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**Project Implementation Strategies and Performance of Zero Dropout Projects by Save
the Children, Rwanda**

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of Zero Dropout Projects by Save the Children,
Rwanda**



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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to assess the influence of project implementation strategies on performance of non-governmental organization projects in Rwanda, specifically focusing on the Zero Dropout Project in Bugesera District. The study aims to evaluate how various strategies, including community outreach and engagement, partnerships with local leaders, support services, resource allocation, and monitoring and evaluation, influence the performance of the project.

Methodology: Employing a descriptive survey research design, the study will target a population of 321 individuals from whom a sample size of 178 respondents is calculated and was selected purposive sampling techniques, selected through stratified sampling to ensure representative data from various stakeholders involved in the Zero Dropout Project. Data was collected using structured questionnaires and documentary analysis, capturing the perceptions and experiences of key participants. The analysis was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences.

Findings: The regression analysis yielded a coefficient (B) of 0.586 and a p-value of 0.000 for the community outreach and engagement variable. The coefficient for partnership with local leaders was 0.217, with a p-value of 0.000. Support services had a coefficient of 0.458 and a p-value of 0.003. Resource allocation recorded a coefficient of 0.096 and a p-value of 0.022. Monitoring and evaluation produced the highest coefficient (1.678) and a p-value of 0.000. The study concludes that effective project management strategies play a critical role in the success of education-based interventions.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Based on the findings, the study recommends enhancing partnerships with local leaders, expanding financial support mechanisms, improving monitoring and evaluation capacity, and scaling the project to other districts.

Keywords: *Community Outreach and Engagement, Monitoring and Evaluation Partnerships, Project Implementation Strategies, Performance, Projects, Resource Allocation, Support Services*

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) projects employ diverse strategies to address educational challenges, focusing on planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation. In India, NGOs like Pratham and Teach for India have been instrumental in improving literacy rates and scaling effective educational interventions. Their strategies involve leveraging technology, fostering partnerships with government institutions, and deploying community-driven approaches to enhance learning outcomes. Key performance metrics in India include literacy rates, school retention, and the scalability of successful models across states (Patel & Gupta, 2023).

Similarly, in China, NGOs play a vital role in addressing the urban-rural education divide. Organizations such as the China Youth Development Foundation and the Rural Education Action Program focus on building schools, training teachers, and implementing digital learning platforms. These initiatives have significantly improved access to education in remote areas, with success measured through school enrollment rates, educational attainment levels, and the impact of digital tools on student learning (Liu & Zhang, 2022).

In Africa, NGOs are pivotal in addressing educational inequalities, particularly in underserved rural and urban areas. In Guinea, NGOs like the Association Guinéenne pour le Progrès de l'Éducation (AGPE) work to improve literacy rates and enhance educational infrastructure. Their strategies involve community mobilization, partnerships with local educational authorities, and teacher training programs. Success is assessed through indicators such as school enrollment rates, student attendance, and improvements in literacy and numeracy skills (Diallo & Kouyaté, 2020).

Similarly, in Cameroon, NGOs such as the Cameroon Education Foundation and Educate Cameroon target educational inequalities by building classrooms, providing educational materials, and supporting teacher professional development. Their efforts have resulted in increased school retention rates, better academic performance, and a reduction in dropout rates, particularly in rural areas (Nchinda & Mbue, 2021). These initiatives demonstrate how localized strategies tailored to specific community needs can effectively address educational disparities across Africa.

In Uganda, NGOs like the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and the Uganda Education Initiative prioritize improving access to education in rural areas where resources are scarce. Their strategies involve building school infrastructure, training teachers, and engaging local communities to promote education. Performance is evaluated based on improvements in school attendance, student academic achievement, and the sustainability of educational interventions (Muwanga & Nakiboneka, 2023). These regional efforts underscore the critical role of tailored, context-specific strategies in addressing the unique educational challenges of East Africa.

In Rwanda, NGOs have been instrumental in addressing educational challenges through strategic partnerships with local communities, capacity-building initiatives, and infrastructure development. These projects are carefully aligned with national development priorities, ensuring coherence with government policies and donor expectations. NGOs in Rwanda implement a range of strategies, from enhancing school facilities to providing teacher training and promoting community involvement. For example, educational interventions often focus on increasing school enrollment rates, improving academic performance, and fostering inclusivity within the education system. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks are employed to assess

project performance, with metrics such as literacy rates, student retention, and community engagement serving as key indicators of success. Rwanda's proactive approach to leveraging NGO support has significantly improved education access and quality, particularly in rural and underserved areas, setting a strong foundation for sustainable development in the sector.

