Stakeholder Involvement and Performance of Poverty Eradication Projects in Uganda: A Study of NAADS Projects in Mukono District

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Abstract

An increased failure rate of poverty eradication projects in Uganda has become a concern of many stakeholders. This paper establishes the relationship between stakeholder involvement and Performance of Poverty Eradication Projects as a strategy for improving public sector work in Uganda. Cross-sectional and operations research survey designs were used with a study sample of 323 NAADS projects undertaken in the 28sub-counties of Mukono district. Results revealed that stakeholder involvement positively relates with and predicts performance of poverty eradication projects. This implies that in order to improve performance of poverty eradication projects, stakeholders have to be highly involved in the projects' decision-making and other core activities. The study recommended teamwork amongst stakeholders, efficient and effective ways of doing work in order to improve stakeholder involvement thereby improving performance of projects.

Key words: project, stakeholder, poverty, involvement

INTRODUCTION

An increasing turmoil in the modern business environment has made it necessary for many organizations, both public and private to adopt project approach as means to achieving organizational goals (Westerveld, 2002). Public organizations have adopted project approach to ensure achievement of public sector goals like poverty eradication (Maaninen, 2007). In Uganda, for example, National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) projects are some of the projects the government started so as to eradicate poverty through enhancement of agriculture. However, each project strives for excellence and success yet, it is by definition a unique task normally subjected to severe restrictions on budget as well as time (Andersen, 2006). Therefore, a project has to perform well in terms of planned budget, time and quality of the project processes as well as outputs (Munns and Bjeirmi, 1996) so as to fulfill the intended objectives of satisfying the stakeholder's needs (Baccarini, 1999). Failure to achieve this, the project will be branded unsuccessful and failed. According to NAADS Secretariat Report of 2003/ 04 and Uganda National Famers' Federation (2011) the NAADS projects had registered 60% failure rate with some projects in districts like Kotido registering 100% failure rate while projects in more than 10 districts registering a failure rate of above 90%. As a result of such high failure rates of poverty eradication projects in Uganda, poverty level has remained high with more than 31% of Ugandan population living below a dollar a day.

The weak performance of these projects could be attributed to luck of involvement of key stakeholders in project activities. According to the stakeholder theory, an organization is a group of stakeholders where the purpose of the organization is to manage stakeholders' interests, needs and viewpoints. Therefore, organization's success is dependent on how well it manages relationships with key groups (normative stakeholders)

that can affect realization of the organization's purpose. Managers who are argents should keep support of all these groups, balancing their interests, while maximizing their value over time (Freeman,1984; Jones and Thomas, 1995).According to the Auditor General's reports of 2008 and 2012, it is evident that NAADS coordinators pay attention to interests of beneficiaries as the coordinators spent most of the money on workshops, which were never attended by farmers who are principal project beneficiaries.

Therefore it is probable that there is a link between stakeholder involvement and performance of poverty eradication projects (Crawford, 2005; Koh and Boo, 2001).The challenge for project managers is to ensure involvement of key stakeholders in project activities in order to improve performance of the projects. The research question of this paper was whether stakeholder involvement positively relates with performance of poverty eradication projectsand whether or not Stakeholder Involvement Components Predict Performance of Poverty Eradication Projects**.**

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

According to the stakeholder theory, stakeholders are individuals or organizations, whose interests may be positively or negatively affected as a result of project implementation or successful project completion (Freeman, 1984; Jones and Thomas, 1995; PMI, 2000; McElroy and Mills, 2000), Stakeholders can either be primary or secondary (Winter, *et. al.,* 2006). Primary stakeholders have more interest in the project than the secondary stakeholders (Morris, Crawford, Hodgson, Shepherd and Thomas, 2006). According to Baker, Murphyand Fisher (1988), there are four primary stakeholders to any project. They include customers, developers/ sponsors, project teams and product end-users *(ibid)*. Secondary stakeholders can be organizations or individuals who are

