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Ernest Mushi & Njenga Gitahi

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The Effect of Ethical Practices in Project Management On the Quality of Non-Governmental Organization Projects in Rwanda: A Case Study of Inspire, Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda

Ernest Mushi[1] & Njenga Gitahi[2]
[1]School of Business and Economics, Mount Kenya University
[2]School of Business and Economics, Mount Kenya University, Rwanda

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of ethical practices on the quality of projects implemented by non-governmental organizations in Kigali, Rwanda, using Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda as a case study, with particular focus on accountability, integrity, and compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks. The research was guided by Stakeholder Theory, Social Contract Theory, and Ethical Leadership Theory, which collectively framed the ethical dimensions of organizational performance and governance. A mixed-methods case study design was employed, targeting 114 staff across five departments, with a sample of 88 respondents determined using Yamane's formula and selected through simple random and convenience sampling to ensure inclusivity and representation. The ANOVA results showed that the overall regression model was statistically significant (F = 656.934, p < 0.001), indicating that the ethical practice variables jointly had a significant effect on the quality of NGO projects. The multiple regression analysis revealed positive coefficients for all three ethical practice variables, implying that improvements in accountability (β = 0.121), integrity (B = 0.487), and compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks (β = 0.145) were associated with improvements in project quality. Among the predictors, integrity recorded the highest standardized beta coefficient (β = 0.169), indicating that it contributed relatively more to project quality than accountability (β = 0.056) and compliance (β = 0.089). The Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated strong positive and statistically significant relationships between each ethical practice and project quality. Accountability had a strong positive correlation with project quality (r = 0.834, p < 0.001), integrity also exhibited a very strong positive relationship (r = 0.848, p < 0.001), while compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks showed the strongest positive correlation with project quality (r = 0.855, p < 0.001). These findings indicate that higher levels of ethical practices are consistently associated with higher levels of project quality.

Key Words: *Accountability, Ethical Practices*, *Integrity, Compliance, Management and Quality of Projects*

1. Introduction and Background

Ethical practices form the cornerstone of project success in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) worldwide, fostering transparency, accountability, and trust among stakeholders. Historically, NGOs have been instrumental in addressing social, economic, and humanitarian issues. In the Rwandan context, Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) has been a pivotal player in implementing projects aimed at improving child welfare. The organization's projects have contributed to a 15% increase in primary school enrollment and a 10% reduction in child malnutrition rates between 2015 and 2020 (MINEDUC, 2021). However, ethical lapses, such as inadequate stakeholder consultation, have occasionally undermined project outcomes, highlighting the critical need for rigorous ethical practices to enhance project quality (Uwitonze & Niyonsenga, 2023). Previous studies on Rwanda's NGO sector, such as those by Mukamana (2019), emphasize that ethical practices significantly influence project sustainability and stakeholder satisfaction.

Current policies and frameworks in Rwanda, such as the Rwanda Governance Board's NGO registration and compliance guidelines, underscore the importance of ethics in project implementation. These policies mandate annual audits and stakeholder engagement as prerequisites for project approval, contributing to a 20% improvement in project transparency from 2018 to 2022 (RGB, 2022). Nevertheless, gaps remain in monitoring and enforcing these policies, necessitating further research to identify effective mechanisms for strengthening ethical compliance.

The study advances knowledge by integrating Social Contract Theory, Ethical Leadership Theory, and Stakeholder Theory to explain how ethical practices enhance NGO project quality. It demonstrates that project quality depends not only on technical project management skills but also on ethical governance, leadership, and stakeholder engagement, while providing empirical evidence from Rwanda to address a gap in the literature.

