000	Rejected

It was shown that Passive participation (p=0.832 greater than 0.05) is not statistically significant in performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda, interactive participation (p=0.00 less than 0.05), and functional participation (p=0.000 less than 0.05) are statistically significant in performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda. Therefore, the study concluded that Passive participation does not have a statistically significant effect on performance of schools and system project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda, was confirmed. There is no statistically significant effect of the interactive participation of stakeholders on the performance of schools and the system project implemented by Save the Children in Rwanda (Ho2) was rejected. The study also found no support for the third hypothesis (Ho3), there is no statistically significant effect of functional participation of stakeholders on performance of schools and system project implemented by save the children in Rwanda.

5. Conclusion

The study concluded that actively involving stakeholders and promoting their meaningful participation in donor-funded projects in Rwanda is crucial for project performance. Strengthening interactive participation through effective collaboration and addressing potential conflicts further enhanced performance of schools and system project in Save the Children in Rwanda. Additionally, maintaining functional participation by ensuring clear roles and responsibilities, providing necessary resources and support, and recognizing stakeholder contributions contributed to positive performance and sustainability of schools and system project in Save the Children in Rwanda.

6. Recommendations

Save the Children in Rwanda recommended to involve stakeholders in important project decisions by creating platforms for their meaningful involvement, such as stakeholder committees or working groups.

Schools and system project management should ensure stakeholders are informed about project decisions and developments in a timely manner, and provide them with explanations and justifications for those decisions.

There is need to establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate stakeholder performance, holding them accountable for fulfilling their roles and responsibilities, while also recognizing and rewarding their contributions.

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