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Risk Management Practices and Sustainability of Projects Devoid of USAID Funding in Rwanda: A Case of Maranyundo MTLC Initiative

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Abstract: *This study examined the effect of project risk management practices on the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda, with a case of the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative. Specifically, the study examined the effect of risk identification on project sustainability. The study adopted a descriptive and correlational research design using a quantitative approach. The target population comprised 171 respondents, all of whom participated in the study. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS Version 25. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Product-Moment correlation, and simple linear regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The findings showed that effective risk identification practices, including documenting risk information, gathering relevant risk information, providing guidance on risk handling, and using information from past risks, contribute to project sustainability. The correlation analysis indicated a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between risk identification and project sustainability ($r = .749$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis further showed that risk identification significantly influenced project sustainability. The study concluded that effective project risk identification is important for enhancing the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding. The study recommends strengthening the documentation and regular review of risk information, conducting regular risk identification meetings, gathering relevant information, and using lessons from previous risks to support sustainable project implementation.*

Keywords: *Project Risk Management Practices; Risk Identification; Project Sustainability; USAID Funding; Maranyundo MTLC Initiative; Rwanda*

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1. Introduction

The sustainability of projects in times of increasing instability and globalization is even more important to business performance, but many projects tend to be postponed, overruled and even abandoned (Jun, Qiuzhen, & Qingguo, 2020). Every project has a certain amount of difficulty. Within the developed world, the US and the UK have many companies that believe they can thrive with their projects, usually did not success to take account and measure their risks. Nonetheless, approaches and techniques designed to increase the project's efficiency are still rarely used (Robert & Anette, 2022). An effective project plan or even a sound detection and control system is not enough to cope with the rapid technological change and intensified competition today. Organizations must be alert for project risks and prepared to take action (Hopkin, 2020). However, risk management practices were

addressed in a variety of protocols, principles and frameworks.

Malaysia, Porter (2018) reinforces the importance of project risk management in the NGOs in Malaysia. It is highlighted as a means to build confidence in decision-making regarding sustainable development goals. Effective risk management not only reduces brand-related risks but also enhances knowledge of sustainable practices within the industry. To ensure project sustainability, it is essential to identify potential risks that may occur within the manufacturing sector and could impact project objectives negatively. The project risks management is strengthened by policy makers about policies, rules that regulate the natural project risk management practices within rural and urban rural areas (Hamimah, 2018).

In India, the adequate management, identification, assessing and monitoring risks within project risk management practices requires the process. In India, managers need to determine the kinds of risks having crucial impacts to natural environment. Within business environment, risks need to be taken as long as people operate business activities. Organizations have the responsibilities in risks management practices. However project sustainability is highly correlated with the level of integration and coordination across risks functions (Jaafari, 2021).

In Nigeria, project risk management is therefore viewed as strategic in that it harmonizes project sustainability with project objectives (Asare, 2021). Organizations that work on short-term implementations conclude that project management entails the ability to regulate resources in a way that highlights limited expenses and time to provide satisfying performance and successful working associations with beneficiaries (Dyason, 2020). All institutions and concerned business people need more cooperation and interaction to protect environment against risks. Indeed, better knowledge increases efficiency and appropriate decision making in risks reduction strategies (Idoro, 2022).

In Tanzania NGOs have paved a way for several policies and strategies in various sectors in Tanzania. Since the formation of NGO act of 2002, projects facilitated by the donor funded projects have increased from 23% in 2003 to 56% in 2016. For the government facilitated projects, the increase is significant from the year 2005 to 2015 by 23.5% where the government has provided funds for health projects, infrastructure construction and Agriculture alone (Hofisi & Chizimba, 2023). The discipline of project risk management is poor, incomplete, and inconsistent throughout community-based projects, which signifies that the country has not focused on effective risk management. Donors have been providing a lot of money to fund the implementation of different social and economic development projects in Tanzania. Donors insist on implementing agencies to put efforts on risk management by allocating at least 5% of the total project budget for managing risk associated with the project. This is one of the strategies to ensure that the project is implemented smoothly and realizing the expected project targets. Donors are doing everything possible to support implementing agencies to achieve intended project goal. (Msomba, 2024).