The study provides practical guidance for IEE Rwanda and similar NGOs by promoting stronger ethics policies, ethical leadership, stakeholder engagement, transparent procurement, accountability, and ethics-based monitoring systems. It also demonstrates to donors, regulators, and NGO practitioners that strengthening ethical practices enhances project quality, beneficiary satisfaction, organizational credibility, and the sustainability of development projects.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite numerous reports and scholarly research emphasizing the importance of ethical practices in improving the quality of projects implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), significant challenges persist in the operational frameworks of these organizations in Kigali, Rwanda. According to a 2023 report by the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), 47% of NGOs operating in Rwanda reported inconsistencies in their adherence to ethical standards, leading to reduced trust among stakeholders and beneficiaries. Additionally, the Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda projects in Kigali have faced scrutiny due to challenges in transparency, accountability, and compliance with the legal and regulatory frameworks governing NGO operations. These issues highlight a crucial gap between ethical guidelines and their practical application in project execution, which directly affects project quality and beneficiary outcomes. Furthermore, while the Rwandan government has established stringent policies such as the National NGOs Policy of 2020 to promote transparency and integrity, many NGOs still struggle to implement these guidelines effectively. A report by Transparency International Rwanda (2023) revealed that 32% of surveyed NGOs failed to align their practices with the policy requirements, often citing limited capacity and resource constraints. This discrepancy has not only hampered the delivery of high-quality projects but also contributed to a growing perception of inefficiency among NGOs.

The situational gap becomes evident in Kigali, where NGOs like SCI play a critical role in providing education, health, and child protection services to vulnerable populations. However, a 2023 survey by the Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC) revealed that 41% of beneficiaries expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of services delivered by NGOs, attributing this to poor ethical practices such as mismanagement of funds, favoritism, and lack of stakeholder engagement. For instance, the Kigali Education Support Program, led by SCI, reported a 15% shortfall in its project deliverables in 2022, largely due to non-compliance with ethical standards and inadequate oversight mechanisms.

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of ethical practices such as accountability, integrity, and compliance with legal frameworks on the quality of NGO projects in Kigali, Rwanda, using Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) as a case study. By identifying the challenges and proposing actionable solutions, this research aims to enhance the effectiveness and credibility of NGO interventions, ultimately improving outcomes for beneficiaries and fostering sustainable development in Rwanda.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The general objective of this study was to assess the effect of Ethical Practices in Project Management on The Quality of Non-Governmental Organization Projects in Rwanda: A Case Study of Inspire, Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda

1.1 Specific Objectives

i. To assess the effect of accountability on the management and quality of projects implemented by non-governmental organizations in Kigali.
ii. To examine the effect of integrity on the management and quality of projects implemented by non-governmental organizations in Kigali.
iii. To analyze the effect of compliance with Legal Regulatory Frameworks on the management and quality of projects implemented by non-governmental organizations in Kigali.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

Ho1: Accountability has no significant effect on the management and quality of projects implemented by non-governmental organizations in Kigali

Ho2: Integrity has no significant effect on the management and quality of projects implemented by non-governmental organizations in Kigali.

Ho3: Compliance with legal regulatory frameworks has no significant effect on the management and quality of projects implemented by non-governmental organizations in Kigali

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Accountability in Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

In Rwanda, the *Rwanda Governance Board* (RGB) provides specific guidelines for NGOs operating within the country, emphasizing the importance of ethical behavior and accountability in project implementation. The RGB's (*National Governance Policy*, 2013) articulates expectations for NGOs in ensuring transparency in their operations. NGOs are encouraged to adopt practices such as publishing annual reports, disclosing financial statements, and ensuring that all project processes, from inception to closure, are documented and accessible to stakeholders. This local context is critical for Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda as it navigates both international and local governance frameworks to ensure that its projects meet ethical standards and contribute positively to the community.