affected by the project in any form, for example, politically, economically, socially or otherwise (Veraz, 2007). Stakeholder Involvement has been defined as the degree to which stakeholders of the project are willing to participate in the project work/activities (Freeman, 1984). According to Paullay, Alliger, and Romero(1994), stakeholder involvement is the degree to which one is cognitively preoccupied with, engaged in, and concerned with one's present project activities. Lodahl and Kejner (1965) look at involvement as the degree to which a person is identified psychologically with his work or the importance of work in his total self-image. Lassk, Marshall, Cravens and Moncrief, (2001) argue that individuals who are willing to work hard are highly involved, whereas individuals without willingness are lowly involved. According to Dubin (1968), an individual is highly involved in the job if the job situation is of central life interest to him/ her. Stakeholder involvement has been categorized into job involvement (by role and setting) and work involvement. Job involvement pertains to a specific project activity. Yet work involvement pertains to working attitude in general (work centrality). Job involvement is the degree to which one is engaged in the specific tasks/ activities that make up one's project in form of project roles and setting. Work involvement/ project centrality, on the other hand, is the degree to which one finds carrying out project tasks in the project environment to be engaging. It is the belief that individuals have regarding the degree of importance that the project plays in their lives. Therefore, project centrality looks at the stakeholders, willingness to participate in the project. But job involvement looks at stakeholders' willingness to carry out the specific tasks of the present project (Kanungo, 1982).

On the other hand, project performance can be viewed narrowly as achievement of intended outcomes in terms of project specification, completing activities on time, completing the project on the agreed budget,

only carrying out activities within the scope and with requisite performance [(technical requirements) Atkinson, 1999; Pinto and Slevin, 1988; Wateridge, 1998]. According to PMI Standards Committee (2004) and Bryde (2005), this is the golden or the iron triangle measurement of project performance, that is, if the project is completed in time, within budget, and to specification, it would achieve the intended objectives and thus, perform well. This is the operational mindset, which is influenced by the "get the job done" approach (Dvir, Sadeh, and Malach, 2006). Several studies support inclusion of customer satisfaction as a fourth dimension of project performance (Lipovetsky, *et. al*., 1997; Lim and Mohamed, 1999; Zwikael and Globerson, 2006; Kerzner, 2006; Voetsch, 2004; Bryde, 2005). This study adopted the measurement of project performance in terms of schedule, project quality, customer satisfaction, time management and achieving project objectives (reducing poverty level).

Stakeholder involvement leads to improved performance of poverty eradication projects. According to Kanungo (1979), stakeholders who are highly involved in the project will put forth substantial effort towards achievement of project objectives and will be less likely to withdraw from project work. But stakeholders who are lowly involved in the project work are more likely to abandon the project and/or withdraw effort from the project work and either apply that energy to tasks outside the scope of the project or engage in various undesirable on-the-job activities. Cohen's (1999) research supported the important status of job involvement by arguing that individuals with high levels of job involvement, which stem from positive experiences on-the-job (Kanungo, 1979; Witt, 1993), make attributions for these experiences to the organization. Thus, having previously received benefits from the organization and being obligated by the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) to repay them, high job involvement employees feel compelled to reciprocate in some form. The findings from

the MESs AGE project (2007) also revealed that involvement of primary stakeholders in the project has a positive effect to project performance by creating widespread support for the project, which increases acceptance and legitimacy of policy plans. According to Liu and Walker (1998), project performance is a function of performance of each participant in the project. Bourne (2005) demonstrates a direct link between successful management of the relationships between project stakeholders and project performance. This is in agreement with findings by Loo's (2002) study of internal the best practices of project management where a sample of project managers from 34 organizations that were project-driven was studied. Among people practices, he (ibid) found out that stakeholder involvement has a significant influence to project performance. This shows that project overall performance is highly dependent on stakeholders involvement in various project activities. Therefore, it can be concluded that for poverty eradication projects to perform well, primary stakeholders have to be involved in project activities.