In Rwanda, the prevailing situation demonstrates that several development projects have experienced significant operational challenges following donor funding withdrawal. These challenges include reduced outreach to beneficiaries, inability to maintain infrastructure and services, erosion of institutional memory due to staff attrition, and weakened organizational credibility. In some cases, communities that had benefited from project interventions have been left without adequate transition mechanisms, creating dependency and undermining long-term development gains. This gap between the intended sustainability of development projects and the reality following donor exit raises critical questions about the effectiveness of existing risk management practices (Iribagiza & Kirabo, 2024).

Rwanda's NGO sector, risk management practices encompass systematic processes such as financial diversification, stakeholder engagement, contingency planning, and proactive exit strategies. Project sustainability, on the other hand, refers to the capacity of a project to maintain its operations, services, and benefits after the cessation of external donor funding. Despite the recognized importance of risk management in project management, Maranyundo MTLC Initiative face sustainability challenges following the withdrawal of external funding. The devoid of USAID funding in Maranyundo MTLC Initiative has revealed significant vulnerabilities in project planning and implementation, particularly in relation to financial risk preparedness, institutional capacity, and continuity strategies. Projects that were previously stable and impactful have experienced reduced operations, loss of skilled personnel, and diminished services to beneficiaries (Benegahutu, 2025).

1.1 Statement of the problem

According to Ngabonzima and Rugimbana (2024), insufficient funding continues to hinder the successful completion of NGO projects in Rwanda. For instance, Kagaba (2025) reported that over 40% of NGO projects in Rwanda experienced delays or were not completed. According to Sangwa and Dushimimana (2023), in Rwanda many projects run within various sectors of

country's life have failed all along many years due to different factors. Some issues are continuing cases of delayed and abandoned contracts, cases of stalled projects, continuing cases of idle assets, Failure to recover advance payment and performance securities, and delays in payment of suppliers' invoices.

According to Singirankabo (2023), NGOs in Rwanda face the issues of unsustainability of project indicated with failure to meet community needs. Nsengiyumva (2022), NGOs unable to satisfy their beneficiaries. In the case of the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative, Sangwa and Dushimimana (2023), the USAID funding devoid disrupted planned activities and ceased some operations entirely and drastically reduced their scope and reach. Previous studies on sustainability of projects fail to link project risk management practices to sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda. Chapman (2019) aimed to assess how the identification of project risks impacts the outcomes of construction projects in Indonesia. Bazigaga and Rusibana (2024), assessed the influence of project risk assessment on project performance in Rwanda. Obondi (2022) explored the impact of project risk monitoring and control practices on project success in construction projects in the United States. Therefore, it is against this study background that wants to fill the gap by studying the effect of project risk management practices on sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda with a case of Maranyundo MTLC Initiative.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General objective of the study

The general objective of this study was to assess the effect of project risk management practices on sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda.

1.3.2 Specific objectives of the study

i. To examine the effect of risk identification on the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding. Case of Maranyundo MTLC Initiative Rwanda.

2. Literature Review

Risk is the occasional facts that impact the projects' activities and delay or hinder the projects purpose or its potential exposure to more unfavorable opportunities that happen to affect the objectives of the project (John, 2019). It is important to understand how the risks could be controlled and managed in an effective manner to alleviate all diverse effects to the objectives of the projects in an organization, even if it is predictable in all projects activities. The risks in the project can happen due to the projects marginal fluctuations in an organization, competitive process, worksite output, right to the contract, issues of inflation, and political instability (Rezakhani, 2022).

According to Tucci and Stedman (2023), risk management practice is the practice of identifying, assessing and controlling threats to an organization's capital, earnings and operations. These risks stem from a variety of sources, including financial uncertainties, legal liabilities, technology issues, strategic management errors, accidents and natural disasters. Risk management has perhaps never been more important to business success than it is now. The risks that modern organizations face have grown more complex, fueled by the rapid pace of globalization. New risks constantly emerge, often related to and generated by the now-pervasive use of technology. Climate change has been dubbed a "threat multiplier" by risk experts (ALSaadi & Norhayatizakuan, 2021).

Risk management process is a clearly defined method of understanding what risks and opportunities are present, how they could affect a project or organization, and how to respond to them. Business risks stem from many sources, including financial uncertainty, legal liabilities, technology use, strategic management errors, accidents and natural disasters. Risk management practices aim to anticipate these threats and their potential impact and establish plans to address them when they arise (Bajaj, Oluwoye, & Lenard, 2019).