2.1.2 Integrity in Fostering Trust and Effective Project

Integrity in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) plays a fundamental role in fostering trust and effective project implementation. According to *The Ethical Guidelines for International NGOs* (World Council of Churches, 1997), integrity is pivotal in ensuring honest communication with stakeholders. This principle is emphasized in various codes of conduct and ethical policies for NGOs, such as *The Code of Ethics for NGOs* (International NGO Accountability Charter, 2008), which stresses the importance of transparency in organizational processes. As suggested by *Husted in Ethics in International Business: The Influence of Institutional Environment* (1999), communication with stakeholders should be transparent, ensuring stakeholders are well-informed and engaged throughout the project lifecycle. These guidelines aim to prevent any form of manipulation or dishonesty that could undermine the project's success and public trust.

2.1.3 Legal and Regulatory Compliance in NGO Projects

Compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks is critical for the operational success and ethical practice of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Registration and licensing requirements ensure that NGOs operate legally and within the bounds of the country's regulatory environment. According to the Law No. 04/2012 of the Republic of Rwanda on Non-Governmental Organizations, all NGOs must register with the Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) to obtain the necessary legal standing. This legal requirement is a foundation for the legitimacy of NGOs within the country (Republic of Rwanda, 2012). Further, adherence to labor laws is fundamental to maintaining ethical work practices. The Rwanda Labor Code (Law No. 66/2018 of 30/08/2018) outlines the employment standards, workers' rights, and employer obligations, including safe working conditions and non-discriminatory practices (Rwanda Law, 2018). Additionally, international guidelines, such as the

International Labour Organization (ILO) standards, provide a broader framework for labor law compliance in NGOs (International Labour Organization, 2019).

2.1.4 Quality of Projects Non-Governmental Organizations

According to the "Principles of Project Management" (PMI, 2017), project effectiveness is a key indicator of the success of any project. Effectiveness can be measured by how well the project delivers on its objectives and intended outcomes. The Project Management Institute (PMI) outlines specific methodologies that ensure the effective execution of projects, including risk management, stakeholder engagement, and continuous monitoring, which align with achieving the desired results. Furthermore, as suggested by "Managing Project Quality" by Lewis (2012), quality management practices directly influence the effectiveness of NGO projects. These practices include setting clear objectives, ensuring robust project planning, and monitoring progress against predefined metrics. In line with these approaches, the quality of project output in NGOs such as Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda is shaped by the extent to which the project is implemented according to its objectives and the resources allocated

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Stakeholder Theory

The Stakeholder Theory, initially proposed by R. Edward Freeman in 1984, posits that organizations should consider the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders, in their decision-making processes. Freeman argued that organizations have a moral obligation to create value for a broad group of stakeholders, which includes employees, customers, suppliers, and the community. The theory emphasizes that ethical practices within an organization are essential in ensuring that stakeholder interests are balanced and upheld. It argues that a failure to account for these interests may lead to a decline in the organization's legitimacy, trust, and overall success (Freeman, 1984).

Stakeholder Theory is highly relevant to the study on ethical practices and the quality of NGO projects, especially in the context of Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda. NGOs like Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) rely heavily on the support of various stakeholders, including donors, local communities, governments, and other partners. If Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) engages with these stakeholders in an ethical manner, it will likely improve the quality of its projects by ensuring that the needs and interests of all parties are met. This aligns with the findings of authors like Moyi (2017), who argued that NGOs that fail to uphold ethical standards face challenges in stakeholder engagement, leading to a decline in project quality. The theory provides a framework for understanding how Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE)'s ethical practices impact the delivery and sustainability of their projects in Rwanda.

2.2.2 Social Contract Theory

Social Contract Theory, notably advanced by philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes (1651), John Locke (1689), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762), emphasizes the idea of mutual agreement between individuals and the society they live in, focusing on the ethical obligations of individuals and organizations toward each other. According to Social Contract Theory, people and organizations enter into an implicit agreement where they agree to follow societal rules and norms to ensure fairness, justice, and order. This agreement forms the basis for ethical behavior and the legitimacy of organizations, as they must operate within the boundaries of social expectations.

