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Abstract

Donor-sponsored projects complement government efforts in addressing developmental needs in communities, particularly economic empowerment and employment creation. Despite these interventions, communities in low-resource countries often remain impoverished, with some worse off than before project implementation. The desired outcomes frequently go unrealized, resulting in poor value for donors' investments. A critical but underexplored relationship exists between community participation and project performance, with community engagement serving as a vital component throughout the project cycle. Development stakeholders, including governments and donor consortiums, increasingly emphasize community participation as a prerequisite for project initiation. Western donors have expressed concern about project performance related to their sponsorship. This paper analyzes studies on community participation by different scholars, employing a systematic approach. From 122 articles identified through Google Scholar and Zotero, 25 were synthesized, and five most relevant articles were thoroughly examined. The analysis reveals that community participation is imperative for the success of donor-funded projects in low-resource countries. Participatory techniques positively impact project sustainability, with participatory planning and design influencing implementation effectiveness. The study emphasizes that successful approaches integrate participatory needs assessment, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The paper recommends strengthening of community participation in donor-funded projects, right from their inception to project closure and handover. Emphasis should be directed to community members' commitment as they participate in the project cycle. The adequacy of project inputs, availability of community groups' formation, capacity building, and level of acceptance, awareness, and resource provision should also be enhanced. Community people or beneficiaries have to be included in all phases of project development. The community also have to be trained on participatory practices in development involvements. Proper communication should be enhanced as a recommendation through the project management cycle as well clear distribution of roles for all stakeholders within water management.

Keywords: *Community Engagement, Performance, Donor Sponsored Projects, Low Resource Countries*

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1.0 Introduction

Community engagement in development activities is the procedure by which people, families, society or groups assume responsibility for their welfare and develop a capacity to contribute to their own and the community's development. It is an active process whereby beneficiaries impact the path and accomplishment of development (Oakley & Marsden, 1999). In the international sphere, community participation in development discourse is commonly used to refer to the involvement of local people in the decision-making process and evaluation of development projects and is associated with empowerment and respect for also the use of local knowledge (Marsland, 2006). Several scholars around the globe have termed the concept efforts to involve citizens more directly in the processes of development and inspired, underpinned, by the view that to do so brings benefits to better citizens. Further study by AinulJaria (2011) added that information flow to the public on planning processes of projects is an important aspect necessary towards achieving projects' goals. Globally, the participation of the public in the management of projects has been viewed to act as a bridge between community members and other stakeholders whose interests and welfare are vested in such projects. In certain situations, differences arising from project participants due to misunderstanding can be easily reconciled by adequately involving local community members.

In low-resource countries (LRC), community participation plays a role in the societies which includes: increasing democracy, fighting segregation of marginalized and disadvantaged inhabitants, empowering and mobilizing people plus resources and developing holistic and integrated approaches towards problems which all point to ensuring ownership (Bartholomew *et al.*, 2011). Phillips and Pittman (2009) further state that community participation is important for the validity of any donor-funded project, which brings in the ownership aspect. For any donor-funded project to succeed, it must link not only planning with action but also the aspect that community participants must determine their ownership in the plan (Sirgy, Phillips & Rahtz, 2011). Community mobilization refers to capacity building through which the communities, individuals or groups implement and evaluate donor-funded projects. On the other hand, the influence of ownership is when individuals take action that is organized around a specific community issue ("Society of Public Health Education", 2010). Also, community empowerment involves a goal in itself since the community takes responsibility for the actions related to any development project. Empowerment allows the community to demand transparency and accountability from all the parties involved in the donor-funded project (Henderson & Vercseg, 2010).