The risk management practice is the structured approach teams use to identify, evaluate, and address potential issues that could impact their goals. It's more than a checklist; a risk management process is a proactive strategy for navigating uncertainties. Every project, no matter how well planned, faces financial risks and operational risks from missed deadlines to unexpected budget challenges. Without clear risk response strategies, these issues can quickly derail progress, leaving teams scrambling for solutions or explaining delays to stakeholders (Martins, 2024). Effective risk management in project management means having a plan to address surprises before they happen. By pinpointing types of risk early, you'll be prepared, not panicked, when an issue arises. The risk management process also keeps your project risk assessment clear with stakeholders, so they're confident in your team's ability to handle challenges (Guofeng, Min, & Weiwei, 2020).

2.2.2 Risk identification

The first step is identifying every potential risk that could disrupt the project. Think broadly here issues can arise from internal factors like resource limitations or external

ones such as natural disasters. Involving the entire team and engaging with stakeholders provides different perspectives and uncovers possible risks you might miss alone. Project risk identification technique tries to identify the supply and type of dangers. Project risk identification involves the popularity of capacity chance occasion situations in the construction venture and the explanation of risk obligations (Galorath, 2019).

The identification of project risk is pivotal to the risk planning exercise and as such, the team should ensure that specific risks affecting project success are recognized. Therefore, project risk identification is the procedure used by project personnel to document risks attributes and its possible effect on project outcome. However, this process is preceded by an effective brainstorming exercise usually spearheaded by the project manager. The identification of risk enables one to understand its nature and gives an idea of how such risk should be handled. It influences project stakeholder's decisions in creating a sustainable project (Keoki & Sears, 2022).

In the identification of risks, it is a good practice to delve into the possible causes of risk. Most risks are tied to some obvious causes that can be easily identified and resolved; once that is done, the risk will dissipate. Dealing with 'root causes of risk' in risk planning is an essential component of addressing the challenges posed by project risks. In addition to the root causes of risk, the project team might want to establish risk relationships; situations that lead to the occurrence of risk. Such situations are referred to as triggering conditions; serves as warning call, that project manager and team should not treat lightly (Larson, 2020).

2.1.4 Sustainability of projects

Sustainability encompasses the ability to endure and persist over time, and it is integral to sustainable development. This involves effectively managing resources to ensure that human well-being is sustainable in the long run. However, quantifying sustainability can be changing as it requires making value judgement about individual projects and determining if they will provide lasting benefits (Tong'l, Otieno, & Osoro, 2019).

Sustainability refers to the capacity of a project to create lasting and positive effects. As such, the global sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) advocate for development conversations that prioritize improving quality of life, preserving the environment, and promoting peace and prosperity on a worldwide scale. Projects with a focus on sustainability aim to provide ongoing benefits, maintain environmental stability, and ensure fair distribution of advantages while involving the community continuously (Project Management Institute, 2021).

Project sustainability is a term used in project management that defines the team's ability to execute a project. This means that you can design, complete and decommission projects while ensuring you meet your current needs and that you plan for how people in the future can manage the outcomes (Clift, 2019). Project community sustainability means how people in the community, or the recipients of a completed project, can access and interact with the outcome over time. This is common in non-government organizations or non-profits where they hope to continue outreach. For example, an initial project may include redesigning social media profiles. To ensure this is sustainable, you might plan for engaging posts and action items that can help the community thrive and grow after the initial campaign (Alonzi, 2020).

Project financial sustainability ensures that a company has enough money to complete each step in a project, including after the initial project is complete. For example, if you build a new system, you might map out each stage in the process including costs. To be sustainable, you can budget for technical support and further development. This can ensure the long-term effects of the project have more benefits than negative effects (Robichaud & Anantatmula, 2021). Project organizational sustainability means how an organization can operate and manage projects after completion. This could involve components of the other types of sustainability, like financial, but also involve individual responsibilities and expectations. For example, if a project manager works on a cost-savings project, they might ensure the teams can still function with less or cheaper options into the future (Zamagni, 2022).

2.2. Theoretical Review

This section reviews the theories that provide the foundation for the study. It explains how the selected theories relate to project risk management practices and the sustainability of projects after the withdrawal of USAID funding. The review focuses on Risk Management Theory and shows how each theory supports the study objectives.

2.3.1 Risk Management Theory

Risk Management Theory explains how organizations and projects can systematically identify, assess, respond to, and control uncertainties that may affect the achievement of their objectives. The theory emphasizes that risks should be recognized early so that appropriate actions can be planned before they negatively affect project activities. The Project Management Institute (PMI, 2024) emphasizes that project risk management involves proactively addressing uncertain events or conditions that may have positive or negative effects on project objectives. Recent research also shows that risk identification and evaluation remain central

elements of risk management in sustainable projects (Wang et al., 2024). Therefore, Risk Management Theory provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for examining how risk identification can influence project sustainability, particularly where projects operate under conditions of financial and operational uncertainty.