Problem Statement

The strategic implementation of educational projects is fundamental to achieving meaningful outcomes and addressing educational disparities effectively. Well-implemented strategies ensure the efficient utilization of resources, active stakeholder engagement, and the realization of project objectives. This is particularly critical for non-governmental organization (NGO) projects, which often aim to bridge gaps in access to quality education and foster equitable learning opportunities for marginalized populations.

In Rwanda, the "ZERO" Education Project, led by Save the Children in Bugesera District, highlights efforts to combat educational exclusion by targeting out-of-school children and promoting primary education enrollment. However, despite its noble objectives, the project has encountered several challenges. Logistical difficulties, such as limited transportation options, inadequate teacher training, and inconsistent community engagement, have significantly hindered its implementation.

For instance, a study by Nkubito (2021) revealed that transportation barriers delayed the delivery of educational materials to rural areas, while the lack of sufficient training for teachers limited their ability to deliver effective instruction.

Empirical evidence underscores the detrimental impact of such strategic implementation challenges on project performance. Smith and Johnson (2022) found that logistical barriers and insufficient community support could reduce the success rate of educational projects by as much as 35%. Similarly, a report by the Ministry of Education (2023) highlighted that project failing to adapt their strategies to local contexts experienced higher dropout rates and lower student retention.

In Rwanda, these challenges are compounded by broader national education statistics. While primary school enrollment stands at an impressive 98%, the transition rate to secondary education drops to 71%, with rural areas experiencing the most significant disparities (National Institute of Statistics Rwanda, 2022). Teacher shortages exacerbate the issue, with rural schools reporting a ratio of one teacher per 58 students, far above the recommended standard.

This study aims to examine the implementation strategies and performance of the "ZERO" Education Project in Bugesera District, Rwanda. By analyzing the strategic approaches employed, the challenges encountered, and their impact on project performance, this research seeks to offer actionable insights into improving the effectiveness of similar NGO-led educational initiatives. A deeper understanding of these factors contribute to enhancing implementation practices, reducing dropout rates, and improving access to quality education in Rwanda, ultimately supporting the country's educational development goals.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to assess project implementation strategies and performance of non-governmental organization projects in Rwanda.

Specific Objective

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i To examine the effect of community outreach and engagement strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district,
- ii To analyse the effect of partnership with local leaders' strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district,
- iii To analyse the effect of support services strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district,
- iv To analyse the effect of resource allocation strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district,
- v To analyse the effect of monitoring and evaluation strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district.

Research Hypotheses

To attain the objectives of the study, the research tested the following hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of community outreach and engagement strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district,

H₀₂: There is no significant effect of community outreach and engagement strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district,

H₀₃: There is no significant effect of support services strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district,

H₀₄: There is significant effect of resource allocation strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district,

H₀₅: There is no significant effect of monitoring and evaluation strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The theoretical framework for the study of project implementation strategies and performance of NGO projects in Rwanda incorporates the Theory of Change, Resource-Based View, and Stakeholder Theory. The Theory of Change offers a structured approach to mapping interventions and understanding their impact, making it highly relevant for evaluating project effectiveness. The Resource-Based View provides insights into how internal resources contribute to competitive advantage and project success.

Stakeholder Theory emphasizes the importance of managing relationships with all relevant parties, offering a comprehensive perspective on organizational accountability and performance. Among these theories, the Theory of Change is particularly relevant to the study of Save the Children in Bugesera District. It provides a clear framework for mapping out interventions, understanding causal pathways, and evaluating project outcomes, which is essential for assessing the effectiveness of implementation strategies and optimizing project performance.

2.1.1 Stewardship Theory

The Theory of Change (ToC) emerged in the early 1990s as a framework for planning and evaluating complex social programs and interventions. Initially conceptualized by Carol Weiss and further refined by practitioners such as Judith E. H. Chang and Philanthropy New York, the ToC aimed to provide a structured methodology for understanding how interventions lead

to desired outcomes. The original focus of the ToC was on mapping the logical sequence of interventions and their expected impacts. Over time, the theory has evolved to incorporate systems thinking, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the broader context and interactions between different components of a project. This evolution has made the ToC a versatile tool applicable across various sectors, including education, health, and international development.

In practical settings, the Theory of Change has been extensively used to design, implement, and evaluate social programs. For instance, NGOs and development organizations employ the ToC to clarify their goals, map out the causal pathways leading to these goals, and establish measurable indicators for success. In the education sector, the ToC has been applied to design interventions aimed at improving student outcomes by outlining the necessary inputs, activities, and expected changes in student performance and engagement. Organizations such as the World Bank and UNICEF have successfully utilized the ToC to enhance program effectiveness by providing a clear framework for articulating and evaluating the underlying assumptions and mechanisms of their interventions (Ramalingam, 2019; Connell & Kubisch, 2020).