In relation to the study on ethical practices and the quality of NGO projects in Rwanda, Social Contract Theory provides a framework for understanding the ethical obligations of Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda toward the local population and other stakeholders. The theory suggests that NGOs, through their ethical practices, are bound by a social contract to act in the best interests of the community. This includes maintaining transparency, fulfilling promises, and operating with fairness. In the African context, the concept of the social contract is particularly relevant, as it aligns with communal values of trust, collaboration, and social responsibility (Oluwatoyin, 2019). For Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE), adhering to this social contract can positively influence the quality of their projects and ensure that they meet both local and international standards of ethical conduct.

In Rwanda, where the importance of rebuilding trust after the 1994 genocide is critical, the social contract plays a significant role in shaping ethical practices in NGOs. According to Gacuyago and Uwayezu (2021), NGOs that honor their social contract with local communities are more likely to foster trust and improve project outcomes. For Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE), ensuring ethical practices aligns with this social contract, promoting the legitimacy and sustainability of their projects. By acting in accordance with societal expectations, Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) can positively influence the quality of its projects, benefiting children and their families.

2.2.3 Ethical Leadership Theory

Ethical Leadership Theory, as introduced by Brown and Treviño (2006), focuses on the role of leaders in promoting ethical behavior within organizations. The theory suggests that ethical leaders play a crucial role in shaping organizational culture and ensuring that ethical standards are maintained. Ethical leadership is characterized by fairness, transparency, and a commitment to doing the right thing, even in difficult situations. Leaders are expected to lead by example and serve as role models for ethical behavior. This theory emphasizes the importance of leadership in shaping organizational practices and ensuring that ethical values are embedded in every aspect of an organization’s operations.

In the context of Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda, Ethical Leadership Theory is relevant to understanding how the leadership within the organization influences the quality of its projects. The behavior and ethical standards set by the leadership in Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) will directly affect how staff members approach their work and interact with local communities. Leaders who prioritize ethical decision-making and transparency can instill these values in their teams, ensuring that the organization operates in a way that is consistent with its mission to improve the lives of children in Rwanda. According to Ngobeni (2020), ethical leadership in NGOs enhances the quality of projects by creating an ethical organizational culture, which fosters trust and collaboration with local communities. This leads to better project outcomes, as ethical standards guide project implementation and decision-making.

In an African context, the application of Ethical Leadership Theory has been crucial in improving NGO effectiveness. Studies such as those by Okpara and Wynn (2019) suggest that ethical leadership has a profound impact on organizational outcomes, particularly in African countries where trust in institutions may be low. By fostering ethical leadership, NGOs like Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) can ensure that their projects are not only effective but also contribute to community development in a manner that respects local values and norms. This theory's relevance to Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) is clear: by promoting ethical leadership within the organization, Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) can improve its project outcomes and strengthen its relationships with local stakeholders, ensuring that its initiatives are both impactful and sustainable.

2.3 Critical Review and Research Gap identification

2.3.1 Critical Review

This empirical review provides a valuable foundation for understanding the relationship between ethical practices and project quality within the Rwandan NGO sector. It effectively synthesizes research findings on key ethical dimensions, including accountability, integrity, and legal compliance, and their impact on project outcomes. Studies by Karanja (2017), Njoroge (2015), Mwaura (2016), and others demonstrate the crucial role of transparency in financial reporting, clear decision-making processes, and effective stakeholder communication in enhancing project success. Similarly, research by Mugenzi (2019), Mukamana and Kamana (2020), and Wambui and Njoroge (2018) underscores the significance of integrity, emphasizing the importance of honest communication, fair resource allocation, and consistent ethical conduct in building trust and fostering successful project outcomes. Furthermore, research by Niyonzima (2021), Hakizimana and Mutuyimana (2022), and Kamanzi (2020) highlights the critical role of legal and regulatory compliance in ensuring project success, demonstrating that adherence to legal frameworks enhances project approval rates, improves project quality, and strengthens relationships with donors and stakeholders.