The theory is particularly relevant to the first objective of this study, which seeks to examine the effect of risk identification on the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding. Risk identification enables project managers and stakeholders to recognize potential threats, their possible causes, and their likely effects on project objectives. In the case of Maranyundo MTLC Initiative, the withdrawal of USAID funding exposed vulnerabilities related to financial preparedness, institutional capacity, staff retention, continuity of activities, and service delivery to beneficiaries. Identifying such risks before or during the funding transition could enable management to develop appropriate responses and protect the continuity of project activities. This argument is consistent with recent evidence that effective risk identification provides an important foundation for risk assessment, response planning, and sustainability-oriented project management (Gładysz & Kuchta, 2022; Wang et al., 2024).

Risk Management Theory therefore establishes a logical relationship between risk identification and project sustainability. When risks are systematically identified, project managers can recognize emerging threats, prioritize areas requiring attention, and prepare appropriate measures to reduce their potential effects on project continuity. This is important for donor-dependent projects because changes in external funding can create financial and operational risks that may threaten the continuation of project benefits. Recent research on sustainability risk management further indicates that integrating risk management into organizational decision-making can support more effective responses to sustainability-related risks (Abdul Razak et al., 2024). In this study, Risk Management Theory is therefore used to explain how effective risk identification can contribute to the continued operation, service delivery, and long-term benefits of the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative after USAID funding withdrawal.

2.3. Empirical Review

2.3.1 Project risk identification and sustainability of projects

A research conducted by Chapman (2019) aimed to assess how the identification of project risks impacts the outcomes of construction projects in Indonesia. Finding potential risks in a project includes looking for possible risks to assess their likelihood and timing of occurrence. The study has explored how identifying risks affects the success and longevity of a project. The study limited to outcomes of construction projects while current study assess on sustainability of donor-funded projects.

Magagan (2019) examined how project risk management impacts project performance in Kenya. The study aimed to evaluate how project risk identification, among other factors, contributes to promoting project success. The research employed a descriptive research method and included a sample of 272 participants selected from educational initiatives in Nairobi County, Kenya. The research showed that the success of a project relied heavily on identifying risks as a crucial part of managing project risks. The study limited to project performance in Kenya while current study assess on sustainability of donor-funded projects in Rwanda.

Juma and Ondara (2024), investigated how project risk management affects the sustainability of donor funded projects in Nairobi County, Kenya. This study utilized a descriptive research approach. The study specifically looked at project managers within the target population of 379 donor-funded projects in Nairobi County. By using a stratified random sampling technique, a total of 142 projects were selected based on different categories of donor-funded projects. The study gathered primary data from project managers using a structured questionnaire. The survey was conducted using a drop-and-pick method. The data collected was examined using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study showed that identifying project risks had a significant impact on the sustainability of donor-funded projects in Nairobi County ($\beta = 0.223$; $P= 0.007<0.05$). The study found that poor sustainability of projects funded by donors in Nairobi County was strongly linked to a lack of effective adoption of project management elements such as identifying, assessing, mitigating, and monitoring risks. It is advisable for the management team to prioritize risk management by accurately identifying, analyzing, and assessing risks, as well as implementing mitigation strategies and monitoring to improve and sustain donor-funded projects.

Spundak (2022) investigated risk management, project success and technology uncertainty. It examines the extent to which risk management practices like risk recognition, probability project risk assessment, complexity preparation and trade-off analysis are used, and variation in the execution between various project types and effect on different project success indicators, utilizing informant over 100 projects carried out in Israel. As a result of their research, they concluded that risk management strategies were not widely adopted and were appropriate for high-risk ventures. Concerning the impact of risk management, they

discovered that risk management is primarily concerned with respecting time and budget targets and is less concerned with product efficiency. As their risk management conclusion is still in its early stages, more awareness on implementation, training, tool development, and risk management research is required. The study limited to projects carried out in Israel while current study limited to donor-funded projects in Rwanda.

