



Contribution of Stakeholders Participation on Project Sustainability of Compassion International Rwanda's Initiatives

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Abstract: *This study investigated the contribution of stakeholder salience on the sustainability of development projects implemented by Compassion International Rwanda. It used a descriptive research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods. The target population consisted of 363 individuals, with a sample of 190 respondents selected using Slovin's formula, including staff from Compassion International Rwanda, local government authorities, NGO partners, educational institutions, and beneficiaries (heads of families). A total of 185 questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 97%. Inferential analysis, conducted using SPSS software (version 21), revealed a statistically significant relationship between stakeholder salience and project sustainability, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.786$, indicating a strong positive relationship. Regression analysis further supported this, with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.870, demonstrating that stakeholder salience was a major predictor of project sustainability. The p-value of 0.000 signified the statistical significance of this relationship, suggesting that the effect of stakeholder salience on project sustainability was highly unlikely to have occurred by chance. The study concluded that stakeholder salience played a crucial role in the sustainability of projects at Compassion International Rwanda, with higher levels of stakeholder involvement contributing to more sustainable outcomes. Based on these findings, it was recommended that Compassion International Rwanda strengthen stakeholder engagement at every stage of project implementation. By actively involving stakeholders, particularly those with high salience, the organization could better align project goals with stakeholder needs, minimize conflicts, and enhance long-term project sustainability.*

Keywords: Stakeholders Participation, Project Sustainability, stakeholder salience, stakeholder's involvement and compassion international Rwanda's Initiatives

How to cite this work (APA):

Hategekimana, L. & Tarus, T. (2025). Contribution of Stakeholders Participation on Project Sustainability for compassion international Rwanda's Initiatives. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 9(2), 261 – 274. <https://doi.org/10.59765/9.2.xuy>.

1. Introduction

Globally, stakeholder participation is recognized as a critical element for ensuring the success and sustainability

of development projects. According to the World Bank (2019), involving stakeholders at all stages of a project significantly increases the likelihood of achieving sustainable outcomes. The World Bank's report

emphasized that projects with higher levels of stakeholder engagement are 20% more likely to meet their goals compared to those with minimal involvement. Stakeholder engagement ensures that the diverse needs and interests of various groups are considered, leading to more inclusive, effective, and sustainable results. Jones et al. (2020) further support this claim, showing that projects with strong stakeholder participation in South Asia experienced a 30% higher sustainability rate, highlighting the global importance of participatory development approaches.

In developed countries, stakeholder participation has become deeply embedded in project management and governance practices. In nations like the United States, Canada, and several European countries, active engagement of stakeholders is seen as essential for transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making. Smith and Brown (2023) assert that renewable energy projects in these countries with robust stakeholder involvement are 60% more likely to succeed in the long term. These projects emphasize collaboration across diverse groups, from local communities to government agencies, to ensure their long-term success. The approach, widely adopted in sectors such as infrastructure, healthcare, and energy, demonstrates that stakeholder engagement is essential for ensuring sustainability in developed nations.

In Africa, the role of stakeholder participation is becoming increasingly recognized as essential for achieving sustainable development outcomes. However, the full integration of stakeholders, particularly in rural and underserved areas, remains a challenge due to resource constraints and institutional limitations. Ochieng and Awiti (2021) found that projects with strong stakeholder participation in Africa had a sustainability rate of 75%, compared to only 40% for those with poor engagement. Mensah and Antwi (2020) further support this, showing that in Ghana, the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making processes resulted in a 30% increase in project sustainability. This illustrates the need for greater stakeholder involvement in African development projects to foster ownership, reduce resistance, and ensure long-term success.

In East Africa, the importance of stakeholder participation is gaining increasing recognition in the success of development projects. Countries like Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania have adopted participatory approaches that engage stakeholders in decision-making, project planning, and implementation. Kessy and Mushi (2020) found that projects involving key stakeholders in the East African Community saw a 30% improvement in sustainability. Nkurunziza and Uwimana (2022) also emphasize that engaging local health workers, community leaders, and beneficiaries in decision-making processes led to a 25% improvement in project outcomes. These findings underline the need for continuous and inclusive stakeholder

involvement to ensure project success and sustainability in the region.

In Rwanda, stakeholder participation has been recognized as a cornerstone of the country's development strategy. The Rwandan government has made significant strides in promoting inclusive development, where local communities and stakeholders are central to project decision-making. Mukarugwiza and Niyonzima (2019) found that projects involving local communities had a sustainability rate of 70%, compared to just 45% for those with limited engagement. In education, Uwitonze and Ndahayo (2020) observed that schools with active stakeholder participation, including parents and local authorities, had a 25% higher success rate in meeting educational goals. Similarly, Habimana and Mukashema (2021) demonstrated that engaging local health workers and community leaders in health projects led to a 30% increase in project sustainability. These studies highlight how effective stakeholder engagement contributes to project success and sustainability across various sectors in Rwanda.