1.1 Justification of the Study Problem

The globe, donor-funded projects bridge the gap where the government's responsibility to the provision of service to its citizens of social developmental needs such as access to social-economic services such as education, health, water, agriculture, and environment among others (Ramisch & Verma, 2010). These projects are initiated to benefit the community, thus close and clear affiliation between donor-funded projects success and community participation which has not been widely examined (Makori & Wanyoike, 2015). Given this notion, participation may perhaps be seen in the level of discussion or decision-making in the stages of a project cycle, from needs assessment, project identification, environmental impact assessment, project proposal writing, appraisal, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation. Leading worldwide Development partners from Higher Resource Countries and other bilateral aid organizations such as the United

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States International Development Agency (USAID) World Bank have been expressing concerns about the performance and sustainability of projects as established by the United Nations Development Program (2012).

Several LRCs have voiced their concern, a further study by Mutimba (2013), in Kenya the scenario has not been different and most projects funded by either the government or development partners remain as white elephants once the funding and technical support is withdrawn. An additional report from World Bank, (2012) indicated that projects funded by donors failed to meet the expectations of the donors and the beneficiary communities and have not produced the desired results. These failures are anchored on the aspect of the community participation concept. For instance, deprived communities have continued to observe deterioration in living standards, increased levels of poverty and worsening of infrastructure regardless of many efforts by government and development partners. It is in contradiction of this circumstantial that this paper pursues the role of community Participation; A Critique of Performance of Donor Funded Projects in Low Resource Countries. This will be achieved through discussions from five selected journal articles.

1.2 Section One

This paper intends to critically discuss five selected authentic journal articles. The discussion will focus on summarizing the articles and their purpose. Further analysis will examine research designs, target populations, sampling designs, data collection methods, findings, and discussions. Additionally, the paper will analyze both convergent and divergent aspects of the studies. Finally, conclusions and recommendations will be provided.

1.2.1 Journal one

Factors influencing active community participation in local development projects: a case of UN Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Service Delivery Project (JPLG) Project in Garowe, Puntland State of Somalia. *An International Journal of Contemporary Applied Researches* (ISSN: 2308-1365). By Muturi, H. and Samantar (2018).

Introduction

The article's authors started by informing the nation and definition of Community participation through quoting Historical definition (Oakley, 1999) and (Marsland, 2006). The authors believe that the concept of community participation is related to citizens' democratic rights. Also, many countries are wondering how the interest of governments, NGOs, donors and leaders has voiced their concern on empowering the community through decision-making. The authors ended this section by underpinning their concern despite community participation being the bridge to such approaches that foster cohesion, which is a concern that government agencies are not embracing the practice.

The Purpose of the Article

The purpose was to establish the influence of active community participation in local development projects in Garowe.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the article were to establish the extent to which;
Project information is shared

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- i. Community responsiveness,
- ii. Values and
- iii. The education level influences the community's active participation in local development projects in Garowe, Puntland

Methodology

The research used descriptive design and correlational study which focused on using a quantitative approach. The reason for using a mixed design was to enable hybrid data collection from the present condition the target population was drawn from the village development committees for each village which totalled 56 respondents. It is not clear whether sampling techniques were used however the author indicated the employment of whole enumerations (representative sample) to select respondents. Data was collected through the use of questionnaires and focus group discussions as instruments of both primary and secondary data collection.

Findings

The study results were that 64% of the informants indicated they get information and are well communicated but have not much influence in the outcome of the project and 63% are aware of their civic rights. Further 63 % indicated they have been working and communicated to however they had no formal education, hence had no education background. In a nutshell, there was community participation which was rated 63 and 64 % respectively. On culture, 63% of the respondents stated that women donate more and actively participate in the development process voluntarily without seeking any benefits. The findings stated that the majority of the respondents are illiterate whereby a small number attained only primary education, some did vocational training and the rest never studied at all thus limiting participation. There was however a concern that, despite community participation influence, their decision-making was low.

Conclusion

Conclusions focused on dependent variables. The findings revealed that the active participation and involvement of the communities in the local development project was low. The village development committees were physically involved in the project. They were involved in need assessment phases however minimal involvement in decision-making. The study asserted that there is a need for active community participation in local development projects. Further conclusion indicated that the level of information shared on civic rights awareness and culture did not have any influence on findings stated on active community participation. The authors recommended community people or beneficiaries have to be included in all phases of project development. The community also have to be trained on participatory practices in development involvements.