According to Jun, Qiuzhen, and Qingguo (2020) demonstrated the contribution of project risk plan on the success of information project risk assessment and technology project using the Chinese buyers. The study relied on primary data collected by use of structured questionnaires. The collected data was coded into SPSS for analysis. Therefore, this research demonstrated the existence of a clear association between recognizing risks and project performance. Study gaps is that the further study was based on and technology project using the Chinese buyers while the current study focused on donor-funded projects in Rwanda.

3. Methodology

This section presents the methodology that was used to examine the effect of project risk management practices on the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda, with particular focus on the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative. The chapter presents the procedures that were followed in selecting the research design, study population, sample size, sampling approach, data collection instruments, validity and reliability procedures, data processing and analysis, limitations of the study, and ethical considerations. The methodology was designed to provide relevant information for assessing the relationship between project risk management practices and project sustainability.

The study adopted a descriptive and correlational research design using a quantitative approach. The descriptive design was used to examine the existing level of project risk management practices and project sustainability at the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative. The correlational design was used to establish the relationship between project risk management practices and project sustainability. The study considered project risk management practices as the only independent variable and project sustainability as the dependent variable. Project risk management practices were assessed through risk identification, risk assessment, risk mitigation, and risk monitoring and control. These four areas were treated as dimensions of the single independent variable rather than separate independent variables.

The study population comprised 171 respondents from the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative. The respondents included 12 project managers, 8 senior management staff, 39 field officers, and 112 long-term beneficiaries. These categories were selected because they were directly involved in project management, implementation, participation, or had relevant knowledge of the project. Their involvement provided information relevant to project risk management practices and the sustainability of project activities and benefits.

Since the population of 171 respondents was manageable, the researcher used the entire population as the sample. Therefore, 171 respondents participated in the study. The use of the entire population enabled the researcher to obtain information from all the identified categories of respondents and reduced the possibility of excluding relevant views from particular groups.

Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents. The respondents were selected because of their involvement in or knowledge of the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative. Project managers, senior management staff, field officers, and long-term beneficiaries were considered capable of providing relevant information concerning risk identification, risk assessment, risk mitigation, risk monitoring and control, and project sustainability.

The study relied on primary data collected directly from the selected respondents. A structured questionnaire was used as the main data collection instrument. The questionnaire consisted mainly of close-ended statements and was organized into sections covering respondents' demographic information, project risk management practices, and project sustainability. The section on project risk management practices measured the single independent variable through its four dimensions of risk identification, risk assessment, risk mitigation, and risk monitoring and control. The section on project sustainability measured the dependent variable. A five-point Likert scale was used, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Before the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted with 20 staff members selected using purposive sampling. The pilot exercise was conducted to assess the clarity, relevance, and suitability of the questionnaire. The responses and observations obtained during the pilot study were used to improve the questionnaire before its administration to the main respondents.

The validity of the questionnaire was assessed through review by the research supervisor and the pilot testing process. The questionnaire was examined to ensure that its items adequately covered project risk management practices and project sustainability and were aligned with the objectives of the study. The Content Validity Index obtained was 0.88, which indicated that the instrument

adequately covered the content required for the study. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The questionnaire contained 31 items and produced a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.883. The coefficient indicated a satisfactory level of internal consistency among the questionnaire items. The instrument was therefore considered reliable for collecting information concerning project risk management practices and project sustainability.

After data collection, the completed questionnaires were checked for completeness, consistency, and accuracy. The responses were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. The data were subsequently organized and tabulated to facilitate statistical analysis and presentation. Editing, coding, and tabulation were conducted carefully to minimize errors and ensure that the collected information was suitable for analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequencies and percentages were used to present the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Means and standard deviations were used to summarize respondents' responses concerning project risk management practices and project sustainability. Pearson correlation analysis was used to establish the strength and direction of the relationship between the independent variable, project risk management practices, and the dependent variable, project sustainability. Regression analysis was used to determine the effect of project risk management practices on project sustainability. The hypotheses were tested at a 5% level of significance.

The mean and standard deviation were used to summarize the responses obtained from the respondents. The mean showed the general level of agreement with statements concerning project risk management practices and project sustainability, while the standard deviation showed the extent of variation in the responses. The results were presented and interpreted according to the scale adopted for the study.

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between project risk management practices and project sustainability. The analysis considered project risk management practices as one independent variable, with risk identification, risk assessment, risk mitigation, and risk monitoring and control serving as its dimensions. The correlation coefficient was used to establish the direction and strength of the relationship between project risk management practices and project sustainability.

