



Effect of Community Involvement in Project Management Process on Project Performance: A Case of Good Shepherd Project in Nyabihu District, Rwanda

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Abstract: The general objective of this research was to assess the effect of community involvement in project management process on performance of Good Shepherd Project implemented in Nyabihu District, Rwanda. The study examined the effect of project planning, project implementation, and monitoring and evaluation on performance of Good Shepherd Project. The study used Theory of Change, Social Accountability Theory and Goal Setting Theory, and employed both descriptive and correlational research designs. A census method was used to collect data from the entire population of 163 individuals involved in Good Shepherd Development Project, while 159 questionnaires were successfully filled and returned. Data collection methods included structured questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative insights. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 29 to examine relationships between community involvement dimensions and project performance indicators. Regression results showed that project planning had a significant positive effect on performance ($\beta = 0.246$, $t = 5.125$, $p = 0.000$). Project implementation also had a significant positive effect on performance ($\beta = 0.395$, $t = 7.054$, $p = 0.000$), while monitoring and evaluation significantly affected performance ($\beta = 0.260$, $t = 4.815$, $p = 0.000$). Therefore, all null hypotheses were rejected. The study recommended that project managers should adopt digital feedback platforms to allow community members to report implementation issues in real time, improve problem-solving, and increase transparency in project operations.

Keywords: Community Involvement, Project Management Process, Project Planning, Project Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation, Project Performance, Good Shepherd Project

How to cite this work (APA):

Munyakyanza, C. & Dushimimana, J. D. (2026). Effect of Community Involvement in Project Management Process on Project Performance: A Case of Good Shepherd Project in Nyabihu District, Rwanda. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 10(3), 444 – 451. <https://doi.org/10.59765/7d5l9>

1. Introduction

Community involvement has become a cornerstone of contemporary development practice, particularly in efforts to improve project performance and sustainability. Scholars across disciplines emphasize that when communities are actively engaged in planning, implementation, and evaluation, projects tend to align

more closely with local needs and generate more durable outcomes. This participatory approach is increasingly recognized not only as a democratic imperative but also as a strategic mechanism for enhancing efficiency, accountability, and long-term impact (Han *et al.*, 2021).

Across Africa, participatory development theory has been applied to diverse sectors with measurable success. In Bauchi State, Nigeria, the Local Empowerment and

Environmental Management Project (LEEMP) demonstrated that participatory structures enhance governance and resource management. Community members involved in budgeting and oversight contributed to better maintenance and reduced dependency on external donors. In Lambussie District, Ghana, participatory monitoring and evaluation frameworks implemented by district assemblies have strengthened accountability and adaptive management. These frameworks allow communities to provide feedback on project progress, ensuring alignment with evolving local priorities (Akanbang & Abdallah, 2021).

In Rwanda, academic research has provided robust evidence of the positive relationship between community participation and project performance. A study conducted in Bugesera District examined the Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC) project, which aimed to improve water flow infrastructure. Researchers found that stakeholder engagement during planning and monitoring phases led to improved service delivery and resource utilization. Community members who participated in decision-making helped align project goals with local expectations, enhancing sustainability and reducing operational inefficiencies (Niyihaba & Mburamatare, 2025).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the expansion of externally and locally funded development initiatives across Rwanda, project performance continues to face persistent challenges. Gahigana (2019) examined the SUR'EAU project implemented through Society for Family Health and recorded that 61% of surveyed staff reported unclear role definitions, while 47% cited inconsistent communication between implementing partners and district authorities. These coordination gaps contributed to delayed activity rollout and reduced beneficiary coverage.

A peer-reviewed study of the Busanza housing project in Kicukiro District reported that 53% of respondents observed irregular monitoring practices, and 38% indicated that performance indicators were not consistently tracked. These gaps were associated with delayed corrective actions and reduced implementation efficiency (Ntambara & Irechukwu, 2021). Umuhoza and Wabala (2025) found that 59.4% of respondents cited poor task classifying as a cause of delay, while 46.7% noted that unclear scheduling procedures affected implementation timelines.