1.1 Problem Statement

In the context of Compassion International Rwanda, stakeholder salience plays a crucial role in the sustainability of development projects. Stakeholder salience refers to the degree to which stakeholders are prioritized in project processes based on their power, legitimacy, and urgency. When stakeholders with significant influence, such as local community leaders, government officials, and beneficiaries, are properly engaged, projects are more likely to align with community needs, leading to greater ownership and long-term success. However, despite its importance, there remains a challenge in adequately recognizing and engaging these stakeholders in decision-making and project implementation processes. As a result, the full potential of Compassion International Rwanda's initiatives is not being realized, leading to missed opportunities for meaningful collaboration, increased project delays, and diminished sustainability.

The lack of stakeholder salience has been a consistent issue, with many projects facing difficulties such as unrealistic expectations, lack of clear communication, and delays in the implementation of critical components. This inadequacy in addressing the needs and priorities of stakeholders can lead to ineffective monitoring and evaluation, preventing timely intervention and the necessary adjustments to improve project outcomes. Moreover, insufficient salience often undermines the trust and commitment of local communities and other key partners, reducing their willingness to engage and support the project long-term. This lack of engagement and prioritization of stakeholders with the highest salience is detrimental to project sustainability, as it fails to ensure that

the projects are truly community-driven or responsive to the evolving needs of the beneficiaries.

Existing literature on stakeholder engagement and salience has shown that prioritizing the right stakeholders significantly contributes to the success of development projects. For instance, a study by Smith and Brown (2023) highlights that in developed countries, renewable energy projects with strong stakeholder salience are 60% more likely to succeed in the long term. Similarly, Ochieng and Awiti (2021) found that projects in Africa that engaged stakeholders with high salience demonstrated a sustainability rate of 75%, compared to 40% for those with poor engagement. These studies underscore the importance of properly identifying and engaging key stakeholders, whose influence and urgency directly impact project success.

However, there is a research gap in understanding how stakeholder salience specifically influences the sustainability of initiatives in the context of Rwanda, particularly within organizations like Compassion International Rwanda. While previous studies have focused on stakeholder engagement in general, there is limited research that examines the direct impact of stakeholder salience particularly in rural and underserved communities in Rwanda. This study aims to fill this gap by assessing how prioritizing stakeholders based on their salience contributes to the sustainability of Compassion International Rwanda's projects, exploring how power, legitimacy, and urgency of stakeholders shape project outcomes and long-term success. By addressing this gap, the research will provide valuable insights into how stakeholder salience can be leveraged to improve project planning, execution, and sustainability in development initiatives in Rwanda.

This study sought to achieve the following research objective:

To assess the contribution of stakeholder Salience on project sustainability of Compassion International Rwanda's initiatives.

2. Literature Review

2.1.1 Stakeholder Participation

Aguirre et al. (2019) define stakeholder participation as a dynamic and collaborative process in which stakeholders actively engage in co-creation and decision-making to ensure that projects align with local needs and priorities. This approach emphasizes the importance of joint problem-solving and adaptive strategies, which enhance the long-term outcomes of development initiatives. Luyet et al. (2019) argue that meaningful participation involves more than just inclusion; it requires the empowerment of

stakeholders to influence key project decisions. This perspective challenges earlier models, suggesting that stakeholder engagement should extend beyond mere consultation to enable participants to shape the project's trajectory and outcomes. Additionally, de Vente et al. (2020) highlight that stakeholder participation fosters social learning, where stakeholders share knowledge, develop mutual understanding, and co-create innovative solutions, thus making projects more resilient to changing conditions.

Building on these concepts, Palmer et al. (2021) describe stakeholder participation as an iterative process that enhances accountability and transparency during project implementation. Santos et al. (2022) emphasize that effective participation must include diverse stakeholder representation, particularly marginalized groups, to ensure equitable decision-making. Cai and Zhang (2023) focus on the integration of digital technologies in stakeholder participation, noting that virtual platforms have expanded opportunities for real-time feedback and broader engagement, which, in turn, allows for more inclusive and responsive project management. Lastly, Martínez et al. (2024) argue that stakeholder participation is crucial in the context of sustainability projects, where long-term success depends on continuous stakeholder involvement to monitor, evaluate, and adjust project goals in response to evolving challenges.

2.1.2 Stakeholder Salience

The concept of stakeholder salience is widely used in project management and business strategy to categorize stakeholders based on their influence and to understand the importance and value assigned to their claims. The Stakeholder Salience model assesses stakeholder importance using three key attributes: Power, Legitimacy, and Urgency. Power refers to a stakeholder's ability to influence the project or organization's goals, which may stem from financial power, political influence, or control over resources. Legitimacy refers to the justification a stakeholder has for being involved in the project or decision, such as legal rights, ethical considerations, or social norms. Urgency relates to the time-sensitive nature of a stakeholder's claims and the criticality of their demands (Yejun, 2023).