Regression analysis was conducted to determine the effect of project risk management practices on project sustainability. Since the study retained only one independent variable, the overall regression model was specified using project risk management practices as the predictor of project sustainability. The four dimensions of project risk management practices were used to measure the independent variable but were not treated as separate independent variables. The analysis considered the coefficient of determination, regression coefficient, F-statistic, and significance value in determining the effect of project risk management practices on project sustainability.

The regression model was expressed as $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$, where Y represented project sustainability, X represented project risk management practices, β_0 represented the constant, β_1 represented the regression coefficient of project risk management practices, and ε represented the error term. Project risk management practices were measured through risk identification, risk assessment, risk mitigation, and risk monitoring and control. The model was used to determine whether project risk management practices had a statistically significant effect on project sustainability.

The study was subject to several limitations. The study focused on the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative, and therefore the findings were mainly applicable to the selected project and might not represent all projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda. The study also depended on information provided by respondents, and some responses might have reflected individual perceptions or experiences. The researcher minimized this limitation by explaining the purpose of the study to respondents and assuring them of confidentiality. The availability of respondents and the time required for data collection also presented challenges, which were addressed through proper planning and follow-up during the data collection process.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research process. The researcher obtained permission from the relevant authorities before collecting data. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and participated voluntarily. They were assured that the information provided would be treated confidentially and used only for academic purposes. The researcher maintained anonymity by avoiding the disclosure of respondents' personal information. The rights, privacy, and dignity of respondents were respected throughout the study. The researcher also acknowledged the sources used in the research and maintained academic integrity throughout the research process.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discussion of the study on the effect of project risk management practices on

the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda, with particular focus on the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative. The findings are presented in line with the general and specific objectives of the study. The chapter focuses on project risk management practices as the independent variable and project sustainability as the dependent variable. The findings cover risk identification, risk assessment, risk mitigation, and risk monitoring and control as dimensions of project risk management practices. The results are presented and discussed based on the information collected from the respondents and the objectives of the study.

4.1 Findings

This section presents the findings on the effect of project risk management practices on the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda, with focus on the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative. The findings were presented according to the four dimensions of project risk management practices: risk identification, risk assessment, risk mitigation, and risk monitoring and control, and their relationship with project sustainability.

4.1.1 Response Rate

The study targeted a total of 171 respondents, and all the 171 questionnaires distributed to the respondents were successfully completed and returned, representing a 100% response rate. This high response rate indicated that all targeted respondents participated in the study and provided the required information. The response rate was therefore considered sufficient for data analysis, presentation, and interpretation of the findings. The availability of responses from all the targeted participants also reduced the possibility of non-response bias and provided adequate information for examining the effect of project risk management practices on the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda, with particular focus on the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative

4.1.2 Descriptive Statistics of project risk management practices

This section presents the descriptive statistics on project risk management practices as the independent variable. The analysis covers its four dimensions: risk identification, risk assessment, risk mitigation, and risk monitoring and control, using the mean and standard deviation to summarize respondents' views. A five-point Likert scale was used where 5 = Strongly Agree (SA), 4 = Agree (A), 3 = Neutral (N), 2 = Disagree (D), and 1 = Strongly Disagree (SD).

Table 2. Level of agreement of project risk management practices

Statements	Mean	SD
The project managers always document the risks attributes and its possible effect on project outcome.	4.25	0.88
The project managers fairly give idea on how project risk should be handled.	4.48	0.61
Information about risks faced by Maranyundo MTLC Initiative is usually gathered by managers of this project.	4.29	0.49
Checklists for identifying risks using past information are fairly usually analyzed.	4.08	0.50
Overall mean	**4.27**	

Source: Field data (2026)

The findings in Table 3 indicate that respondents strongly agreed that project managers always document the risk attributes and their possible effects on project outcomes, as shown by a mean of 4.25 and standard deviation of 0.88. This suggests that the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative placed considerable emphasis on documenting identified risks and understanding their possible consequences. Such documentation can support project managers in making informed decisions and preparing appropriate responses to risks that may affect project implementation and sustainability. The relatively higher standard deviation indicates some differences in respondents' perceptions regarding the extent to which this practice was consistently applied.

Respondents also strongly agreed that project managers fairly provided ideas on how project risks should be handled, recording a mean of 4.48 and standard deviation of 0.61. This was the highest mean among the statements in Table 3, indicating a high level of agreement among

respondents. The finding suggests that project managers provided guidance to project teams on appropriate approaches for dealing with identified risks. The standard deviation of 0.61 shows that respondents had relatively similar views, indicating consistency in their perceptions of the role played by project managers in guiding risk handling.