Previous studies including Gahigana (2019), Ntambara and Irechukwu (2021), Umuhoza and Wabala (2025), and Wibabara and Sanja (2024) have not sufficiently examined community involvement within educational support project contexts. This gap limits understanding of participatory dynamics in such settings. Therefore, the study on the effect of community involvement in project management process on project performance, using

Good Shepherd Project in Nyabihu District, Rwanda, addresses this gap through focused contextual analysis.

1.3 Hypotheses

The study was guided by the following null hypotheses.

Ho1: There is no significant effect of project planning on performance of Good Shepherd Project in Nyabihu District, Rwanda.

Ho2: There is no significant effect of project implementation on performance of Good Shepherd Project in Nyabihu District, Rwanda.

Ho3: There is no significant effect of monitoring and evaluation on performance of Good Shepherd Project in Nyabihu District, Rwanda.

2. Literature Review

An empirical review involves the process where the researcher develops a good understanding of the current state of research works and data in a research field of interest. It specifies the type of review based on practical findings rather than conceptual implications characteristic of other types of reviews, such as theoretical reviews or literature reviews that focus on abstract concepts without direct application to real-world scenarios.

2.1 Project planning and Project Performance

Syamsiyah *et al.* (2025) explored community participation in planning the development of environmentally conscious hamlets under the Citarum Harum program in Indonesia. The objective was to identify the extent and effects of community participation, including planning inputs, on sustainable village outcomes. The study drew on community empowerment theory and used a descriptive survey design with 250 respondents. The results showed a mean participation score of 4.12 out of 5, approximately 82.4% favourable, and regression indicated $B = 0.385$, $p = 0.000$ for planning participation and sustainable outcomes. The authors concluded that active community planning involvement significantly enhances sustainable village development and recommended structured participation channels in planning phases.

Kamau, Lango and Onsarigo (2025) investigated the relationship between project planning, goal-setting, needs assessment, decision-making, and performance of community water projects in Kenya. Using Participatory Development Theory and Systems Theory, the convergent parallel mixed-method design sampled 370 beneficiaries, with a response rate of approximately 85.9%. The key result was correlation $r = 0.718$, $p < 0.01$. The conclusion was that community involvement in planning significantly and positively influences

performance outcomes such as timely completion, satisfaction, and access. The study recommended active involvement of community members in planning workshops, goal definition, and decision-making committees.

Mukakarisa and Njoroge (2024) targeted the effect of stakeholder engagement in the planning phase on performance of construction projects in Rwanda. The study invoked Stakeholder Theory and Agency Theory, and employed a mixed-method descriptive-correlational survey with 125 sampled staff out of 182 targeted. The key statistical finding was $\beta = 0.325$, $t = 6.153$, $p = 0.000$ for stakeholder planning and project performance. The conclusion was that stakeholder engagement during planning significantly improves project performance, and the study recommended inclusive stakeholder forums during planning and feedback loops with local community representatives.

2.2 Project implementation and Project Performance

Kjeldsen (2025) examined the effect of community involvement during implementation of a state-led mixed-income housing transformation project on project performance in Denmark. It employed deliberative participation theory as its conceptual basis. Using a case-study design with survey and document analysis, the study found that participants felt implementation involvement averaged only 2.9 out of 5, and a statistically significant negative correlation of $r = -0.34$, $p < 0.05$, was observed between low involvement and higher cost overruns. The study concluded that inadequate community involvement during implementation can detract from performance and recommended community advisory panels during implementation.

Zikargae (2022) examined how stakeholder participation during project implementation influenced performance of community projects targeting environmental security and livelihoods in Zimbabwe. The study was guided by social capital theory and participatory governance theory. Employing a quantitative survey of 243 participants across several project sites, the results showed that 77% of respondents reported strong involvement in implementation, and regression revealed $R^2 = 0.59$. The study concluded that community implementation involvement is a major predictor of project performance.