The Theory of Change offers several advantages. Firstly, it provides clarity and focus by offering a structured framework for defining goals and the steps required to achieve them. This clarity ensures that all stakeholders understand the project's objectives and processes (Kivunja, 2020). Secondly, the ToC is flexible and can be adapted to various contexts and project types, accommodating changes based on new information or emerging challenges (Coryn et al., 2019). Thirdly, it enhances evaluation by specifying causal pathways and assumptions, allowing for robust measurement of progress and assessment of intervention effectiveness (Mayne, 2021).

However, the ToC also has its limitations. It can be complex and time-consuming to develop, particularly for large-scale projects with multiple stakeholders. Capturing all relevant factors comprehensively can be challenging (Smith, 2022). Additionally, the effectiveness of the ToC relies on the accuracy of underlying assumptions and causal pathways; flawed assumptions or unforeseen changes can undermine its validity (Dart & Davies, 2020). Furthermore, developing a ToC often requires extensive stakeholder engagement, which can be challenging to achieve comprehensively, potentially leading to gaps in the ToC and its implementation (Georgi, 2021).

The Theory of Change was instrumental in the study of implementation strategies and performance of NGO projects in Rwanda, particularly in the case of Save the Children in Bugesera District. By applying the ToC, the study can map out the pathways through which Save the Children's interventions are expected to achieve their goals in the district. This mapping will help identify the necessary preconditions, inputs, and activities required to reach desired outcomes, such as improved child welfare and education.

Moreover, the ToC facilitated a deeper understanding of the assumptions and contextual factors influencing the implementation and performance of Save the Children's projects. It provided a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of strategies, measuring progress against established indicators, and identifying areas for improvement. By clarifying causal relationships and expected outcomes, the ToC enhanced the study's ability to assess the alignment between the organization's strategies and its impact on the community, offering valuable insights into optimizing project performance and achieving sustainable results.

Uncertainty Theory

The Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm, developed in the late 20th century, offers a strategic management framework emphasizing the internal resources and capabilities of a firm as sources of competitive advantage. The RBV was first articulated by Edith Penrose in her seminal work *The Theory of the Growth of the Firm* (1959), which laid the groundwork for understanding how firms leverage their unique resources. Jay Barney further advanced the RBV in 1991 with his influential paper on "Firm Resources and Sustained Competitive Advantage," which introduced the core idea that resources must be valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable to provide a competitive edge. Over time, the RBV has evolved to incorporate the concept of dynamic capabilities, as discussed by Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997). Dynamic capabilities refer to a firm's ability to adapt and reconfigure its resources in response to changing environments, thereby enhancing its competitive position. This evolution has made the RBV a comprehensive framework for understanding how firms can leverage their internal strengths to achieve sustained competitive advantage and superior performance.

In practical terms, the RBV has been widely applied across various industries to understand and enhance competitive advantage. For example, tech giants like Apple and Google have effectively utilized their unique resources such as advanced technologies, intellectual property, and highly skilled personnel to maintain and strengthen their market positions. Similarly, in the context of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the RBV provides valuable insights into how these organizations leverage their internal resources to achieve their goals. For NGOs, internal resources such as organizational knowledge, strategic partnerships, and financial assets play a crucial role in addressing development challenges and delivering impactful results. Research has shown that NGOs with strong organizational capabilities and effective resource management practices are better positioned to implement successful projects and achieve their objectives (Morris & Baddock, 2020; Sampson & Temesgen, 2021). The RBV thus serves as a useful tool for understanding how NGOs can optimize their resources to enhance project effectiveness and outcomes.

The Resource-Based View offers several advantages. First, it provides a focus on internal strengths, helping organizations identify and leverage their unique resources to improve performance and achieve strategic goals (Barney, 2020). Second, the RBV emphasizes strategic resource management, allowing firms and organizations to align their resource allocation with their objectives, leading to greater efficiency and effectiveness (Peteraf & Barney, 2022). Third, by incorporating the concept of dynamic capabilities, the RBV acknowledges the need for organizations to adapt their resources to changing environments, which is crucial for maintaining a competitive advantage in dynamic and uncertain contexts (Teece, 2021).