However, the review also presents certain limitations. While it effectively summarizes key findings, it falls short in its exploration of specific ethical dilemmas faced by NGOs in the Rwandan context. For instance, the review could delve deeper into the ethical challenges arising from power imbalances in community engagement, the potential for exploitation of vulnerable populations, and the ethical implications of utilizing technology in project delivery. Moreover, the review largely relies on quantitative data, potentially overlooking the nuanced perspectives and lived experiences of stakeholders. Incorporating qualitative methodologies, such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, would provide richer insights into the complexities of ethical decision-making within the NGO sector.

2.3.2 Research Gap Identification

The literature review identified several research gaps. Historically, limited attention has been given to how the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi and its aftermath have shaped the ethical environment, trust, community relationships, and operational performance of NGOs in Rwanda. Understanding these long-term influences is essential for developing sustainable and context-sensitive interventions. Conceptually, previous studies have not adequately examined specific ethical dilemmas faced by NGOs, including ethical challenges in data collection and use, informed consent, data privacy, engagement with vulnerable populations, and the ethical implications of technology in project implementation, such as digital equity, data security, and unintended consequences.

Technologically, there is limited research on the role of emerging technologies in strengthening ethical practices within NGOs. Future studies should investigate the potential of technologies such as blockchain for transparent financial reporting, artificial intelligence for ethical decision-making, and digital platforms for improving stakeholder participation and accountability. Addressing these historical, conceptual, and technological gaps would provide a more comprehensive understanding of ethical practices and improve the effectiveness, transparency, and sustainability of NGO projects in Rwanda. The literature review identified several research gaps. Geographically, limited attention has been given to variations in ethical practices, project quality, and stakeholder engagement across different districts of Kigali and other regions of Rwanda. Comparative studies across NGOs operating in diverse locations would provide a broader understanding of factors influencing project outcomes.

Contextually, previous studies have not adequately examined how power dynamics among NGOs, donors, government agencies, and local communities, as well as political, economic, and governance factors such as government policies, economic instability, and corruption, influence ethical decision-making and project quality. Methodologically, existing research relies heavily on quantitative approaches, with limited use of qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, case studies, and participatory research. These approaches would generate deeper insights into stakeholder experiences, ethical decision-making, organizational culture, and the broader social context while enhancing stakeholder participation and the relevance of research findings. Addressing these geographical, contextual, and methodological gaps would strengthen the understanding of ethical practices and project quality in Rwanda's NGO sector and support the development of more effective, inclusive, and sustainable interventions.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrates the relationship between ethical practices as independent variables, organizational capacity as intervening variables, and the quality of NGO projects as the dependent variable. Ethical practices, encompassing accountability, integrity, and compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks, directly influence the quality of NGO projects by fostering transparency, fairness, and adherence to standards. For instance, transparent financial reporting and honest communication enhance stakeholder trust, which improves beneficiary satisfaction and