Ndungutse and Akims (2025) examined implementation strategies, including community outreach and engagement during implementation of the Zero Dropout education project in Bugesera District, Rwanda, and their effect on project performance. Using a descriptive survey of 178 respondents, regression analysis showed community outreach and engagement had a coefficient B

$= 0.586$, $p = 0.000$. The conclusion was that community involvement during the implementation phase significantly influenced project performance in this NGO context.

2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation and Project Performance

Wallerstein *et al.* (2018) looked at health programs in Latin America to see how community-based participatory assessment affected project success. The research strategy was a mixed-methods approach, which included both online surveys and in-person interviews with 25 community members and 180 health care professionals. Projects that included community members in the monitoring and evaluation process had better service quality and more compliance with implementation deadlines. Citizen scorecards and community-led audits helped identify performance deficiencies early on.

Joshi (2022) examined the impact of online tracking tools on public participation in city improvement initiatives. Community monitors and municipal employees were among the 200 people surveyed using a cross-sectional survey technique. SPSS and correlation analysis were used for data analysis. The results showed that digital reporting tools made procedures more transparent and reduced response times for customer service issues. Deploying monitoring software for mobile devices, holding review sessions, and incorporating citizen comments into performance dashboards were suggested.

McGee and Gaventa (2023) evaluated how intermediate organizations might support community monitoring in governance initiatives. Sixty interviews and twelve focus groups were used to compile data for this qualitative case study across three South Asian locations. Better recording of monitoring results and more transparent communication between stakeholders were outcomes of projects supported by intermediary facilitation. The study recommended standardization of reporting forms, alignment of community supervision with institutional accountability norms, and formalization of intermediary roles in monitoring frameworks.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed both descriptive and correlational research designs. The descriptive design was used to detail the current practices of community involvement in the project management process, while the correlational design assessed the relationship between community involvement and project performance.

3.2 Population

Target population was 163 individuals who are directly involved in community involvement practices within Good Shepherd Development Project located in Nyabihu District, Western Province, Rwanda. This study focused on stakeholders engaged in Good Shepherd Development Project in Nyabihu District, including project beneficiaries, local leaders, field officers, and community facilitators. In this study, a census method was employed to gather comprehensive data from the entire population of 163 individuals involved in Good Shepherd Development Project.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected directly from participants through structured questionnaires and structured interviews. Secondary data were sourced from project documentation, including reports and related records. Data processing involved editing, coding, and tabulation. Questionnaire responses were coded for SPSS entry, while interview transcripts were coded thematically. The Content Validity Index for all variables was 0.875, which was above the standard threshold of 0.70.

To assess reliability, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was computed for each scale used in the questionnaire. A value above 0.70 indicated satisfactory internal consistency, confirming that the data collected were dependable and suitable for statistical analysis.

Table 1: Reliability statistics

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Project Planning	8	0.845
Project Implementation	8	0.882
Monitoring & Evaluation	8	0.861
Project Performance	4	0.814

Source: Research findings, 2026

The reliability analysis indicates a strong level of internal consistency for all variables in the study. Since all values were above 0.80, the questionnaire was highly reliable and suitable for assessing the intended constructs.

3.4 Data Analysis

The researcher presented the findings primarily through numerical data and statistical analysis. SPSS version 29 was used to process quantitative responses. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Inferential analysis involved Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression to test relationships between community involvement dimensions and project performance.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Questionnaire forms were coded to protect respondent identity, and interview transcripts were stored securely. Authorization letters were issued from the University of Kigali and the management of Good Shepherd Development Project to permit data collection. Clearance was secured from relevant institutional bodies.

4. Results and Discussion

The study presents the response rate for the survey conducted in Good Shepherd Project in Nyabihu District. Out of 163 questionnaires distributed, 159 were successfully filled and returned, resulting in a response rate of 97.5%. A small number of questionnaires, specifically 4, were not returned, accounting for 2.5% of the total distribution. This high response rate reflects effective engagement with participants and supports the reliability of the data collected for analysis.