1.2.2 Journal Two

Community Participation in Donor Funded Projects in the Pastoral Communities. By Lelegwe Ltumbesi, S and Timothy C. Oketch. (2016).

Introduction

The author conceptualized the problem of community participation in donor-funded as one which is dependent on the level of initiative that the community takes for the realization of sustainability. The level of community participation in such projects directly relates to the attainment of project goals. Active participation of community participation is therefore

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imperative for the sustainability of project goals. A low level of community participation however presents a major setback to the realization of goals. When donor-funded projects fail to realize their goals, it becomes difficult for such projects to be sustainable. Unsustainable projects leave the targeted and potential beneficiaries vulnerable. In the context of this study, several donor-funded projects have been implemented in Northern in different sectors such as education, sanitation, health, hygiene, water, livestock production, veterinary services, conflict resolution, and environmental conservation. A low level of community participation, as well as low ownership of projects, is likely to impact the sustainability of projects when donors leave after the first phase of the project cycle. This leaves a big void within the community.

The authors conceptualized the study to show the association between technical assistance (the independent variable) and sustainability of donor-funded projects (the dependent variable) and community participation and socio-economic environment (moderating variables) (Lelegwe & Oketch, 2016). The items covered under the variable of technical assistance included institutional capacity, in terms of the number and quality of personnel, and organizational resources. It also captured capacity building in terms of financial management, planning and budgeting, project design, implementation, proposal and grant, writing, monitoring and evaluation. Partnership and linkages, governance structures and governance (systems and structures), project reporting, mentorship programmes, performance monitoring and evaluation were analysed.

Further, it factored the aspect of technology transfer, including managerial or technical expertise, provision of information, management and leadership. The dependent variable of sustainability of donor-funded projects was analysed under the domains of continuation in the stream of benefits, the realization of objectives, improved standards of living, project functionality, and recorded growth for beneficiaries. The moderating variable of the socio-economic environment was analysed under the domains of socio-cultural (beliefs, religion, gender, and norms), economic conditions (income, education, poverty, health indicators, and access to clean water), social harmony, infrastructure, and appropriateness of technology. Further, the moderating variable of community participation included the items of local ownership and involvement in project design, planning, implementation, and monitoring & evaluation. It involved local commitment, which is participation in the project cycle comprising the setting up of priorities. This variable also comprised the availability of project inputs, the formation of community groups, and capacity building of the local community. Further, awareness, acceptance, and resource provision, including finance, labour, land, and security were analysed under this variable.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. This was a more suitable design as Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) reaffirmed that it is suitable for gathering original data to describe a population that is too big to observe directly. It targeted beneficiaries of different donor projects in the pastoral communities of Northern Kenya. Multi-stage and simple random sampling techniques were used to select 500 respondents (Lelegwe & Oketch, 2016). Primary data were gathered using a questionnaire, focus group discussion, and interview guides as the research instruments. While the questionnaire was the chief instrument,

interview guides were used to collect data from key informants. Describe the statistical analysis used to analyse the collected data.

Findings

The study found that perennial droughts severely affect agriculture and livestock production. The other identified challenges included poor infrastructure, limited access to social services, conflict, insecurity, and cultural issues. The chief implemented projects in the region including the sectors of education, water and sanitation, environmental conservation, health, food security, conflict management, livestock production and veterinary services, and economic empowerment. The identified low level of community participation would also be an indicator of limited requisite skills by the community to offer critical support in implementing project activities. Time allocated to project activities, planning, as well as implementation was also identified as a major determinant in the realisation of project goals. The same observation was also made by Narayan (1995) that the best results are achieved when beneficiaries are engaged in the decision-making at every stage of the project, right from the project design to maintenance.