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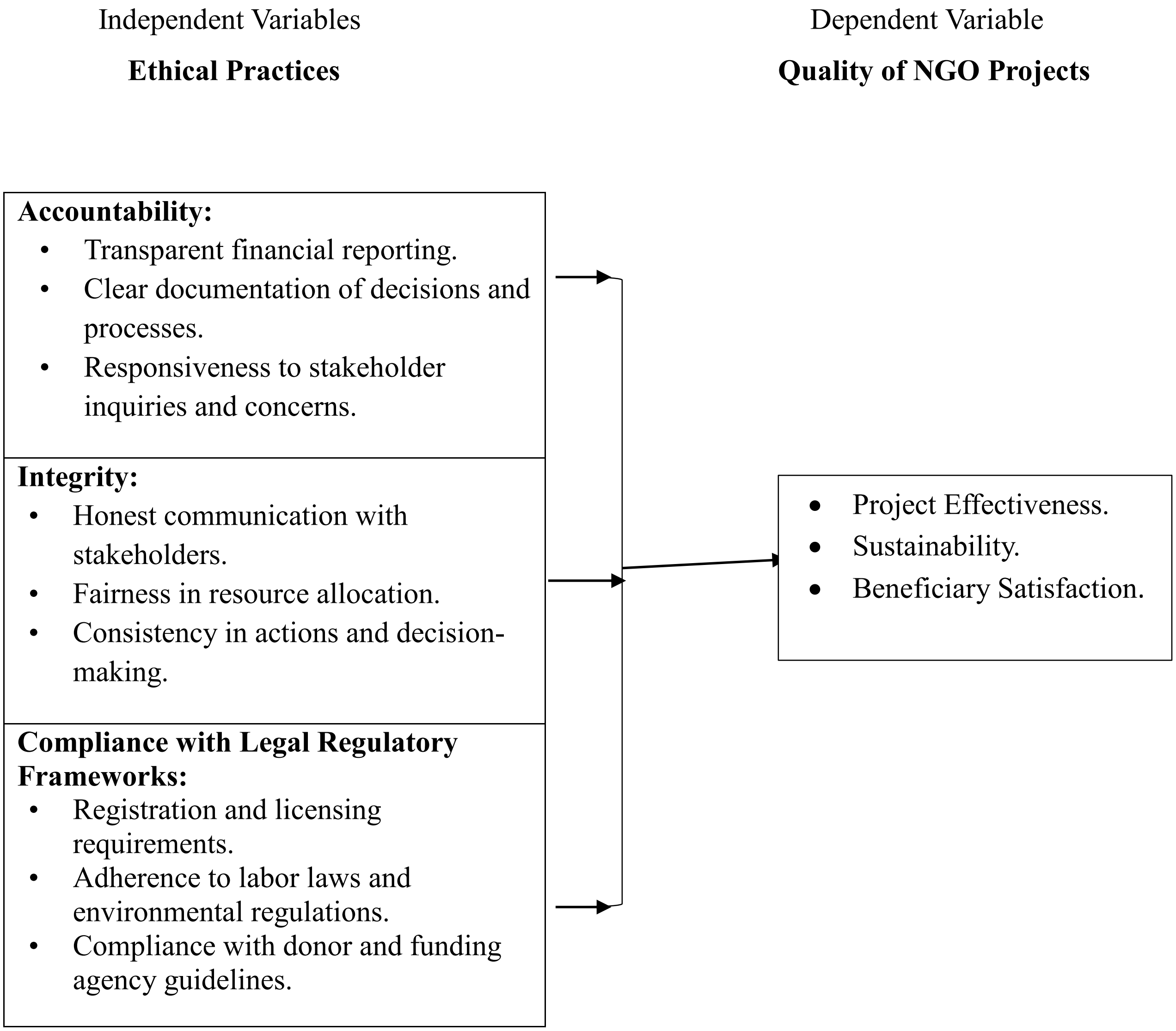
project sustainability. Simultaneously, organizational capacity intervenes by amplifying or mitigating the impact of ethical practices. Human resource competence ensures that accountability and integrity are effectively implemented, while resource availability supports adherence to legal requirements and project execution. Monitoring and evaluation systems enable continuous assessment and improvement, ensuring that ethical practices translate into effective, sustainable, and satisfactory project outcomes. Collectively, these interactions demonstrate how ethical practices, supported by robust organizational capacity, drive the quality of NGO projects in Kigali, Rwanda.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher (2026)

3. Methodology

This study adopts a case study research design to explore the relationship between ethical practices and the quality of Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) projects. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies to ensure a

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robust and comprehensive understanding of the topic. Quantitative data were used to measure specific variables, such as adherence to ethical guidelines and project performance indicators, while qualitative data provided nuanced insights into the perceptions, experiences, and contextual factors of stakeholders involved. The target population for this study consisted of 114 individuals directly involved in or knowledgeable about the implementation of project at Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda. the sample size was determined using Yamane's formula for sample size calculated to 88 respondents.