Stakeholder involvement components (job involvement and work/ project centrality) predict project performance significantly. Kahn (1990) and Pfeffer (1994) argued that if stakeholders are highly involved in project activities and have a general willingness to work in projects, they will behave well towards the company objectives. They (ibid) argue that job involvement affects employees' motivation and effort, which subsequently determine project performance. For highly involved employees, their jobs seem inexorably connected with their very identities, interests and life goals, and are crucially important (Mudrack, 2004). Job involvement develops in the individual through a long and meaningful process (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965). The prevailing assumption in research is that high job involvement is an inherently desirable attribute of employees (Mudrack, 2004), since job involved workers develop strong relationships with their jobs and invest "personal resources" in their current job (Kanungo, 1982). Indeed, highly

job involved individuals generally seem to be satisfied with their jobs, to be in characteristic positive moods at work and to be highly committed to their employing organizations, their careers as well as their professions (Carson, Carson and Bedeian, 1995; Cohen, 1995). Job involved individuals believe that personal and organizational goals are compatible (Chay and Aryee, 1999) and tend to focus on job activities even in their spare time – such as thinking of ways to perform even better (Mudrack, 2004), feel competent and successful and are inclined to assist others at work (Holton and Russell, 1997). This in the end leads to high project performance in terms of time management, cost control, improved quality and generally achieving project objectives. Work/project centrality as another component of stakeholder involvement has a strong prediction to performance of poverty eradication projects. According to Paullay, *et. al*. (1994), stakeholders with high work/project involvement take work to be of central life interest which makes them work hard thereby leading to high project performance. Dubin (1968) added that such individuals work for their total self image thereby improving the quality of products they produce. Hence they achieveed project objectives in general. Lodahl and Kejner (1965) believed that individuals with high work involvement participate in their jobs to meet such needs as prestige, self-respect, autonomy, and self-regard. This in the end makes them work to achieve their objective while helping the project to achieve its objectives.

HYPOTHESIS

H1: Job involvement by roles and setting and workcentrality are components of stakeholder involvement

H2: Stakeholder involvement positively relates with performance of poverty eradication projects

H3: Stakeholder involvement components predicts performance of poverty eradication projects

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross sectional and quantitative survey strategies. Correlational and regressional designs were adopted to explain relationships between stakeholder involvement and project performance together with the extent to which stakeholder involvement explains project performance. The study sample consisted of 323 projects of the 2,062 NAADS projects undertaken in the 28sub-counties of Mukono district. Mukono district was selected to be the study area because the District has had the benefit of being first on many government pilot programs. Two categories of project stakeholders were considered. They included sponsors/ coordinators and project beneficiaries/ team members (farmers). This study adopted a multi-stage sampling procedure in order to get representative views from various stakeholders on performance of poverty eradication projects in Uganda. It involved using proportionate sampling to select the 323 projects and 370 project stakeholders (respondents) who comprised of 356 farmers/ team members and 14 NAADS coordinators from the 323 projects. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents of the two categories (team members and or project coordinators) from each project. The response rate was 88.5%. Primary data were collected by administering a questionnaire which contained close ended questions relating to each study variable in question. The respondents answered based on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements in the questionnaire. Secondary data were also used.

Stakeholder involvement was measured using the stakeholder involvement questionnaire developed by Kanungo (1982). Project performance was measured using four dimensions. Schedule overrun (this tests whether or not the project committed outputs were delivered within the agreed timeframe), Cost overrun (whether or not the committed outputs were produced within the agreed budget), Project quality (whether or not all

committed outputs were delivered and met agreed quality standards), Customer satisfaction (whether or not the project customers achieved all the targeted outcomes), Achieving project objectives (whether or not the government achieved its major objectives, the key one being reducing poverty level) (Uganda national Famers' federation, 2011; Kerzner, 2006; Voetsch, 2004). Each of the four categories was measured by items on a five-point scale, where 5 represented "strongly agree" and 1 represented "strongly disagree". The research instrument was examined for its reliability by using Cronbach's Alpha valve. Results showed that the instrument was reliable with a coefficient that was above 0.5. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 16.0.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study used factor analysis with principal component analysis to extract variables from the indicators on stakeholder involvement. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was .807 and Bartlett's test was significant at $\chi^2(321) = 4544.600, p \prec .001)$ implying that factor analysis was afitting model for the study. Communalities for each of the items in Table 1 varied between 0.517 and 0.788. Indicators with a communality of 0.55 were considered to vary closely with the extracted components and indicators with a communality of < 0.55 to vary scantily with the extracted components.