However, the RBV also has limitations. Identifying and evaluating the value of resources can be challenging, particularly for organizations with complex or intangible assets. This difficulty may lead to issues in accurately assessing which resources are truly valuable and rare (Coff, 2020). Additionally, while the RBV focuses on internal resources, it may underemphasize the importance of external factors such as market conditions and competitive pressures. A sole focus on internal resources might overlook the impact of external factors on organizational performance (Makadok & Barney, 2022). Furthermore, the concept of dynamic capabilities, although valuable, can be complex to implement and measure effectively. Organizations may struggle to develop and manage these capabilities, which can affect their ability to maintain a sustained competitive advantage (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2021).

In the study of implementation strategies and performance of NGO projects in Rwanda, particularly focusing on Save the Children in Bugesera District, the Resource-Based View will offer significant insights. By applying the RBV, the study can examine how Save the Children leverages its internal resources such as human capital, financial assets, and organizational processes to achieve its project goals. The RBV provided a framework for assessing how these resources contribute to the effective implementation of projects and the attainment of desired outcomes, such as improved child welfare and education.

Furthermore, the RBV facilitated a deeper understanding of how Save the Children's resource management practices impact project performance. It helped identify the strengths that can be leveraged and areas where resource management practices may need improvement. By clarifying the role of internal resources in influencing project outcomes, the RBV offered valuable insights into optimizing resource allocation and enhancing the overall impact of Save the Children's interventions in Bugesera District.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory, introduced by R. Edward Freeman in his seminal work *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach* (1984), fundamentally transformed the way organizations approach and manage their stakeholder relationships. Freeman's theory posits that organizations should not solely focus on maximizing shareholder value but also consider the interests of all parties affected by their actions, including employees, customers, suppliers, and the broader community. This inclusive perspective challenged the traditional shareholder-centric approach and advocated for a more comprehensive view of organizational responsibility and strategy.

Since its inception, Stakeholder Theory has evolved significantly. Initial discussions centered on identifying and classifying stakeholders, understanding their interests, and managing relationships to balance competing demands. Over time, the theory has integrated broader concepts such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), ethical business practices, and sustainability. Notable contributions to the theory include the work of Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997), who introduced the concept of stakeholder salience, which assesses the importance of stakeholders based on their power, legitimacy, and urgency. Additionally, Freeman's later works, particularly his 2010 update on Stakeholder Theory, have emphasized dynamic stakeholder management and the interconnectedness of stakeholder relationships, further enriching the theory's application and relevance.

Stakeholder Theory has been widely applied across various sectors to improve organizational performance and accountability. In the corporate sector, companies use stakeholder analysis to identify key stakeholders, understand their needs, and develop strategies to address these needs effectively. For example, multinational corporations like Unilever and Microsoft integrate stakeholder perspectives into their business strategies to tackle social, environmental, and economic issues, thereby enhancing their reputation and achieving sustainable growth (Jones, 2019; Harrison & Wicks, 2020). In the non-profit sector, Stakeholder Theory is crucial for managing relationships with diverse groups such as donors, beneficiaries, and community partners. NGOs employ stakeholder analysis to ensure their projects align with stakeholder needs and expectations, thus improving project outcomes and organizational effectiveness. For instance, organizations like the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Amnesty International use stakeholder engagement strategies to gain support, address concerns, and achieve their mission-related goals (Brugmann & Prahalad, 2021; O'Donohue, 2022).

Stakeholder Theory offers several advantages. It provides a comprehensive perspective on organizational management by considering the interests of all relevant parties. This broad view helps organizations balance competing demands and make more informed decisions (Freeman, 2010). The theory also enhances accountability by focusing on stakeholder interests, fostering trust and improving relationships with stakeholders, which can lead to better organizational performance (Jones, 2019). Additionally, Stakeholder Theory supports the integration of corporate social responsibility and sustainability into business practices, aligning organizational goals with ethical and social considerations, thus contributing to long-term success (Harrison & Wicks, 2020).

However, the theory also presents challenges. Managing the interests of multiple stakeholders can be complex, as organizations may struggle to balance conflicting demands and prioritize stakeholders effectively (Mitchell et al., 1997). Furthermore, Stakeholder Theory lacks clear guidelines for addressing stakeholder conflicts or measuring stakeholder satisfaction, which can complicate its practical implementation (O'Donohue, 2022). Additionally, engaging with a wide range of stakeholders can be resource-intensive, posing difficulties for smaller organizations or those with limited resources (Brugmann & Prahalad, 2021).

In the study of implementation strategies and performance of NGO projects in Rwanda, particularly focusing on Save the Children in Bugesera District, Stakeholder Theory will provide valuable insights. By applying this theory, the study can explore how Save the Children identifies and engages with its various stakeholders, including beneficiaries, donors, and local partners. Understanding stakeholder interests and expectations will help assess how well the NGO's strategies align with the needs of these groups and how effectively it manages relationships to achieve project goals.