4.1 Correlation Analysis

This section presents the correlation analysis conducted to assess the relationships between project planning, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and project performance in Good Shepherd Project in Nyabihu District. It aims to determine the strength and direction of the associations between these variables, highlighting significant correlations and their implications for project performance.

Table 2: Correlations matrix

		Project planning	Project implementation	Monitoring and Evaluation	Project performance
Project planning	Pearson Correlation	1	.485**	.626**	.670**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	159	159	159	159
Project implementation	Pearson Correlation	.485**	1	.693**	.759**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	159	159	159	159
Monitoring and Evaluation	Pearson Correlation	.626**	.693**	1	.769**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	159	159	159	159
Project performance	Pearson Correlation	.670**	.759**	.769**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	159	159	159	159

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

Source: Research findings, 2026

Table 2 presents the correlation matrix assessing relationships between project planning, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and project performance in Good Shepherd Project in Nyabihu District. The analysis indicates that all independent variables demonstrate significant positive relationships with project performance.

Project planning shows a strong positive relationship with project performance ($r = 0.670$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that better planning leads to higher performance in Good Shepherd Project. The result validates the importance of needs assessment, goal-setting, budget planning, resource planning, clarity of roles, quality planning, time planning, and scope planning in strengthening performance.

Project implementation shows a very strong and statistically significant positive relationship with project performance ($r = 0.759$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that as community involvement in implementation increases, the performance of Good Shepherd Project significantly improves. Implementation activities such as activity execution, access to resources, problem-solving

capacity, stakeholder coordination, and communication implementation therefore support project success.

Monitoring and evaluation shows the strongest significant positive relationship with project performance ($r = 0.769$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that effective M&E processes are critical drivers of performance in Nyabihu District. Feedback mechanisms, routine data collection, use of M&E tools, evaluation meetings, stakeholder participation, performance reporting, sustainability assessment, and feedback integration collectively support accountability and continuous improvement. This is consistent with Netshandama (2023), who argues that planning minimizes duplication and delays by aligning team efforts toward common goals. The statistical significance validates that a foundation of clear roles and community input is not just a formality but a prerequisite for quality outputs.

4.2 Regression Analysis

This section evaluates the impact of project planning, project implementation, and monitoring and evaluation on project performance, including model fit, ANOVA results, coefficients, and hypothesis testing in the context of Good Shepherd Project.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.857 ^a	.735	.730	.17998	1.561

a. Predictors: (Constant), Monitoring and Evaluation, Project planning, Project implementation

b. Dependent Variable: Project performance

Source: Research findings, 2026

Table 3 shows that the R-value of 0.857 indicates a very strong overall correlation between the combined independent variables and project performance. The R Square value of 0.735 means that 73.5% of the variance in performance of Good Shepherd Project is explained by project planning, project implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.561 falls within the acceptable range, suggesting no

significant autocorrelation in the residuals. This supports the empirical findings of Zikargae (2022), who found that implementation involvement is a major predictor of project success. It suggests that while planning sets the stage, the actual mobilization of resources and task execution carries the most weight in determining whether a project succeeds or fails.

Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.941	3	4.647	145.219	.000 ^b
	Residual	5.021	155	.032		
	Total	18.962	158			

a. Dependent Variable: Project performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Monitoring and Evaluation, Project planning, Project implementation

Source: Research findings, 2026

Table 4 presents the ANOVA results, showing an F-statistic of 145.219 with a Sig. value of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than the significance level of 0.05, the overall regression model is statistically significant. This means that the independent variables collectively have a significant effect on performance of Good Shepherd Project, and the regression model is a good fit for the data

collected in Nyabihu District. This aligns with Wallerstein *et al.* (2022), whose research showed that projects including community members in M&E had better service quality and higher compliance with deadlines. The statistical link reinforces that M&E acts as an essential check and improve cycle that ensures long-term sustainability.