Items 1 to 10 represented job involvement by roles, with item 3 (I am willing to work overtime to accomplish unfinished tasks), item 2 (Often when I am not engaged in project work, I find myself thinking about things that I have done or things that need to be done in the project), having the highest variances of 0.705 and 0.702 respectively. Items 11 to 16 represented job involvement by setting, with item 14 (I always enjoy doing things with my team members), item 12 (This work environment really

inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance), item 13 (There is something about the team on which I work that makes me want to do my best)), having the highest variances of 0.788, 0.763 and 0.744 respectively. Items 17 to 20 represented project centrality,with item 20 (The major satisfaction in my life comes from working in projects) having the highest variance of 0.739.

Table I: *Extracted Communalities for the Indicators of Stakeholder Involvement*

	Initial	Extraction
I don't mind spending half an hour past finishing time, if I can accomplish the project activity I have been working on.	1.000	.592
Often when I am not engaged in project work, I find myself thinking about things that I have done or things that need to be done in the project.	1.000	.702
Am willing to work overtime to accomplish un finished tasks	1.000	.705
Sometimes I lie awake at night thinking about the things I have to do the next day in this project.	1.000	.630
In this project, I often do extra work beyond what is expected of me	1.000	.613
I am absorbed in the activities that I carry out in this project.	1.000	.662
I am very much involved personally in the activities I do in this project.	1.000	.558
I usually show up for project work a little early to get things ready.	1.000	.508
I often try to think of ways of doing my activities more effectively.	1.000	.565
I am really interested in my project work.	1.000	.614
I feel part of the team on which I work.	1.000	.695
This work environment really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.	1.000	.763
There is something about the team on which I work that makes me want to do my best.	1.000	.744
I always enjoy doing things with my team members.	1.000	.788
I really feel as if the team's problems are my problems.	1.000	.685
I would prefer to work in a different setting than project environment.	1.000	.517
The most important things that happen to me involve my work in the projects.	1.000	.542
Working in a project setting should be considered central to life.	1.000	.644
Overall, I consider working on projects to be very central to my existence.	1.000	.695
The major satisfaction in my life comes from working in projects.	1.000	.739

Notes: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Components of stakeholder involvement were extracted with principal component method using varimax rotation to determine any underlying components for each item and validate whether or not respondents perceived the three components of stakeholder involvement to be distinct. Components of stakeholder involvement included: Job involvement by Roles, Job involvement by Setting and project Centrality. Results in Table II show that all three factors had an eigen value >1.0 and cumulative variance of 36.95%. Furthermore, results showed the factor; job involvement by roles to be the most significant factor at explaining stakeholder involvement with variance of 16.62%, followed by project centrality (variance = 13.76%) and job involvement by setting (variance = 6.57%). It implies that most people in Uganda are mainly looking forward to carrying out any activity that solves their problem (poverty eradication) without minding whether or not such activities are in project setting. These findings mean that for stakeholders' job involvement to increase, managers have to ensure that stakeholders are willing to give in more time than the normal working time in order to accomplish project activities, ensuring that stakeholders think about projects activities that need to be done in the project, ensuring that stakeholders are fully absorbed in the activities that they carry out in the project, and by making sure that stakeholders always think of ways of doing their project activities more effectively than the usual ones. For project centrality to increase, project managers have to ensure that stakeholders give project activities the first priority compared to other activities that they do outside the project and ensuring that stakeholdersconsider working in a project setting central to their life.