Stakeholder Theory also aided in evaluating Save the Children's accountability and transparency practices, which are essential for building trust and ensuring project success. Analyzing how Save the Children addresses stakeholder concerns and balances competing demands provided recommendations for improving stakeholder engagement and optimizing project performance. This approach enhanced the understanding of how effective stakeholder management contributes to the overall impact and sustainability of Save the Children's interventions in Bugesera District.

Empirical Review

Wade (2023) conducted a study on the community engagement for impact (CEFI) framework: an evidence-based strategy to facilitate social change in Canada and Australia. The Community Engagement for Impact (CEFI) Framework and the Contextual Model of Community Engagement (CMCE) are based on findings of an in-depth, qualitative study of researchers' strategies for community engagement. The project used qualitative, constructivist grounded theory to examine SSH researchers' perspectives on CE benefits and challenges, including institutional and disciplinary support. Semi-structured interviews with twenty-six participants were conducted at twenty-four research-intensive public universities in Canada and Australia. Results point to complex relationships between researchers, universities, and disciplines, shaped by government policy, research trends, community imperatives, and other factors. While participants fostered community relationships supporting social change, they did not receive appropriate training, support, or recognition. CEFI guides individuals and institutions to identify barriers and facilitators for engagement, across disciplines, for work involving industry organisations, community groups, governments, and other partners. When

used alongside CMCE's approach to local, national, and global factors, researchers, universities, and disciplines can better support pathways to societal impact.

Han (2023) carried out a study on the impact of team interdependence on cooperative performance in public–private partnership projects: the moderating effect of government equity participation in China. The study aims to clarify the role relationships among the four variables of team interdependence, team interaction, team performance, and government participation. Through an empirical investigation of the data of 367 samples of PPP project teams and data analysis by SPSS 26.0 and Amos 23.0, it is found that team interdependence (task interdependence, result interdependence) has a significant positive effect on cooperative performance, and team interaction plays a mediating role in this process. Compared with enterprises with low government share, team interdependence with high government share has a significant positive effect on the team cooperation performance of PPP projects and has a positive moderating effect on the influence mechanism of team cooperation performance. Based on this, this paper proposes strategies for PPP project team management and sustainable development. It suggests corresponding suggestions for improving PPP project team performance and sustainable development.

Amule (2022) conducted a study on support services, risk management, and project success in South Sudan. The study was aimed at investigating the factors perceived to influence NGOs projects' success in saving lives and restoring the human dignity of the most vulnerable populations in the Country. These factors studied include Project planning, stakeholder involvement, and Risk Management. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches for data collection through a sample size of 144 respondents, selected from 233 sample frames of NGOs' staff in South Sudan. The study findings show positive relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable as follows; Project Planning and Projects Success at ($r = 0.348$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$); Project Planning and Risk management at ($r = 0.528$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$); Risk management and Projects success at ($r = 0.523$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$); Stakeholder's involvement and Risk management at ($r = 0.503$, $P\text{-value} < 0.01$); and A Regression analysis of ($R = 0.541$). Therefore, in consideration of the positive correlations' independent variable, NGOs are advised to ensure sufficient project planning, risk management, and stakeholders' involvement; to ascertain intervention success.

Obadia (2022) carried out a study on effect of resources management on project success implementation. a case of strengthening livelihoods in rural Rwanda project. The general objective of this research was to assess the effect of resources management on project success implementation in Rwanda, a case study of strengthening livelihoods in rural Rwanda project with the following specific objectives: To determine the effect of human resources management; time management and financial resources management on project success implementation of strengthening livelihoods in rural Rwanda. The target population involved all project participants include Urwego staff, Muhanga district officers, project beneficiaries and local community key informants. The data were analyzed quantitatively using percentages, frequencies, regression analysis were used to extract a systemic relationship between the independent and dependent variables and the results revealed that resources management has an influence of 83,7% on project success implementation of strengthening livelihoods in rural Rwanda project Muhanga district.

Endris (2023), carried out a study on the effect of monitoring and evaluation practices on the success of development projects of non-governmental organizations in Ethiopia. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to investigate the effect of M&E practices on project success. The

study mainly employs survey research design comprising explanatory research types. Using 92 development projects of the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) sector in Ethiopia, the findings from multiple linear regression indicate that project M&E practices in terms of planning, staff technical skill, budgeting and stakeholders' engagement have positive and significant effects on project success. Thus, the findings of this study imply that project-oriented organizations including NGOs need to establish robust project M&E system in order to enhance the project success.