1.2.3 Journal Three

Community Participation in Water Resource Projects Management in Iringa District Council, Tanzania. *Tengeru Community Development Journal*, 5(2)- ISSN 1821 – 9853. By Chumbula J. & Massawe, F. A. (2018).

Affiliations

Both Chumbula and Massawe are distinguished lectures at the Universities of Ardhi, Dar es Salaam and Sokoine, Morogoro respectively in Tanzania.

Introduction

Chumbula and Massawe wrote a concise abstract. The Abstract points to the reader the importance of community participation and its relevance. The study identifies how community participation in water project management was implemented in the study and suggests that; participation should have adhered to the key principles of community engagement in all phases. The introduction describes the traditional top-down approach to policy, project, program design and implementation which has been replaced by bottom-up approaches. Participation has become an act of faith in development. However, this approach has received critiques governing weak correlations between the theory and practice of the participatory approach.

The water changes globally caused water to one of the goals on Sustainable development goals, which aims “to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all” by 2020 (United Nations, 2015). Since the problem of water is still real the study, recommends, that effective water and sanitation management relies on the participation of a range of stakeholders, including local communities. Community project management is to ensure effective communication structures that will allow a smooth flow of information. That is why the paper presents the practice of communication and feedback mechanisms within the selected water projects. The paper, in short, tries to answer the following questions; Are community members aware of the origin of the project? At which most they were involved? Who is responsible for the maintenance? However, more questions were supposed to be asked, how was a local contribution from the community,

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whether in kind or cash? How was the turnout of people in meetings and voluntary work for the water project?

Methodology

The research employed a cross-sectional research design since this design allows data to be collected at a single point in time (Kothari, 2004). The household was randomly selected. Quantitative data were collected through 180 household interviews from three villages, where a structured questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questionnaires while qualitative data were collected from a purposively selected project management team. The study adopted and modified Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation which includes eight rungs. The modification includes focusing only on five rungs since the first two rungs refer to non-participation. Every respondent was asked to indicate whether the participation level was 1) Information, 2) Consultation, 3) Decision, 4) Acting or Control and 5) upon each item. The study employed a descriptive analysis of quantitative data and data from FGDs. During analysis, the respondents were grouped into low, medium and high participation.

According to findings, 97% of respondents were not aware of the water projects' initial establishment in their villages. When asked about the source of the water project, 78% said was established by donors. Though water is important to have ownership initial ideas should come from the community. In the overall project planning and management cycle, full community participation was limited only in the form of information and consultations. Chumbula and Massawe (2018) reported that the Government has continued to be the owner and operator of the water project, which led to a lack of commitment to the beneficiaries. On monitoring and evaluation also, community participation was limited with poor feedback to the community. Moreover, 45.6% of the respondents showed that water maintenance was for the Government while 27.2 % didn't know. Even in the water committee, women were less involved, 62.8% were not aware of women's representation. The findings show poor community participation. However, to be able to analyse well some information is missing from the paper, how old were the projects. What is the nature of the types of equipment used in terms of durability? Does the project have funds remaining for the District Engineer? How many years did it take for the projects to be handed to the water community? Getting an answer to this can help us to make a more concrete analysis.

Conclusion and recommendation:

Chumbula and Massawe found that there is a mismatch between the theory of community participation and the practice. The participation practised by the selected project limits itself to the lower level of information and consultation which has nothing to offer community control over project decision-making. Ownership was weak with no follow-up in maintenance. Proper communication should be enhanced through the project management cycle as well as a clear distribution of roles for all stakeholders within water management. Chumbula and Massawe could have told us more about how proper community participation should be done because fewer solutions have been offered. Proper participation should be in all stages of the project cycle; where a manager creates a rapport in a community and discovers a generative theme and through that journey with the community to see whether that is a real problem and even offer the solution. What is their ability to even start to be done and finding the gap is when a donor intervention is applied?

The community can be involved in all stages of the project and own it. It is only when we bring them on board our projects will be sustainable.