This research employs a combination of simple random sampling and convenience sampling techniques. This study utilized both primary and secondary data collection instruments to gather comprehensive and reliable data. The primary data collection tools included structured questionnaires and interview guides. To ensure the reliability of the research instruments, a pilot study was conducted on a sample of 10 individuals who are not part of the actual study population but belong to an institution similar to Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda. A regression model was used to assess the relationship between variables. Narrative analysis was used to explain the qualitative results of the survey.

$$\mathbf{Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon}$$

Where Y = Project Quality
α = Model Constant
$\beta_{1\text{-}3}$ = Model Coefficients
ε = Error Term (unknown random error assumed as normally distributed)
X_1 = Accountability
X_2 = Integrity
X_3 = Compliance with Legal and Regulatory Frameworks

To ensure the reliability and validity of the quantitative results, diagnostic tests were performed before interpreting the regression output. These tests included normality tests to confirm that the residuals are normally distributed, multicollinearity tests using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to check for interdependence among independent variables, and heteroscedasticity tests to ensure that error terms have constant variance. The analyzed data were presented in tables, graphs, and narrative form for clarity and ease of interpretation.

4. Results

4.1 Inferential Statistical Analysis

The inferential analysis examined the influence of ethical practices—accountability, integrity, and compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks—on the quality of NGO projects at Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda. The ANOVA results showed that the overall regression model was statistically significant ($F = 656.934$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the ethical practice variables jointly had a significant effect on the quality of NGO projects. Since the significance value was below the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis that ethical practices have no influence on project

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quality was rejected. This confirms that the regression model adequately explains variations in project quality and is appropriate for predicting project outcomes.

The multiple regression analysis revealed positive coefficients for all three ethical practice variables, implying that improvements in accountability (B = 0.121), integrity (B = 0.487), and compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks (B = 0.145) were associated with improvements in project quality. Among the predictors, integrity recorded the highest standardized beta coefficient (β = 0.169), indicating that it contributed relatively more to project quality than accountability (β = 0.056) and compliance (β = 0.089). However, the individual predictors did not achieve statistical significance at the 5% level (Accountability: $p = 0.072$; Integrity: $p = 0.068$; Compliance: $p = 0.098$), suggesting that although each variable had a positive influence, their independent effects were not statistically significant when considered separately. Their combined influence, however, was statistically significant, as confirmed by the ANOVA results.

The Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated strong positive and statistically significant relationships between each ethical practice and project quality. Accountability had a strong positive correlation with project quality ($r = 0.834$, $p < 0.001$), integrity also exhibited a very strong positive relationship ($r = 0.848$, $p < 0.001$), while compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks showed the strongest positive correlation with project quality ($r = 0.855$, $p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that higher levels of ethical practices are consistently associated with higher levels of project quality.

Overall, the inferential statistics provide sufficient evidence to conclude that ethical practices significantly influence the quality of NGO projects. Although the individual regression coefficients were not statistically significant, the strong and significant correlations, together with the highly significant overall regression model, demonstrate that accountability, integrity, and compliance collectively contribute to improving project quality within NGOs. Integrity emerged as the strongest predictor in the regression model, while compliance exhibited the strongest bivariate association with project quality. These findings support the view that strengthening ethical governance enhances project effectiveness, accountability, sustainability, and stakeholder confidence.

ANOVA

Table 1: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1130.466	3	376.822	656.934	.000[a]
	Residual	47.964	84	0.571		
	Total	1178.430	87			

Predictors: *(Constant), Accountability, Integrity, Compliance with Legal Regulatory Frameworks*

a. ***Dependent Variable:*** *Quality of NGO Projects*

Source: Primary Data (2026)

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4.1.1 Regression Analysis

Table 1: Multiple Regression Analysis

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	3.782	.941		2.389	.000
	Accountability	.121	.108	.056	.708	.072
	Integrity	.487	.226	.169	1.836	.068
	Compliance with Legal Regulatory Frameworks	.145	.207	.089	.018	.098

a. Dependent Variable: Quality of NGO Projects

Source: Researcher (2026)