According to the Stakeholder Salience model, stakeholders can be categorized into three groups: High Salience Stakeholders, who possess high power, legitimacy, and urgency. These stakeholders demand the most attention and require careful management of their needs; Medium Salience Stakeholders, who may have high power and legitimacy but lower urgency, or vice versa, necessitating a balanced approach that considers their influence and the

immediacy of their needs; and Low Salience Stakeholders, who have low power, legitimacy, and urgency, and thus require less attention (Amir, Jan & Nasir, 2019).

The Stakeholder Salience Model plays a crucial role in prioritizing stakeholder engagement by helping project managers understand the relative importance of different stakeholders. It enables the allocation of resources more effectively, focusing on building strong relationships with the most significant stakeholders. By tailoring communication strategies based on stakeholder salience, project managers can ensure that stakeholders receive the information they need in the most effective manner. Additionally, recognizing and addressing the concerns of high salience stakeholders can help proactively mitigate potential risks and obstacles that could impede the project's progress (Amir, Jan & Nasir, 2019).

2.1.3 Project Sustainability

Project sustainability has become a critical focus in contemporary project management, as organizations increasingly recognize the importance of ensuring long-term positive impacts that extend well beyond the project lifecycle (Johnson, 2023). A sustainable project is one that successfully incorporates environmental, social, and economic factors throughout its design and implementation stages, ensuring it meets current needs while safeguarding the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Sustainable Development Commission, 2019). Johnson (2023) emphasizes that these projects aim to maximize benefits while minimizing adverse impacts on stakeholders and the environment. As a result, project sustainability is not just about completing the project but about leaving a lasting positive legacy that contributes to long-term community well-being, economic development, and environmental health. One of the most essential elements in ensuring project sustainability is stakeholder engagement, which is recognized as a cornerstone in successful project management.

Brown (2022) underscores the importance of involving stakeholders in every phase of the project, particularly in the decision-making process. Projects that engage stakeholders actively tend to be more resilient, adaptable, and aligned with the needs of the community. This active participation allows the project to be continuously refined and adjusted based on stakeholder feedback, ensuring that it remains relevant throughout its life cycle. Moreover, involving stakeholders helps build a sense of ownership, which increases their investment in the project's success, ultimately contributing to its sustainability (Mitchell, 2020). According to Turner et al. (2021), stakeholder engagement improves not only the relevance and resilience of projects but also their overall performance and

outcomes. Furthermore, building partnerships among various stakeholders, including local communities, government bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector, plays a significant role in fostering sustainability. These collaborations enable the project to adapt to challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities, ensuring long-term success (Taylor, 2020).

2.2 Theoretical Review

The theoretical review examines key concepts and frameworks related to stakeholder participation, salience, and project sustainability, providing a foundation for understanding their interconnections in development projects. By exploring relevant theories and models, this section highlights the critical role these elements play in ensuring the long-term success and effectiveness of projects, particularly within organizations like Compassion International Rwanda.

2.2.1 Stakeholder Salience Theory

Stakeholder Salience Theory was developed by Mitchell, Agle, and Wood in 1997 as a way to better understand stakeholder relationships and prioritize stakeholder engagement within organizations. The theory emerged from the field of stakeholder management, where it became increasingly clear that organizations struggled to identify and engage stakeholders effectively (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). The founders sought to address this challenge by introducing a framework that assesses the importance of stakeholders using three key attributes—power, legitimacy, and urgency. The model has since become a key tool in project management and corporate governance (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Their work has significantly influenced how stakeholder management practices have evolved, particularly in terms of organizing and prioritizing stakeholders in project planning and execution.

Stakeholder Salience Theory emphasizes the need for organizations to categorize stakeholders based on three critical attributes: Power, Legitimacy, and Urgency. Power refers to a stakeholder's ability to influence organizational decisions. Legitimacy involves the justification or right of a stakeholder to be included in the decision-making process, based on legal, ethical, or social norms (Yejun, 2023). Urgency refers to the time-sensitive nature of a stakeholder's demands, where their claims require immediate attention. These three attributes combine to define the salience, or importance, of a stakeholder. Stakeholders with high salience are those who have a significant ability to impact the project's outcomes, making

them essential to consider for engagement and resource allocation (Amir, Jan & Nasir, 2019).

In the context of Compassion International Rwanda, Stakeholder Salience Theory is instrumental in assessing how different stakeholders influence the sustainability of projects. By applying this model, Compassion International Rwanda can categorize stakeholders based on their power, legitimacy, and urgency, helping prioritize engagement strategies. For instance, local government bodies and influential community leaders may hold high salience due to their critical role in influencing policy and resources for community development projects. Identifying these stakeholders and engaging them effectively ensures that Compassion International Rwanda's projects are sustainable, as they align with the needs and priorities of those who have the greatest influence over the success of these initiatives

2.2.2 Resource Dependency Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET) was initially proposed by George Homans in 1958, in his seminal work "Social Behavior as Exchange." Homans developed the theory based on principles of behavioral psychology, particularly focusing on how individuals interact and form relationships based on a rational evaluation of rewards and costs. The theory suggests that individuals seek to maximize benefits and minimize costs in social exchanges. Later, Peter Blau (1964) expanded SET by exploring how these interactions extend beyond individual exchanges to include larger organizational and societal contexts. Blau's work emphasized the role of social exchanges in creating structures within organizations and societies, and how power dynamics, norms, and expectations influence these exchanges. Over time, Social Exchange Theory has evolved and become widely used in multiple fields, including sociology, psychology, and organizational behavior, to explain relationship dynamics and decision-making processes.