Table II: *Rotated Component Matrix*

	Roles	Centralit	Setting
Often when I am not engaged in project work, I find myself thinking about things that I have done or things that need to be done in the project.	.700		
I don't mind spending half an hour past finishing time, if I can accomplish the project activity I have been working on.	.690		
I am absorbed in the activities that I carry out in this project.	.685		
I often try to think of ways of doing my activities more effectively.	.674		
I am very much involved personally in the activities I do in this project.	.648		
I am really interested in my project work.	.644		
Am willing to work overtime to accomplish un finished tasks	.629		
Sometimes I lie awake at night thinking about the things I have to do the next day in this project.	.588		
I usually show up for project work a little early to get things ready.	.580		
The most important things that happen to me involve my work in the projects.		.681	
The major satisfaction in my life comes from working in projects.		.608	
Overall, I consider working on projects to be very central to my existence.		.595	
Working in a project setting should be considered central to life.		.537	
This work environment really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.			.605
I would prefer to work in a different setting than project environment.			.576
I feel part of the team on which I work.			.551
There is something about the team on which I work that makes me want to do my best.			.535
I always enjoy doing things with my team members.			.541
I really feel as if the team's problems are my problems.			.519
Eigen Values	5.818	4.816	2.299
Percentage of variance explained	16.623	13.761	6.569
Cumulative Percentage of variance explained	16.623	30.384	36.953

Notes: Extraction method: principal component analysis. Rotation method: varimax with Kaiser normalization. Rotation converged in six iterations

Zero-order Pearson correlations among study variables were used and is presented in Table III

There existed job involvement by roles (Mean = 4.23, SD=0.57), job involvement by setting (Mean = 3.73, SD = 0.91) and project centrality (Mean = 4.22, SD = 0.65). Job involvement by Roles was the most prominentfacet of stakeholder involvement. It implies a possibility of failure to reject the hypothesis that there is a relationship between stakeholder involvement and performance of NAADS projects.

The results in Table III also show that there exists a significant positive relationship between performance of NAADS projects and each of the factors of stakeholder involvement, that is, job involvement by Roles ($r=0.413^*$, $p<.05$), job involvement by Setting ($r=0.464^{**}$, $p<.001$) and project Centrality ($r=0.441^{**}$, $p<.001$). These results imply that if team members are willing to work overtime to accomplish unfinished tasks and consider working on projects to be very central to their life, this may improve the quality of products and services that the project comes up with, a measure of performance of poverty eradication projects.These findings are in agreement with Bourne (2005) who demonstrated a direct link between successful management of the relationships between project stakeholders and project performance. The study findings also agree with Kanungo (1979) who argued that stakeholders who are highly involved in the project will put forth substantial effort towards achievement of project objectives and will be less likely to withdraw from project work. But stakeholders who are lowly involved in the project work are more likely to abandon the project and/or withdraw effort from the project work and either apply that energy to tasks outside the scope of the project or engage in various undesirable on-the-job activities.

Table III: *Zero Order Correlations*

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Roles	4.2281	0.5725	1			
Setting	3.7342	0.9092	.394**	1		
Centrality	3.8633	0.6532	.441**	.341**	1	
Performance of NAADS Projects	3.6718	0.4669	.413**	.464**	.441**	1

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

Hierarchical Regression Analysis

A Hierarchical Regression Model was estimated with variables entered simultaneously within each hierarchical step. Colinearity diagnostics were examined for all items entered at each step and were found to be within the recommended range (VIF <4 and torrelance >0.20; O'Brien and Marakas, 2007). The regression results are shown in Table IV.