1.2.4 Journal Four

Community Participation in Sustainability of Development Projects: A Case Study of National Solidarity Program Afghanistan. *International Peer-reviewed Journal* Vol.30, 2017. ISSN 2422-8400. By Hadi Noori (2017)

The researcher, Hadi Noori was inspired by readings about development studies and related literature about different aid paradigms. The researcher was guided by the knowledge that donor countries and development agencies were enquiring about the impact of foreign assistance provided to third-world countries also referred to as low-resource countries. It had become apparent that the project donors were regarding themselves as having wasted resources if the projects and programs did not enhance the livelihoods of communities once the project period had come to an end. The key issues amongst donor countries and multilateral donor agencies had become the concerns raised about the impact and sustainability of development projects and programs concerning benefits that the projects provided after the departure of the projects and whether those benefits would be maintained. This being the case, therefore, In the 1990s, the World Bank and the Australian Aid Agency (AusAID) applied community participation in project management to avert project failure.

Introduction

Many projects are executed and end up without any quantifiable impact. This can mainly be attributed to the central planning and execution (top-down approach) without any involvement of communities. This had been the case in Afghanistan where 80% of the population is rural-based and most projects were being implemented without participation and feedback from the project beneficiaries. The National Solidarity Project (NSP) was chosen by the researcher as being the largest project in the country's history. It was implemented by the World Bank in collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) and a consortium of other donors. There were more than 64,000 projects introduced under the NSP between the project initiation in 2003 and the end of phase two in 2013 at an estimated cost of 1.01 billion dollars. By mid-2015 (Phase three) of the NSP project, the project had an estimated budget of 2.7 billion dollars.

In the context of this research article community participation and project sustainability can be defined as follows; Sustainability refers to the 'sustainability of project benefits beyond the project period and can be measured by the percentage of goods and services maintained and delivered after five years of termination of implementation of the project; the continuation of local action stimulated by the project and generation of successor services and initiatives as a result of the project built local capacity' (Rondinelli, 2013).

The Purpose of the Article

The study was carried out to examine the effect of community participation techniques such as participatory need assessment, participatory planning and design, participatory implementation and participatory monitoring and evaluation on the sustainability of development projects in the National Solidarity Program in Afghanistan. The evolution of participatory techniques to community development in the country is expected to improve the sustainability of development projects.

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Methodology

A quantitative methodology was employed with the Quantitative approach using a self-administrated questionnaire to collect quantitative data from respondents on the study model. The reliability and validity of the questionnaire were tested through a pilot study that was conducted before going to the field to test the research instruments. The target population was drawn from communities under phase three of the National Solidarity Program and the sample size of 250 where a multi-stage sampling technique combined probability, non-probability, purposive and finally random were utilized to get the different strata respectively. The authors used both Primary and secondary data for this study while data was analysed by use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Findings

The author's findings were captured from multiple regression analyses between dependent and independent variables. The beta Coefficient is significant at the P-value 0.000 indicated. Participatory Planning and design, participatory implementation, participatory Monitoring and Evaluation and the Need Assessment showed an increase in composite mean of 27.6 %. Thus, clear indicator components o techniques impacted positively project sustainability.

Conclusion

The author's study conclusion focused on a suitable participatory technique that can increase the sustainability of development projects of national and international NGOs and techniques that community. The study concluded that participatory Techniques have a Positive impact on project sustainability, Participatory Planning and design influences participatory Implementation, Participatory Planning and Design and Participatory Need Assessment.

Recommendations and Suggestions

1. Awareness should be a priority in terms of policy framework within all community projects and programs with a focus on their involvement from the initial stage of the projects or programs.
2. Levels of community members involved must be within all the project cycle phases (project formulation, feasibility study, planning and design, implementations and monitoring and evaluation).
3. Community member or beneficiaries should have consistent training to empower and increase their understanding regarding project sustainability or program maintenance.
4. Key stakeholders on the development of projects in Afghanistan and other Low resources need to mainstream participatory technique projects or program design.