At its core, Social Exchange Theory posits that human interactions are based on a cost-benefit analysis. Individuals enter relationships or engage in activities when they perceive the benefits of these exchanges (such as rewards, support, or resources) to outweigh the costs (such as time, effort, or risk). The theory suggests that relationships are sustained as long as they are perceived to be mutually beneficial and equitable (Wallas, 2024). When one party perceives an imbalance, such as one party receiving greater rewards than they give, the relationship may deteriorate. This concept can be extended to social systems and larger groups, where individuals or organizations engage in exchanges based on their perceived benefits, and these exchanges help establish

norms, trust, and long-term cooperation within groups. Social Exchange Theory, thus, offers a lens to understand human behavior by focusing on the rationality behind decisions and the interdependence of social interactions.

Social Exchange Theory is highly relevant to this study, particularly in assessing how stakeholder salience contributes to the sustainability of Compassion International Rwanda's initiatives. The theory provides a framework to understand how stakeholders, such as local community members, government officials, and other partners, decide whether to engage with the project based on the perceived costs and benefits. Stakeholders who believe they will gain substantial benefits whether material, social, or otherwise—are more likely to be actively involved and invested in the project's success. For example, if local communities perceive that Compassion International's initiatives will improve their living standards or provide valuable resources, they will likely prioritize their engagement, leading to greater project sustainability.

By applying Social Exchange Theory, Compassion International Rwanda can better understand the dynamics of its relationships with stakeholders, particularly those with high salience—such as local leaders or key community groups. These high-salience stakeholders are crucial to the success of development projects and are more likely to contribute to the project's long-term success if they perceive a favorable exchange. Furthermore, the theory helps identify how the costs of engagement (such as time or effort) must be balanced with the perceived benefits to maintain ongoing participation and commitment. Therefore, Social Exchange Theory can guide Compassion International Rwanda in designing engagement strategies that ensure stakeholders perceive the initiatives as valuable, thus fostering long-term sustainability by maintaining strong, mutually beneficial relationships

2.3 Empirical Literature

This section reviews existing studies on the impact of project governance policies on the success of peat power plant projects, with a focus on global trends, developed countries, Africa, East Africa, and Rwanda.

2.3.1 Effect of Stakeholder Salience on project Sustainability

A global study by Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) explored the effect of stakeholder salience on the sustainability of development projects across multiple sectors. The study found that projects with high stakeholder salience, where key stakeholders had power, legitimacy,

and urgency, were 25% more likely to be successful in terms of sustainability compared to those with lower stakeholder engagement. Using ANOVA, the results revealed a significant difference in sustainability outcomes across projects with varying levels of stakeholder salience ($F = 4.72, p < 0.05$). Additionally, regression analysis revealed that the coefficients for power ($\beta = 0.45$), legitimacy ($\beta = 0.37$), and urgency ($\beta = 0.29$) positively correlated with project sustainability, indicating that the stronger these attributes, the more likely the project would sustain over time.

In developed countries, a study by Brown (2022) investigated the role of stakeholder salience in the success and sustainability of large-scale infrastructure projects, focusing on renewable energy initiatives. The study found that projects with clear and continuous engagement with high-salience stakeholders (e.g., local communities, government bodies, and investors) achieved a 35% higher sustainability rate than those with minimal stakeholder involvement. ANOVA results indicated that the differences between high and low salience projects were statistically significant ($F = 5.46, p < 0.01$). The regression analysis showed that power ($\beta = 0.50$), legitimacy ($\beta = 0.40$), and urgency ($\beta = 0.42$) all had strong positive coefficients, meaning projects that involved stakeholders with these attributes were far more likely to achieve long-term success and environmental sustainability.

A study by Ochieng and Awiti (2021) focused on stakeholder salience in development projects across Africa, specifically looking at infrastructure and energy initiatives. The study found that projects that incorporated high-salience stakeholders had a 75% sustainability rate, compared to 45% for those with minimal engagement. ANOVA analysis confirmed that high salience stakeholders led to more successful outcomes ($F = 6.12, p < 0.01$). The study's regression coefficients indicated that power ($\beta = 0.53$) was the most significant factor, followed by legitimacy ($\beta = 0.44$) and urgency ($\beta = 0.30$). This suggested that the more influential the stakeholders—especially those in government and local communities—the greater the likelihood of achieving sustainable project results, particularly in regions with complex socio-political challenges.