The third statement showed that respondents strongly agreed that information about risks faced by the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative was usually gathered by project managers, with a mean of 4.29 and standard deviation of 0.49. This finding indicates that gathering information about potential risks was an important part of the project risk identification process. The low standard deviation demonstrates that respondents had similar perceptions about this practice. Therefore, the result suggests that project managers were actively involved in collecting information that could help the project recognize potential risks and take appropriate action before such risks negatively affected project activities.

Finally, respondents strongly agreed that checklists for identifying risks using past information were usually analyzed, as indicated by a mean of 4.08 and standard deviation of 0.50. Although this was the lowest mean among the four statements, it still reflected a strong level of agreement. The finding suggests that the project used previous risk information as one of the approaches for identifying possible risks. Using past information can help project managers recognize recurring or similar risks and improve preparedness. Overall, the mean score of 4.27 indicates that project risk identification was strongly practiced within the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative. This suggests that risk documentation, information gathering, guidance on risk handling, and analysis of previous risk information were important practices supporting the broader independent variable of project risk management practices.

The findings are in agreement with Chapman (2019), who found that effective identification of potential project risks contributes to better project outcomes. The study emphasized that identifying possible risks enables project managers to understand their likelihood, timing, and potential effects on project activities. Similarly, the present study found a strong level of project risk identification, with an overall mean of 4.27, indicating that documenting risks, gathering risk information, providing guidance on risk handling, and analyzing past risk information were commonly practiced at the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative. These findings suggest that effective risk identification can help the project anticipate challenges and take appropriate actions to support its sustainability.

The findings are supported by Risk Management Theory, which explains that effective risk identification helps project managers recognize potential risks early, understand their possible effects, and prepare appropriate responses. The findings show that project managers documented risk attributes, gathered risk information, provided guidance on risk handling, and analyzed past risk information. Therefore, the findings support the view of Risk Management Theory that systematic risk identification is an important practice for managing project uncertainties and supporting project sustainability

4.1.3. Correlation Analysis

This section presents the correlation analysis between project risk management practices, as the independent variable, and project sustainability, as the dependent variable. Pearson correlation analysis will be used to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between the two variables. A positive correlation will indicate that improvement in project risk management practices is associated with an increase in project sustainability, while a negative correlation will indicate an inverse relationship. The significance level will be considered at 0.05:

Table 3: Pearson Matrix between independent variable and dependent variable

		Project risk identification (X1)	Project Sustainability (Y)
Project risk identification (X1)	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	171	
Project Sustainability (Y)	Pearson Correlation	.749**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	171	171

Source: Field data, 2026

The findings in Table 3 show a strong positive relationship between project risk identification and project sustainability, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of r = 0.749. This indicates that effective risk identification is associated with higher project sustainability. The significance value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 significance level, showing that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between project risk identification and project sustainability is rejected. The findings suggest that proper identification of project risks can contribute to the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda.

4.1.4. Regression analysis

This section presents the regression analysis used to determine the effect of project risk identification on the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda, with particular focus on the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative. Simple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the extent to which project risk identification predicts project sustainability. The analysis was based on the coefficient of determination (R Square), Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and regression coefficients at a 5% level of significance.

Table 4. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.749	.561	.558	.4217

a. Predictor: (Constant), project risk identification

The findings in Table 4.4 show that the correlation coefficient (R = 0.749) indicates a strong positive relationship between project risk identification and project sustainability. The R Square value of 0.561 shows that project risk identification explained 56.1% of the variation in project sustainability, while the remaining 43.9% was explained by other factors not included in the study model. The adjusted R Square of 0.558 confirms that the model provides a good fit for explaining project sustainability. These findings suggest that project risk identification made a substantial contribution to the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding at the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative

Table 5. ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	38.742	1	38.742	217.364	.000
	Residual	30.123	169	0.178		
	Total	68.865	170			

a. Dependent Variable: Project sustainability
b. Predictors: (Constant), project risk identification

The findings in Table 5 show that the regression model was statistically significant, with an F-value of 217.364 and a significance value of 0.000. Since the significance value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the model is statistically significant. This means that project risk identification significantly affects project sustainability. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant effect of project risk identification on the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda is rejected. The findings indicate that effective identification of project risks contributes significantly to the sustainability of the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative.