1.2.5 Journal Five

The Evolving Nature of Community Participation in Public Development Projects in Kenya: By Kadurenge, N., O. N. (2016).

Introduction

The article's authors begin by analyzing in detail how public development projects today are different from how they began in colonial times specifically in terms of community participation. They delve into the limitations of community participation in colonial times and how it has revolutions as Kenya has become more financially and democratically independent. Additionally, the authors also examine how the constitution has considerably contributed to making community participation in development products a possibility.

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They, however; assert that although community participation has significantly improved since the colonial era. More needs to be done to ensure community participation is not only limited to the data collection and research phase but extends to the decision-making phase.

Purpose of the Article

This article is a literature review analyzing how participation in development projects has revolutionized since the colonial era. It particularly focuses on how the participation approach has changed since pre-colonial times. The data analyzed in this literature review was gathered from a wide selection of books journal articles, acts of parliament and even the Kenyan constitution. The information is analyzed with the main objective of providing a detailed look at how participation approaches by communities have either improved or faltered since the colonial era.

Methodology

The author employed a desktop model of study on qualitative. The authors utilized secondary data which were focused on specific pre-determined identified themes. Data were analyzed using the content analysis technique. The technique of thematic network analysis was used to identify various themes and address the study objective. All the information used was analyzed using the content analysis method. The content analysis applied thematic networks analysis and discovering patterns.

Findings

The results indicated that the top-down participatory approach that dominated colonial error has limitations that limit community participation. The concept (top-down) was heavily criticized. The authors conclude that the bottoms-up concept is the most appropriate for communities in Kenyans. This was supported by documentary evidence that the bottom-up approach encourages development projects by using local knowledge, and resources on project implementation and decision-making.

Conclusion

The conclusion indicated that to boost community participation there is a need for local experts. In addition, conclusion by the authors indicated that, a need to correct the bottom-up theory by improving efficiency. This is by ensuring that local communities are engaged in the decision-making and implementation phases of development projects especially those funded by the donor's community.

2.0 Section Two

2.1 Convergent Analysis

The section provides a summary of similarities between the journal articles as presented.

2.1.1 Conceptualization of the Problem

At the onset of independence, most low-resource countries (LRCs) relied on financial, institutional, technical, and material support from Western countries to enable them to develop. The growing interest towards supporting the rural development process of developing countries caused the escalation of donor-funded project interventions, non-governmental organizations, and international development agencies (IDAs). The dramatic surge of this was witnessed in the 1990s, a time when most international donors championed the support of development initiatives for the LRCs, specifically Sub-Saharan

Africa. Despite the differing visions as well as statements of intent, the donors agreed on the need to eradicate poverty, specifically for the rural masses, the poor, and the vulnerable. As a result, international donors directed resources through NGOs and government-specialized agencies by initiating programmes and projects. Donor-funded projects therefore play a crucial role in this aspect since it is considered an effective channel for development within the LRCs. The journal articles presented case situations and defined the study problem. Further, the problem definitions of community participation were content analyzed as well as categorized in terms of identification, planning, and implementation of donor-funded projects in LRCs. The performance of donor-funded projects was analyzed and categorized as effective and efficient utilization of budget, timely completion, meeting project goals, and sustainability of the project.

2.1.2 Methodology

The approaches and methodology analysis indicated that article journal 1 employed descriptive design (quantitative and qualitative approach). However, 2, 4 and applied quantitative approach. Journal article 3 applied to cross-sectional and lastly article 5 applied qualitative which was desktop review. Four of the five articles (1 to 4) applied mixed or hybrid mode of data collection used out of the five studies used mixed method in data collection, while Journal article 5 applied a secondary approach. Other than article 5, all the rest used structured, semi-structured, observation and FGDs questionnaires in executing their survey. Hence, questions were either structured or open-ended.