In East Africa, Kessy and Mushi (2020) examined the impact of stakeholder salience on the sustainability of development projects in Kenya and Tanzania. The study revealed that projects that engaged stakeholders with power, legitimacy, and urgency achieved a 30% higher rate of sustainability compared to projects that did not prioritize these groups. The ANOVA results showed significant differences in project sustainability outcomes ($F = 4.92, p < 0.05$). Coefficients from the regression analysis revealed

that power ($\beta = 0.41$) and legitimacy ($\beta = 0.36$) had the most significant influence on sustainability, followed by urgency ($\beta = 0.24$). These findings suggested that stakeholders in government, local communities, and NGOs had the highest salience, and their involvement was crucial for the success of projects, particularly in resource-constrained environments where the ability to address urgent issues is paramount.

A study by Mukarugwiza and Niyonzima (2019) on development projects in Rwanda found that the involvement of high-salience stakeholders led to a 70% sustainability rate in education and health projects, compared to just 45% in projects with limited stakeholder engagement. The study's ANOVA results showed a statistically significant difference in sustainability outcomes ($F = 7.38, p < 0.01$) between projects with high and low stakeholder salience. In the regression analysis, power ($\beta = 0.48$) and legitimacy ($\beta = 0.42$) were found to be the most influential factors in determining project sustainability, followed by urgency ($\beta = 0.31$). These results indicated that projects in Rwanda, particularly in sectors like education and health, benefitted greatly from the active engagement of local communities, government bodies, and international donors, reinforcing the importance of stakeholder salience in ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of development initiatives in the region.

3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design to investigate the contribution of stakeholder participation to the sustainability of Compassion International Rwanda's project initiatives. The descriptive design was used to analyze statistical parameters such as mean, standard deviation, mode, frequency, and median. A correlation research design was also employed to assess the relationships between stakeholder participation and project sustainability. While correlation analysis cannot determine causality, it helped establish significant relationships between the study variables. These designs provided a comprehensive framework for analyzing how various forms of stakeholder participation impacted project sustainability in the context of Compassion International Rwanda.

The population for this study comprised various stakeholders involved in Compassion International Rwanda's projects, totaling 362 individuals. These included staff from Compassion International Rwanda, local government authorities, NGOs/partners, educational institutions, and beneficiaries (head of families). The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula, with a

population size of 362 and a margin of error of 5%, resulting in a sample size of 190. Stratified sampling was used to ensure proportional representation from each category of respondents. The sampling technique ensured that key groups were adequately represented, enhancing the reliability of the findings.

To collect primary data, the researcher employed structured questionnaires. These questionnaires included both closed and open-ended questions, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative insights. The structured format ensured that the data collected could be analyzed systematically. Questionnaires were distributed to 192 stakeholders, enabling the researcher to gather comprehensive data on stakeholder participation and its perceived impact on project sustainability. Additionally, interviews were conducted to obtain deeper qualitative insights into the participants' experiences and perspectives regarding the project initiatives.

The measurement of variables was an essential step in ensuring that the research objectives were accurately addressed. Stakeholder participation was assessed using ordinal and interval scales, capturing the level of involvement in decision-making and project implementation. Project sustainability was similarly measured using these scales, evaluating the long-term viability of Compassion International Rwanda's projects. Several dimensions of stakeholder participation, such as salience, risk appetite, communication, and consultation, were considered in this study to determine their impact on the sustainability of the projects. These measurements allowed the researcher to quantify the relationships between the key variables.

Validity and reliability were critical components of this study to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the measurement instruments. Content validity was evaluated by a panel of experts who reviewed the survey instruments, ensuring that they reflected the relevant constructs. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was calculated, yielding a value of 0.92, indicating a high level of content validity. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which measures the internal consistency of the questionnaire items. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.734 was obtained, indicating an acceptable level of reliability, ensuring that the instruments provided consistent and accurate results across various samples and conditions.

The data collected was processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Descriptive statistics, such as means and standard

deviations, were used to summarize the data. Additionally, correlation and regression analysis were conducted to determine the relationships between stakeholder participation and project sustainability. The regression model used in the study included various independent variables such as stakeholder salience, risk appetite, communication, and consultation, with project sustainability as the dependent variable. The data analysis provided meaningful insights into how stakeholder participation influences the long-term success and sustainability of Compassion International Rwanda's projects.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the findings of the study in relation to the research objective.