While existing literature provides valuable insights into community engagement, partnerships, and resource allocation, there is a clear gap in addressing how these factors specifically influence the performance of educational projects aimed at reducing school dropouts. This study on the Implementation Strategies and Performance of Zero Drop Out Project in Bugesera District seeks to fill this gap by examining how community outreach, partnerships with local leaders, and resource allocation strategies impact the success of this education-focused initiative. By employing a descriptive survey research design, the study will provide empirical evidence on effective implementation strategies tailored to education projects, thereby contributing to the body of knowledge on educational project performance in Rwanda.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive and correlational research designs was used by the researcher. A study that uses descriptive research aims to accurately represent its subjects. Descriptive research, to put it another way, focuses on describing the study's participants. The researcher gathers information about the project implementation strategies and performance of Zero drop out of children project. A non-experimental research method called a correlation research design allows researchers to measure two variables, comprehend their statistical relationship, and evaluate it without the interference of any additional variables.

The study population for the Zero Drop Out of Children project in Bugesera District, Rwanda, includes 321 individuals consist of project beneficiaries, project staff (managers and field officers), local stakeholders and NGO management. The sample size of 178 selected using Sloven's formula. The sampling technique employed a combination of stratified random sampling and purposive sampling to ensure a representative and comprehensive analysis.

During the study, the researcher used questionnaires and documentaries as data collection techniques. The researcher in this study processed and analysed data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), which then was used to present the findings, analysed them, and interpret them.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rates

A total sample of the study was 178, and questionnaires distributed were correctly answered and returned representing 100% of total questionnaire distributed. The main objective of the research was to assess implementation strategies and performance of non-governmental organization projects in Rwanda, and the specific objectives were to examine the effect of community outreach and engagement strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera, to analyse the effect of partnership with local leaders' strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district, to analyse the effect of support services strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district, to analyse the effect of resource allocation strategy on the performance of Zero drop

out of children project in Bugesera district and to analyse the effect of monitoring and evaluation strategy on the performance of Zero drop out of children project in Bugesera district.

Inferential Statistics for Hypotheses Test

The section presents the relationship between implementation strategies and performance of Zero Dropout Project which is indicated using multiple linear regression analysis. In regression, the researcher analysed the model summary, variances and coefficients of variables.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.996 ^a	.991	.991	1.08715	.991	3862.286	5	172	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Community outreach and engagement, partnership with local leaders, support services, resource allocation, monitoring and evaluation

Table 1 presents the model summary for the regression analysis examining the relationship between key project implementation strategies community outreach and engagement, partnership with local leaders, support services, resource allocation, and monitoring and evaluation and the performance of the Zero Dropout Project in Bugesera District. The model yielded an R value of 0.996, indicating an exceptionally strong positive correlation between the predictors and project performance. Additionally, the R Square value of 0.991 suggests that 99.1% of the variation in project performance can be explained by these independent variables, highlighting their critical role in shaping the project's success. This finding aligns with studies by Bryson *et al.* (2020), which emphasize the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement and structured implementation strategies in ensuring the effectiveness of social projects.

The adjusted R Square value of 0.991 further confirms the robustness of the model, indicating that even after accounting for the number of predictors, the model still explains 99.1% of the variance in project performance. The standard error of the estimate (1.08715) suggests a strong model fit, though some variability remains unaccounted for, potentially due to external factors such as socio-economic conditions, unforeseen challenges, or other unmeasured influences. Similar results were observed in research by McLoughlin and Thinyane (2019), who argued that while implementation strategies are crucial for project outcomes, contextual factors such as policy environments and community readiness also influence project sustainability.

The change statistics reveal an R Square change of 0.991, an F change of 3862.286, and a significance value of 0.000. This highly significant F change ($p < 0.001$) confirms that the inclusion of these predictors meaningfully contributes to explaining project performance. The degrees of freedom ($df1 = 5$, $df2 = 172$) suggest that the model accounts for multiple independent variables, reinforcing the notion that the combination of community engagement, partnerships, support services, resource management, and monitoring practices is essential for reducing school dropout rates. This is consistent with findings by Nguyen and Rieger (2021), who emphasized that integrated implementation strategies are more effective than isolated interventions in achieving long-term educational success.

Overall, the regression model demonstrates that the five key implementation strategies significantly impact the performance of the Zero Dropout Project. The exceptionally high

predictive power of the model suggests that further strengthening community involvement, local partnerships, resource allocation, and monitoring frameworks will lead to even better project outcomes. These findings highlight the importance of a holistic approach to project management, aligning with global best practices in educational intervention programs.