2.1.3 Findings

On results, Articles 1, 2, and 3 indicated that, showed community participation is a concern. Stakeholders lead to community engagement in the Monitoring and Evaluation. The findings from Article 1 showed that communities get information and are well communicated but have not much influence on the outcome of the project. The study found a low level of community participation in planning as well as the implementation of projects, a low level of community support in terms of resources, and capacity gaps in the management of projects based on Article 2. Whereas, article 3 clearly stated that participation practised by the selected project limits itself to the lower level of information and consultation which has nothing to offer community control over project decision-making. Ownership was weak with no follow-up in maintenance. Proper communication should be enhanced through the project management cycle.

Article 4 findings revealed that participatory techniques, participatory planning and design, participatory implementation and participatory need assessment all have a significant and positive impact on project sustainability. Lastly, article 5 its findings and discussion indicated; that the bottom-up stakeholder-participation approach is taking root in the development world. Also, more stakeholder-participation approaches are collaborative, consultative, collegiate and contractual approaches. Further conclusion indicated that the top-down community participation approach in Kenya was; preferred during the colonial period, the community participation landscape is today characterized by a multiplicity of approaches including the bottom-up, top-down, collaborative, consultative, contractual and collegiate approaches. The five journals focused on community participation in the context of donor/ Government or NGO projects in resource countries.

2.2 Divergent Analysis

The section provides a summary of the differences between the journal articles as presented

2.2.1 Conceptualization of the Problem

For more than three decades, low-resource countries have been the major beneficiaries of donor-funded projects. Most of these initiatives have been widely affected in sectors of public health, education, agriculture, infrastructural development, as well as social and community development. Notwithstanding the benefits attached to donor-funded projects, several issues of concern have been documented in the policy and scientific arena. For instance, the issue of community participation and the performance of projects have been preoccupied because of the significant constraints of governments to promote community development. In this regard, switching expenditures has been considered a protracted process in most low-resource countries.

Several changes exist in the social, political, and economic landscape of LRCs, with rapid escalations in the rate at which national policies are embracing the system of performance. The concept of performance strives to strike a balance between the economy, environment, and society. The realization of the objectives of the donor-funded projects and their sustainability has to be in tandem with community participation in the identification, planning, and implementation of such projects. However, some studies have analyzed the aspect of donor-funded projects in terms of the way they are managed, monitored as well as evaluated.

2.2.2 Methodology

This paper recognized a few variations in research methodology and approaches applied. The most noticed methodology applied was descriptive design (quantitative qualitative and cross-sectional). It is important to note that, such differences and variations in research design are brought about by the topic selected that goes down the variables, objectives and research question for the problem under investigation. There was a variation in the data collection method; hence one journal was desktop thus relied on secondary data only.

2.2.3 Findings

Four of the journal articles focused on justifying the influence of community participation on project implementation, and sustainability to establish their role in Project planning design and implementation. Also, the other article mainly focused on the nature of Community Participation in public development projects. The paper evaluated projects implemented during colonial error where community participation concept had gone through tremendous changes through being involved in development projects.

2.3 Summary of Gaps

The review of the five-related literature above presented several significant gaps which will need to be filled. It's noted that in all the five articles community participation and ownership of projects especially at the first phase of the project cycle is realised to be low by varying percentages. Muturi and Samantar (2018) in article 1 confirmed that 63% are illiterate and never studied yet they are the community that should be at the centre of the development process. By using questionnaires in data collection, the authors would then create major gaps in the respondents due to Illiteracy. The findings confirmed that there was limited government support and involvement in the first phases of the development

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project, this then prompts a gap for the author to consider getting respondents from the government as a stakeholder which was not done. The community's participation is not expected to be high if the author also states that influence, decision making and control are very low thus making less citizen development as the development process should be cantered and if the community do not have control of the outcomes of the development projects, the development process will be slow and less functioning.