4.1 Response rate

The total sample size for this study was 190 respondents, including staff from Compassion International Rwanda, local government authorities, NGOs/partners, educational institutions, and beneficiaries (heads of families). A total of 185 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of approximately 97%. However, 5 questionnaires were not returned, which represents a small percentage of the total sample. Despite this, the high response rate ensures that the data collected is representative and provides a reliable basis for the analysis and interpretation of stakeholder participation and its contribution to the sustainability of Compassion International Rwanda's projects.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics on Stakeholders Salience

Stakeholder salience refers to the importance and influence of stakeholders in a project, based on factors such as their power, legitimacy, and urgency. This section explores the relationship between stakeholder salience and the sustainability of projects undertaken by Compassion International Rwanda. Table 1 below summarizes the responses to key questions related to this objective. In this study, a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5 was employed: 5 representing "Strongly Agree," 4 for "Agree," 3 for "Neutral," 2 for "Disagree," and 1 for "Strongly Disagree." This scale enables a clear interpretation of respondents' attitudes and perceptions. The findings from the descriptive analysis are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Level of agreement of Stakeholders Salience and project sustainability

Views of respondents	N	Mean	SD
Stakeholders are involved and represented in projects under Compassion International for the development of sustainable project goals and strategies.	185	3.94	0.909
In many cases of Compassion International Rwanda, Stakeholder's high urgency has caused delays and affected project timelines	185	4.31	0.857
Stakeholders' needs and priorities were aligned with sustainability objectives for any initiative from Compassion International Rwanda's project.	185	4.24	0.961
Compassion International Rwanda often uses stakeholder salience to identify potential sustainability risks and opportunities in Rwanda.	185	1.93	1.262
The Project teams from Compassion International Rwanda built partnerships with stakeholders to promote sustainable practices.	185	4.28	0.926

Source : Field Data, 2024, **Key :** **M** – Mean; **SD** – Standard Deviation

Table 1 reveals important insights into the role of stakeholder salience in the sustainability of Compassion International Rwanda's projects. Respondents generally agreed that stakeholder involvement is crucial for developing sustainable project goals, with the statement "Stakeholders are involved and represented in projects under Compassion International for the development of sustainable project goals and strategies" receiving a mean score of 3.94. This indicates that respondents view stakeholder engagement as an essential factor in ensuring sustainability. On the other hand, the statement "In many cases of Compassion International Rwanda, Stakeholder's high urgency has caused delays and affected project timelines" received a higher mean score of 4.31, reflecting strong agreement that urgent stakeholder needs can lead to project delays, which may hinder overall project sustainability.

Additionally, the statement "Stakeholders' needs and priorities were aligned with sustainability objectives for any initiative from Compassion International Rwanda's project" scored a mean of 4.24, showing that stakeholders' priorities are often aligned with sustainability goals. However, some variation in responses suggests there are differing views on this alignment. On the other hand, the statement "Compassion International Rwanda often uses

stakeholder salience to identify potential sustainability risks and opportunities" received a mean score of 1.93, signaling strong disagreement. This suggests that many respondents believe the organization is not effectively utilizing stakeholder salience to identify risks and opportunities, which limits its potential to anticipate challenges that could affect sustainability.

The final statement, "The Project teams from Compassion International Rwanda built partnerships with stakeholders to promote sustainable practices," had a mean of 4.28, indicating strong agreement. This finding emphasizes that the organization's efforts to build partnerships with stakeholders are widely seen as a positive strategy for promoting sustainable practices. However, despite the overall positive view of stakeholder engagement, the challenges related to stakeholder urgency and the underuse of stakeholder salience to identify risks highlight areas for improvement.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The findings of the correlations between the independent variables and the dependent variables are summarized and presented in Table 2

Table 2: Correlation between independent variable and dependent variable

		Stakeholders Salience	Project Sustainability
Stakeholders Salience	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	166	
Project Sustainability	Pearson Correlation	.786**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	185	185

Source: Primary data, 2025

The correlation in Table 2 analysis between stakeholder salience and project sustainability revealed a strong positive relationship, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.786** ($p < 0.01$). This indicates a significant and positive correlation between the salience of stakeholders and the sustainability of projects, suggesting that as stakeholder salience increases, the likelihood of achieving sustainable project outcomes also improves. The correlation is statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.000, supporting the hypothesis that effective stakeholder involvement is crucial for ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of Compassion International Rwanda's

projects. The sample size for this analysis was 185, ensuring the robustness of the findings.

4.4 Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was performed in this section to identify the predictor and its contribution towards the criterion. It aims to determine the prediction of a single dependent variable from a group of independent variables. The multiple regression analysis was performed with all the assumptions complied with. Table 3 shows the model summary of the results

Table 3. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.870 ^a	.757	.752	.22567

a. Predictors: (Constant), Stakeholder Salience

The model summary reveals that the regression model has a strong explanatory power, with an R value of 0.870, indicating a high correlation between the independent variable (stakeholder salience) and the dependent variable (project sustainability). The R-squared value of 0.757 suggests that approximately 75.7% of the variation in project sustainability can be explained by stakeholder

salience. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.752 accounts for the number of predictors in the model, confirming that the model remains robust and reliable. Additionally, the standard error of the estimate is 0.22567, indicating a reasonable level of precision in predicting project sustainability based on stakeholder salience.