Table 2: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square F		Sig.
1	Regression	22823.979	5	4564.796	3861.925	.000 ^a
	Residual	203.285	172	1.182		
Total		23027.264	177			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Community outreach and engagement, partnership with local leaders, support services, resource allocation, monitoring and evaluation.

b. Dependent Variable: Performance of Zero Dropout Project

Table 2 presents the ANOVA results, which assess the overall significance of the regression model predicting the performance of the Zero Dropout Project based on key implementation strategies. The table shows that the regression sum of squares is 22823.979, which accounts for 99.1% of the total variability in project performance. This indicates that the vast majority of the variance is explained by the predictors, namely community outreach and engagement, partnerships with local leaders, support services, resource allocation, and monitoring and evaluation. The residual sum of squares is 203.285, representing only 0.9% of the total variability, suggesting that external factors have minimal influence on project performance.

The degrees of freedom (df) for the regression model is 5, corresponding to the five predictor variables, while the residual degrees of freedom is 172, representing the remaining unexplained variation in the data. The mean square value for the regression model is 4564.796, which is substantially larger than the mean square for the residuals (1.182), indicating that the predictors collectively have a very strong explanatory power for the dependent variable. This finding aligns with the work of Anderson and Moser (2021), who found that well-structured educational intervention strategies significantly improve project outcomes when implemented effectively.

The F-statistic, which tests the overall significance of the model, is 3861.925, with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.001$). This confirms that the regression model is highly significant, meaning that at least one of the independent variables has a statistically significant relationship with project performance. Similar studies, such as those by Patel and Mendez (2020), have shown that projects with strong community engagement and resource management frameworks tend to achieve higher success rates in reducing school dropout rates.

Overall, the ANOVA results strongly support the validity and robustness of the regression model, demonstrating that the combined effect of the five implementation strategies plays a crucial role in the success of the Zero Dropout Project. The findings underscore the importance of a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach in addressing school dropout challenges, reinforcing best practices observed in global education projects.

Table 4: Coefficient

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.581	.567		2.788	.006
	Community outreach and engagement	.586	.160	.253	3.662	.000
	Partnership with local leaders	.217	.175	.153	1.240	.000
	Support services	.458	.151	.189	3.028	.003
	Resource allocation	.096	.053	.043	1.810	.022
	Monitoring and evaluation	1.678	.120	.834	13.944	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of Zero Dropout Project

The study tested five null hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance using the coefficients from the multiple regression model presented in Table 4.18. The decision rule is to reject the null hypothesis if the p-value is less than 0.05. The hypotheses were formulated to assess the effect of key implementation strategies on the performance of the Zero Dropout of Children Project in Bugesera District.

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of community outreach and engagement strategy on the performance of the Zero Dropout of Children Project in Bugesera District.

The regression analysis yielded a coefficient (B) of 0.586 and a p-value of 0.000 for the community outreach and engagement variable. Since the p-value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that community outreach and engagement significantly and positively influence the project's performance. The result emphasizes the importance of involving community members in decision-making, mobilization, and awareness efforts. Such actions foster trust, accountability, and collective ownership of the project's goals, increasing the likelihood of sustained engagement and improved educational outcomes. These findings align with the study conducted by Smith and Patel (2022), who reported that such engagement boosts educational project success by making initiatives more responsive to the needs of the community and fostering an environment where stakeholders feel empowered to contribute meaningfully to solutions.

H₀₂: There is no significant effect of partnership with local leaders on the performance of the Zero Dropout of Children Project in Bugesera District.

The coefficient for partnership with local leaders was 0.217, with a p-value of 0.000. As this p-value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This suggests that partnerships with local leaders significantly and positively affect the project's performance. Local leaders hold substantial influence in their communities, and their support can enhance credibility, facilitate community mobilization, and resolve conflicts more effectively. When these leaders champion educational initiatives, they can drive behavioral change, encourage parents to prioritize schooling, and support enforcement of child protection measures. The result is supported by Lee and Thompson (2021), who highlighted that leader engagement fosters community ownership and long-term sustainability of social projects. Their involvement often ensures

alignment with cultural norms and traditions, which increases local acceptance and cooperation.

H₀₃: There is no significant effect of support services strategy on the performance of the Zero Dropout of Children Project in Bugesera District.

Support services had a coefficient of 0.458 and a p-value of 0.003. The p-value being less than 0.05 leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, implying that support services significantly contribute to project performance. These services including counselling, financial aid, nutritional support, and mentoring address underlying barriers that cause children to drop out of school. For instance, children facing psychological trauma, poverty, or lack of parental guidance may benefit from targeted interventions that help them remain focused and motivated. Provision of school materials, lunch programs, and emotional support networks can create a conducive learning environment, reducing absenteeism and increasing retention rates. This finding is in line with Brown *et al.* (2021), who observed that well-structured support mechanisms are critical to the retention and academic success of vulnerable learners, ultimately influencing project performance in a measurable way.