Table 6. Regression Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.245	0.216	—	5.764	.000
	Insurance System	0.683	0.046	0.749	14.743	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Project sustainability

The findings in Table 6 indicate that project risk identification has a positive and statistically significant effect on project sustainability. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.683) shows that improvement in project risk identification is associated with an improvement in project sustainability, while the standardized beta coefficient (β = 0.749) indicates a strong positive contribution of project risk identification to project sustainability. The significance value (p = 0.000) is less than the 0.05 level of significance; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that project risk identification has a significant effect on the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda. The findings are supported by Risk Management Theory, which explains that identifying potential risks enables project managers to understand uncertainties and prepare appropriate responses. Therefore, effective risk identification can contribute to maintaining project activities and supporting project sustainability.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

This study examined how risk identification contributes to the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda, with particular focus on the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative. Effective risk identification enables project managers to recognize potential risks, document their possible effects, gather relevant information, and use previous project experiences to anticipate challenges. At the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative, these practices can help managers understand uncertainties that may affect project activities and prepare appropriate responses before such risks disrupt implementation. Proper identification of risks can also support informed decision-making, improve preparedness, reduce potential disruptions, and help maintain project activities and benefits after USAID funding is no longer available.

The relationship between risk identification and project sustainability can be explained by the role of proactive risk management in maintaining project activities. When potential risks are identified at an early stage, project managers are better positioned to understand their possible consequences and determine appropriate actions. This can help protect project resources, maintain planned activities, and reduce interruptions that could threaten long-term project benefits. Effective risk identification can therefore provide a foundation for managing uncertainties and strengthening the capacity of projects to continue operating under changing financial and operational conditions.

The discussion is supported by Risk Management Theory, which explains that systematic identification of potential risks is an essential part of managing uncertainty. The theory emphasizes the importance of recognizing risks early, understanding their possible consequences, and preparing suitable responses. In the context of the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative, identifying and documenting potential risks can help project managers anticipate challenges and make appropriate decisions to protect project activities. Risk identification can therefore strengthen the ability of the project to manage uncertainty and maintain its benefits over time.

This discussion is consistent with recent literature. Wang et al. (2024) emphasized that systematic risk identification provides an important basis for subsequent risk assessment and response and supports sustainable project outcomes. Niyigena and Mbonigaba (2024) also emphasized the importance of risk identification and assessment in developing resilient approaches to reduce project failures in Rwanda. Similarly, Niragire and Kwena (2024) highlighted risk identification, risk analysis, risk control, and contingency planning as important practices for successful project implementation in Rwanda. These perspectives support the view that identifying potential risks early can strengthen project preparedness and contribute to continuity and sustainability.

Further support is provided by Song et al. (2025), who emphasized that early identification of risks enables project managers to anticipate potential problems and take proactive measures to protect sustainable project performance. Elseknidy et al. (2025) also emphasized the importance of identifying and proactively managing critical risks within sustainability-oriented project management. In the Rwandan context, Nanette and Wabala (2026) identified risk identification, risk analysis, risk response planning, and risk monitoring and control as important elements of project risk management. Therefore, effective risk identification can be considered an important component of project risk management practices for strengthening the sustainability of projects operating without continued USAID funding.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

The study concludes that risk identification contributes significantly to the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda, particularly at the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative. Effective identification of potential risks through documenting risk attributes, gathering risk information, providing guidance on risk handling, and analyzing previous risk information enables project managers to anticipate challenges and prepare

appropriate responses. The quantitative analysis demonstrated a positive and significant relationship between risk identification and project sustainability, indicating that systematic identification of risks can help reduce disruptions, support informed decision-making, protect project activities and resources, and maintain project benefits over time. Therefore, strengthening risk identification as a component of project risk management practices is important for enhancing the sustainability of the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative after USAID funding is no longer available.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, recommendations are made to strengthen risk identification and improve the sustainability of projects devoid of USAID funding in Rwanda. The management of the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative should strengthen the systematic identification of potential risks by ensuring that project managers regularly document identified risks, gather relevant information, analyze previous project experiences, and provide clear guidance on how identified risks should be handled. The project should also maintain an updated risk register and conduct regular risk identification meetings to ensure that emerging risks are recognized early. These practices can enable project managers to anticipate challenges, make informed decisions, and take appropriate actions before risks negatively affect project activities. Strengthening risk identification will therefore help the Maranyundo MTLC Initiative reduce disruptions, protect project resources, maintain its activities, and sustain project benefits after USAID funding is no longer available.

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