Job involvement by roles was entered in model 1 and predicted 19.7% percent of variance in performance of NAADS projects. (R^2=0.197). The R^2 change was 13.5 percent and F change statistics were significant (F statistics = 11.428, β = .307, significance F Change of 0.000), supporting H3.On entering job involvement by setting in model 2, both roles and setting commitment were significant predictors of performance of NAADS projects with a predictive potential of 30.0 percent. The R2 change was 10.3 percent and F change statistic was 40.953. (F statistics =17.049, β=. 0.18, significance F Change of 0.000). This implies that job involvement by setting predicted 13.5 percent of the variance in performance of NAADS projects and thus, supporting H3.

However, when job involvement by setting was introduced the β coefficient for job involvement by roles reduced from 0.30.7 to 0.198. When project

centrality was added in the third model,the results showed that the β– Coefficient for job involvement by setting reduced to 0.154, but was still significant, implying that project centrality possibly partially mediated influence of setting on performance of NAADS projects. Further still, results of the third model showed that project centrality was significant, the new model predicting 35.1 percent of variance in performance of NAADS projects. (R^2=0.351). The R^2 change was 5.0 percent and the F change statistics was significant (F statistics = 18.707, β = .184, significance F Change of 0.000). This implies that project centrality predicted 5.0 percent of variance in performance of NAADS.The results in models 1, 2 and 3 support H3, implying that management of poverty eradication projects should ensure that project stakeholders are highly involved in project activities and put less effort on general liking of projects thereby improving performance of these projects. These findings are in line with Brown (1996) who argued that job involvement predicts project performance significantly. Kahn (1990) and Pfeffer (1994) argued that for highly involved employees, their jobs seem inexorably connected with their very identities, interests and life goals, and are crucially important (Mudrack, 2004). They *(ibid)* contend that job involved individuals believe that personal and organizational goals are compatible and tend to focus on job activities even in their spare time such as thinking of ways to perform even better and are inclined to assist others at work (Holton and Russell, 1997). This in the end leads to high project performance in terms of time management, cost control, improved quality and generally achieving project objectives.

Table IV: *Hierarchical Regression Analysis*

	Model1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Collinearity Statistics*	
	Role	*Setting*	*Centrality*	*Tolerance*	*VIF*
(Constant)	2.079	1.912	1.615	Na	na
Age Group	0.031	0.023	0.03	0.92	1.087
Gender	-0.026	-0.023	-0.038	0.909	1.1
Marital status	-0.01	-0.008	0.009	0.94	1.064
Number of years worked in projects	0.076	0.076	0.069	0.933	1.071
Highest education attained	0.021	0.016	0.014	0.972	1.029
Roles	0.307	0.198	0.121	0.947	1.056
Setting		0.18	0.154	0.84	1.19
Centrality			0.184	0.76	1.316
R	0.444	0.584	0.592	Na	na
R2	0.197	0.3	0.351	Na	na
Adjusted R2	0.18	0.283	0.332	Na	na
F Statistic	11.428	17.049	18.707	Na	na
Significance	.000	.000	.000	Na	na
R2 Change	0.135	0.103	0.05	Na	na
F Change Statistic	46.769	40.953	21.512	Na	na
Significance F Change Statistic	.000	.000	.000	Na	na

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

It was established from the study that there was a significant positive relationship between stakeholder involvement and performance of poverty eradication projects. This implies that if project team members are willing to work overtime to accomplish unfinished tasks and they consider working on projects to be very central to their life, it shall improve the quality of products and services that the project comes up with.

Project beneficiaries should be showed relevance of project activities to them. As a result, project team members will be completely absorbed in

project activities to the extent of being ready to work overtime in order to accomplish any unfinished task of project activities.

NAADS coordinators should consult beneficiaries on activities they can best carry on and be trained on how to carry out those activities in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness in project work and in order to build peoples' interest in the project thereby increasing stakeholders' involvement in the project.

Limitations of the Study

The study was a cross sectional study and focused on stakeholders of NAADS projects. This limits generalization of findings to all poverty eradication projects. However, given the large scope of NAADS projects, the study gives a picture of the situation in Uganda, which other studies can build on. Therefore, there is need for research in project communications, stakeholder participation in decision making and project execution flexibility to performance of poverty eradication projects.

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