Table 4. Summary of ANOVA results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	28.559	4	7.140	140.190	.000 ^b
	Residual	9.167	180	.051		
	Total	37.726	184			

a. Dependent Variable: Project sustainability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Stakeholder Salience

The ANOVA results in Table 4 indicate that the regression model significantly predicts project sustainability. The F-value of 140.190 is highly significant, with a p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 threshold for statistical significance. This suggests that the independent variable, stakeholder salience, has a meaningful impact on project sustainability. The sum of squares for the regression is

28.559, with a mean square of 7.140, while the residual sum of squares is 9.167, with a mean square of 0.051. These findings demonstrate that the model is a good fit for explaining project sustainability and that the variation in project sustainability is largely attributed to stakeholder salience.

Table 5. Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.412	.198		-2.084	.039
	Stakeholder Salience	.818	.094	.870	8.730	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Project sustainability

The regression coefficients presented in Table 5 indicate the strength and significance of the relationship between stakeholder salience and project sustainability. The unstandardized coefficient for stakeholder salience is 0.818, meaning that for each unit increase in stakeholder salience, project sustainability increases by 0.818 units, holding all other factors constant. The standardized coefficient (Beta) is 0.870, suggesting a strong positive relationship between stakeholder salience and project sustainability. The t-value for stakeholder salience is 8.730, and the p-value is 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 significance level, indicating that the effect of stakeholder salience on project sustainability is statistically significant. The constant term, with a coefficient of -0.412, is also significant with a p-value of 0.039. These results emphasize the significant role of stakeholder salience in promoting the sustainability of projects.

From the findings, the study revealed that stakeholder salience has a significant and positive effect on project

sustainability. Specifically, the regression analysis showed a strong correlation between stakeholder salience and project sustainability, with a standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.870, indicating that an increase in stakeholder salience leads to a considerable improvement in the sustainability of projects. The ANOVA results further supported the significance of this relationship, with a p-value of 0.000, confirming that stakeholder salience is a key predictor of project sustainability. These findings highlight the importance of engaging stakeholders with high salience, such as those with urgency, power, and legitimacy, in the project management process to ensure long-term success and sustainability. Additionally, the study revealed that while stakeholder involvement is generally beneficial, challenges such as the urgency of stakeholder needs could potentially lead to delays and affect project timelines, underscoring the need for effective management of stakeholder expectations throughout the project lifecycle.

Table 6: Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results

Hypothesis	Beta	p-value	Decision (Rejected/Accepted)
H₀₁: There is no significant contribution of Stakeholder Salience on project sustainability of Compassion International Rwanda's initiatives.	0.87	0.000	Rejected

Source: Primary data, 2025

The hypothesis testing results presented in Table 7 indicate a significant relationship between Stakeholder Salience and project sustainability for Compassion International Rwanda's initiatives. The null hypothesis (H₀₁), which

posited that there is no significant contribution of Stakeholder Salience on project sustainability, was rejected due to the p-value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 significance threshold. This finding suggests that the

relationship between stakeholder salience and project sustainability is not due to random chance, but rather a genuine statistical connection. The beta value of 0.870 further reinforces the strength and direction of this relationship. A positive beta value indicates that as the salience of stakeholders increases, so does the sustainability of projects. In other words, when stakeholders are more actively involved and their needs, expectations, and influence are considered more prominently in project planning and implementation, the likelihood of sustaining the project over time improves significantly.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of stakeholder salience in ensuring the sustainability of Compassion International Rwanda's projects. The results indicate that stakeholder engagement is considered essential for developing sustainable project goals and strategies. Respondents generally agreed that stakeholder involvement contributes positively to project sustainability. However, the study also highlighted that urgent stakeholder demands often lead to delays, which can potentially undermine the sustainability of projects. This aligns with the finding that stakeholders' high urgency in some cases caused project delays, which suggests that while stakeholder engagement is crucial, mismanagement of their urgent needs can create challenges that affect overall project progress. This also points to the need for a more structured approach to balancing stakeholder urgency with long-term project goals to avoid disruptions.

Interestingly, the study revealed that Compassion International Rwanda is not fully utilizing stakeholder salience to identify potential risks and opportunities related to sustainability. Respondents expressed a significant gap in how the organization uses stakeholder salience to anticipate and address sustainability risks. This was clearly reflected in the low level of agreement regarding the use of stakeholder salience to identify risks and opportunities. While stakeholder engagement is prioritized, the organization seems to miss the opportunity to proactively leverage stakeholder salience to mitigate potential challenges. By doing so, Compassion International Rwanda could better identify emerging risks or opportunities early on, which would allow the organization to take preventive actions, thus strengthening the sustainability of their projects.

Another key finding is the alignment of stakeholders' needs and priorities with sustainability objectives. Many respondents noted that stakeholders' needs and priorities were generally in line with sustainability goals, which is vital for ensuring the long-term success of the projects.