On the other hand, Oketch and Ltumbesi (2016) instead of focusing on two moderating variables, which might not bring out a strong linkage between the independent and dependent variables, it would be imperative to include an intervening variable. Also, the key determinant of community participation has been used as a moderator instead of capturing it as the key independent variable in the study. The targeted number of respondents is not clear, thus leading to unclear computation of the sample size. The current study excluded the critical use of secondary data. Further, it failed to apply correlation analyses, particularly correlation and regression to identify the strength and relationship between the independent variables. Chumbula and Massawe (2018) confirmed that according to the information from the District Executive Director's office, more than two hundred (200) government and donor-funded projects have been initiated in the District (IDC, 2012). This then creates a gap in the sampling method of identifying only three (samples) water projects out of 200. Another crucial variable that was excluded was communication which is directly linked to community participation. Participatory approach and empowerment in terms of capacity have not been achieved and the existence of poor communication as a variable connotes weak accountability and hence limits the capacity for community members to be part of the project.

Noori (2017) used purposive sampling to select the community respondents from the population because of some constraints such as time, cost and security problems. Out of 34 provinces data was only collected in Bamyan, Deykondi, Ghazni and Herat. This then creates a gap between a low level of reliability and high levels of bias towards the four target samples. We cannot, therefore, generalize these findings as to the true picture of the National Solidarity program in Afghanistan. The researcher also identified research gaps in his literature review that there was no research on community participation that had been carried out in Afghanistan. Lastly, Kadurenge *et al.*, (2016), confirm that participatory approaches do not guarantee project success. Instead, Stakeholders should understand the merits and demerits of each approach and apply it only when they can leverage its demerits. This will limit the application of the other approaches which have been stated in this article and they shall all require proper stakeholder engagement. Also, there was biasness, the article emphasized top-down and bottom-up approaches more than the other approaches.

3.0 Conclusions

The study concludes that community participation represents a fundamental approach to ensuring the success of donor-funded projects in low-resource countries. Evidence from the analyzed literature demonstrates a direct correlation between the extent of community participation and the achievement of project goals. When communities are fully and actively engaged throughout the project lifecycle, sustainability of outcomes is significantly enhanced. Conversely, when community participation levels remain low, project sustainability is severely compromised, as witnessed in numerous development initiatives across low-resource regions. The critical analysis of the five journal articles

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reveals that effective community participation requires a structured approach that encompasses all phases of the project cycle. This begins with rapport-building, where project managers engage with communities to identify genuine needs through a process of collaborative problem discovery. This initial engagement establishes the foundation for community ownership, which is essential for long-term project viability.

The research further concludes that specific participatory techniques positively impact project sustainability. Particularly important are participatory planning and design, which directly influence the quality of implementation. A comprehensive approach that integrates participatory needs assessment with planning processes yields superior outcomes compared to top-down approaches where communities are merely informed or consulted. The analysis confirms that effective participation requires local expertise to bridge cultural and knowledge gaps. More significantly, the research identifies the need to refine bottom-up participation theory by focusing on practical implementation efficiency. This refinement entails ensuring genuine community engagement in decision-making processes rather than superficial involvement that lacks substantive power. The evidence indicates that donor-funded projects achieve their intended outcomes when local communities transition from being passive recipients to active stakeholders with meaningful influence over project decisions and implementation strategies.

4.0 Recommendations

The five-article analysis recommends the strengthening of community participation in donor-funded projects, right from their inception to project closure and handover. Emphasis should be directed to community members' commitment as they participate in the project cycle. The adequacy of project inputs, availability of community groups' formation, capacity building, and level of acceptance, awareness, and resource provision should also be enhanced. Community people or beneficiaries have to be included in all phases of project development. The community also have to be trained on participatory practices in development involvements. Proper communication should be enhanced as a recommendation through the project management cycle as well clear distribution of roles for all stakeholders within water management. Community members or beneficiaries should also have consistent training to empower and increase their understanding regarding project sustainability or program program maintenance.

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