Table 5: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance VIF
1	(Constant)	.476	.192		2.479	.014	
	Project planning	.246	.048	.276	5.125	.000	.603 1.658
	Project implementation	.395	.056	.408	7.054	.000	.516 1.939
	Monitoring and Evaluation	.260	.054	.313	4.815	.000	.410 2.437

a. Dependent Variable: Project performance

Source: Research findings, 2026

Table 5 presents the coefficients for the regression model analyzing the effect of project planning, project implementation, and monitoring and evaluation on project performance for Good Shepherd Project in Nyabihu District.

Regarding project planning, the coefficient (β) is 0.246, with a t-value of 5.125 and a Sig. of 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, project planning has a significant positive effect on performance. This means that a one-unit increase in project planning results in a 0.246-unit increase in project performance, other factors held constant.

For project implementation, the coefficient (β) is 0.395, with a t-value of 7.054 and a Sig. of 0.000. This indicates that for every unit increase in implementation efforts, project performance increases by 0.395 units. With a p-value below 0.05, this variable is a significant and strong predictor of project performance.

Concerning monitoring and evaluation, the coefficient (β) is 0.260, with a t-value of 4.815 and a Sig. of 0.000. The statistical significance confirms that M&E is a vital component of project success. Therefore, monitoring and evaluation significantly affect performance of Good Shepherd Project.

Table 6: Hypotheses Results

Null Hypothesis (H_0)	Result (p-value)	Decision
H₀₁: Project planning has no significant effect on performance of Good Shepherd Project.	p < .05	Reject H ₀₁
H₀₂: Project implementation has no significant effect on performance of Good Shepherd Project.	p < .05	Reject H ₀₂
H₀₃: Monitoring and evaluation has no significant effect on performance of Good Shepherd Project.	p < .05	Reject H ₀₃

Source: Research findings, 2026

Table 6 presents the hypotheses results relating to the effect of community involvement in project management process on project performance. All three null hypotheses were rejected because their p-values were below 0.05. The study concludes that project planning, project implementation, and monitoring and evaluation

all have statistically significant positive effects on performance of Good Shepherd Project in Nyabihu District.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the results, it is concluded that project planning is a fundamental determinant of performance for Good Shepherd Project. The systematic inclusion of community members in the early stages created a solid framework for all subsequent activities. This participatory approach ensured that the project goals were aligned with the actual needs of the people in Nyabihu District. Therefore, early stakeholder engagement is indispensable for achieving high-performance standards in community projects.

The study concludes that the implementation phase is the most critical stage for transforming plans into tangible results through community effort. The active participation of local residents in day-to-day tasks significantly boosted the project efficiency and timeliness. It was established that the project success was largely due to the effective mobilization of local human and material resources. Thus, implementation should always be viewed as a joint venture between the project owners and the beneficiaries.

It is concluded that participatory monitoring and evaluation provide the necessary transparency to ensure project sustainability and quality. The use of local feedback loops allowed the project to remain adaptive and correct errors in real time. By empowering the community to track progress, the project fostered a deep sense of accountability among stakeholders. Overall, the research confirms that community involvement in the project management process has a profound and positive effect on project performance.

5.2 Recommendations

1. The management of Nyabihu Tea Estates should institutionalize a policy that requires community representation in all project planning committees. This policy will ensure that local voices are structurally integrated into decision-making processes from the start.
2. Local leaders in Nyabihu District should provide periodic training to community members on basic project management and budgeting. Enhancing local technical skills will make community participation more meaningful and effective during project execution.
3. Project managers should adopt digital feedback platforms to allow community members to report implementation issues in real time. This practice would speed up the problem-solving process and increase the transparency of the project daily operations.

5.3 Suggestion for Further Research

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct a study on the effect of community leadership styles on project sustainability to understand how local governance affects long-term success. Additionally, a study on the impact of digital communication tools on stakeholder engagement would provide insights into modernizing participatory management and complement the current findings on community involvement and project performance.

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