However, the variation in responses suggests that this alignment may not always be consistent. While stakeholders' needs were typically aligned with sustainability objectives, there were instances where this alignment was less clear. This highlights the importance of continuous and open communication between project teams and stakeholders to ensure that expectations are aligned. Inconsistent alignment can potentially lead to divergent priorities, which may affect project outcomes and sustainability. Therefore, ongoing efforts to engage stakeholders and ensure that their needs remain aligned with the sustainability goals of the projects are necessary to ensure long-term success.

The regression analysis further confirms the significant impact of stakeholder salience on project sustainability. The results indicate that stakeholder salience is a strong predictor of project sustainability, with a significant positive correlation between the two variables. This suggests that as stakeholder salience increases through greater involvement and consideration of their power, legitimacy, and urgency the likelihood of achieving sustainable outcomes also increases. This finding is consistent with previous research, which emphasizes the importance of stakeholder salience in driving project success. These findings are relevant since Yakamoto (2023) emphasizes the critical role of stakeholder salience in driving the success and sustainability of projects. According to Yakamoto, understanding and prioritizing stakeholders based on their level of salience specifically their power, legitimacy, and urgency can significantly impact the project's ability to achieve long-term sustainability. The study's findings align with this perspective, as they demonstrate that stakeholder salience is indeed a strong predictor of project sustainability. Yakamoto also highlights that mismanagement of stakeholder expectations and urgency can hinder project progress, a challenge that was observed in the current study as well, where stakeholder urgency sometimes led to delays. Thus, the study's conclusions support Yakamoto's argument that effective stakeholder management, including the careful balancing of urgency and involvement, is essential to overcoming obstacles and ensuring sustainable project outcomes.

In contrast, Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (2024) argue that stakeholder salience should not only be based on urgency, legitimacy, and power but also on the dynamic nature of stakeholder relationships throughout the project lifecycle. They emphasize that the salience of stakeholders may change over time, which can impact project sustainability if not carefully monitored and managed. The findings of this study somewhat challenge this viewpoint, as the respondents highlighted the consistency of stakeholder salience in influencing project sustainability. However, the

underutilization of stakeholder salience to identify risks and opportunities, as indicated by the respondents, suggests that a more flexible, evolving approach to stakeholder engagement could enhance sustainability outcomes. This discrepancy underscores the importance of adapting stakeholder management strategies to the evolving needs and priorities of stakeholders throughout the project's duration, as suggested by Mitchell, Agle, and Wood.

However, the study also highlighted challenges related to stakeholder urgency. Respondents indicated that the urgency of stakeholders' needs often led to delays, which affected project timelines and sustainability. This finding underscores the potential risks of prioritizing urgent stakeholder demands at the expense of project timelines or broader sustainability objectives. Urgent stakeholder needs can create tension, especially when they push for quick resolutions that may not align with the project's long-term goals. This calls for better management of stakeholder expectations, especially for those with high urgency. Effective stakeholder management strategies should be developed to balance urgent needs with sustainable practices, ensuring that immediate demands do not hinder the achievement of long-term goals.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between stakeholder salience and project sustainability, confirming that effective stakeholder engagement plays a crucial role in ensuring the long-term success of Compassion International Rwanda's projects. While stakeholder engagement is largely seen as beneficial, challenges such as managing urgency and aligning stakeholder needs with sustainability objectives remain. The study suggests that Compassion International Rwanda could enhance its project sustainability by better leveraging stakeholder salience to identify risks and opportunities and by refining its strategies to manage stakeholder urgency. By addressing these challenges, Compassion International Rwanda can strengthen its stakeholder management practices and improve the long-term sustainability of its projects, ensuring a lasting positive impact on the communities it serves.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concluded that stakeholder salience significantly influences the sustainability of projects at Compassion International Rwanda, with higher levels of stakeholder involvement contributing to more sustainable outcomes. The hypothesis testing revealed that stakeholder salience plays a crucial role in shaping project success, as shown by the strong beta value of 0.870 and a p-value of 0.000.

Additionally, the findings highlighted the importance of effectively managing stakeholder urgency, legitimacy, and power to avoid delays and maximize project sustainability. Overall, the study emphasizes the need for organizations to prioritize stakeholder engagement to ensure the long-term viability of development projects.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Compassion International Rwanda should focus on strengthening stakeholder involvement at every stage of project implementation. By actively engaging stakeholders, particularly those with high salience, the organization can align project goals with stakeholder needs, minimizing conflicts and enhancing project sustainability.
2. To avoid delays caused by urgent stakeholder demands, it is recommended that Compassion International Rwanda implement better systems for managing and balancing stakeholder priorities. This could involve setting clear communication channels and timelines, as well as prioritizing stakeholder issues based on their impact on project sustainability.
3. Compassion International Rwanda should make greater use of stakeholder salience in identifying potential risks and opportunities throughout the project lifecycle. By systematically evaluating stakeholder power, legitimacy, and urgency, the organization can better anticipate challenges and capitalize on opportunities, ensuring more effective and sustainable project outcomes.

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