H₀₄: There is no significant effect of resource allocation strategy on the performance of the Zero Dropout of Children Project in Bugesera District.

Resource allocation recorded a coefficient of 0.096 and a p-value of 0.022. As the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This demonstrates that resource allocation has a statistically significant effect on the project's performance, though its effect size is moderate. Effective allocation involves distributing financial, human, and material resources in a way that aligns with project priorities and community needs. Proper planning ensures that schools have adequate infrastructure, learning materials, trained personnel, and logistics to support program activities. While the influence of resource allocation is not as pronounced as other variables, it remains a foundational element that enables all other strategies to function efficiently. These findings agree with Jones and Wang (2020), who noted that proper resource planning and distribution are essential for project efficiency and the achievement of targeted outcomes.

H₀₅: There is no significant effect of monitoring and evaluation strategy on the performance of the Zero Dropout of Children Project in Bugesera District.

Monitoring and evaluation produced the highest coefficient (1.678) and a p-value of 0.000. With the p-value well below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that this variable has a highly significant and strong positive impact on project performance. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems allow project managers to track progress, identify bottlenecks, and make evidence-based adjustments throughout the project lifecycle. Regular data collection, reporting, feedback loops, and learning sessions enable continuous improvement and transparency. Moreover, M&E contributes to accountability, both to donors and to the community, reinforcing trust and ensuring that the project stays aligned with its intended objectives. This supports the view of Garcia and Lopez (2022), who argue that consistent tracking, feedback, and learning processes are central to project success and scalability. A robust M&E framework is therefore not just a technical tool but a strategic pillar that underpins effective implementation and outcome delivery.

All five null hypotheses were rejected, confirming that each implementation strategy tested has a statistically significant positive effect on the performance of the Zero Dropout of Children Project in Bugesera District. The results underscore the importance of a comprehensive,

community-driven, and well-monitored implementation model in achieving sustainable educational outcomes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The first objective was to examine the effect of the community outreach and engagement strategy on the performance of the Zero Dropout Project. The analysis revealed that this strategy had a statistically significant and positive influence on project performance. Respondents rated initiatives such as awareness campaigns, parental involvement, and targeted engagement with vulnerable students as highly effective.

The second objective was to analyze the effect of partnerships with local leaders on the performance of the project. The study found that collaboration with local leaders positively impacted the implementation and success of the Zero Dropout Project. Respondents acknowledged the critical role of community authorities including government officials, traditional leaders, and religious figures in mobilizing support, promoting school attendance, and resolving barriers related to education.

The third objective focused on assessing the impact of support services on project performance. The findings indicated that support services including financial aid, mentorship programs, and counseling had a significant and positive influence on project outcomes. These interventions addressed key challenges faced by at-risk students, such as poverty, psychosocial stress, and lack of guidance. The respondents reported that the availability of such support greatly contributed to student retention and academic progress. These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the effectiveness of holistic support systems in preventing school dropout.

The fourth objective aimed to analyze the effect of resource allocation on project performance. The results revealed that efficient and equitable allocation of resources significantly contributed to the success of the Zero Dropout Project. Participants affirmed that financial, material, and human resources were adequately distributed across schools, enabling the smooth execution of project activities. These findings align with existing literature, which underscores the importance of strategic resource allocation in project implementation.

The fifth objective examined the role of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in project performance. The analysis showed that M&E practices significantly enhanced the performance of the Zero Dropout Project. Respondents noted that continuous monitoring, systematic data collection, and regular feedback mechanisms facilitated early identification of implementation challenges and informed timely decision-making. These practices contributed to greater transparency, accountability, and adaptive management. This finding is supported by previous research which highlights M&E as a critical pillar for improving project outcomes.

Recommendations

To further improve this strategy, awareness campaigns should be expanded and tailored to reach more parents and guardians, particularly in remote areas. Additionally, community dialogues should be conducted regularly to address concerns and promote education as a shared responsibility.

To maximize this impact, local leaders should be further trained on their roles in promoting education. Strengthening collaboration with religious and cultural leaders can also enhance the

project's outreach, ensuring that dropout prevention efforts align with community values and beliefs.

To build on this, the project should expand financial assistance programs and ensure timely distribution of educational materials. Additionally, counseling and mentorship programs should be strengthened to address social and emotional challenges that may lead to school dropouts.

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