4.1.2 Correlation Coefficients

Table 3: Correlation Matrix Results

		Accountability	Integrity	Compliance with Legal Regulatory Frameworks	Quality of NGO Projects
Accountability	Pearson Correlation	.834**			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	79			
Integrity	Pearson Correlation	.848**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	N	79	79		
Compliance with Legal Regulatory Frameworks	Pearson Correlation	.855**	.843**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	N	79	79	79	
Quality of NGO Projects	Pearson Correlation	.834**	.848**	.855**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	79	79	79	79

Source: SPSS Results, 2026

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5.2 Conclusions

This study concluded that ethical practices significantly enhance project quality in non-governmental organizations, with Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda providing strong evidence of this relationship. Projects implemented within a strong ethical framework were more effective, timely, sustainable, and responsive to beneficiary needs. The findings further showed that integrity, accountability, and compliance produced the greatest impact when implemented together, highlighting the importance of an integrated ethical governance approach.

In relation to the first objective, integrity had the strongest positive influence on project quality ($r = 0.848$, $p < 0.01$). Honest communication, fairness, and ethical leadership fostered trust among staff, donors, and beneficiaries, resulting in smoother implementation and greater project acceptance. The study concluded that integrity is not only a moral principle but also a strategic asset that directly improves project effectiveness.

The study also concluded that accountability significantly improved project quality ($r = 0.834$, $p < 0.01$). Effective reporting systems, financial transparency, and stakeholder responsiveness promoted efficient resource utilization, timely implementation, and corrective action, demonstrating that accountability strengthens project performance beyond meeting audit requirements. Finally, compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks showed the strongest association with project quality ($r = 0.855$, $p < 0.01$). Adherence to national laws, donor requirements, and safeguarding policies reduced operational risks, enhanced sustainability, and reinforced both integrity and accountability. Overall, the study concluded that NGOs, regulators, and development partners should adopt integrated ethical governance systems to achieve sustainable, high-quality project outcomes.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that Inspire Educate and Empower (IEE) Rwanda, other NGOs, and regulatory authorities strengthen the institutionalization of integrity, accountability, and compliance as core elements of project management. Organizations should promote ethical leadership, transparent decision-making, fair procurement, and proper documentation to build trust among staff, donors, and beneficiaries. They should also strengthen internal accountability through regular audits, monitoring and evaluation, and timely reporting to improve efficiency and project performance.

NGOs should ensure full compliance with national laws, donor requirements, and safeguarding policies to minimize risks and promote sustainable project outcomes. Regular staff training should reinforce ethical standards and strengthen the capacity to implement projects responsibly while enhancing community engagement. Development partners and regulators should provide effective guidance and oversight to promote transparency, accountability, and high-quality project implementation.

The study further recommends adopting integrated ethical governance systems, as the findings demonstrate that combining integrity, accountability, and compliance significantly improves project effectiveness, sustainability, and stakeholder trust, making ethical governance a strategic driver of long-term development success.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Study

Future studies should adopt longitudinal research designs to examine the long-term effects of integrity, accountability, and compliance on project sustainability, community trust, donor confidence, and overall project performance. Such studies would provide deeper insights into the lasting impact of ethical practices beyond a single point in time.

Comparative studies involving multiple NGOs in Rwanda and the East African region are also recommended to assess how organizational culture, regulatory environments, and donor requirements influence the relationship between ethical practices and project quality. This would generate broader evidence to support policy development and capacity building across the sector.

In addition, qualitative research should explore stakeholder perceptions, community engagement, and organizational culture to better understand how ethical practices are implemented and how beneficiaries perceive project quality. Finally, future research should investigate the economic and social impacts of ethical governance on project scalability, resource utilization, sustainability, and stakeholder trust. These approaches would strengthen both the theoretical and practical understanding of ethical governance and improve project management across NGOs.

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