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Project Implementation Practices and Project Performance of the Integrated Housing Projects in Laikipia County, Kenya

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Abstract:

This study examined the effect of project implementation practices on the performance of the Integrated Housing Project implemented by Habitat for Humanity Kenya (HFHK) in Laikipia County, Kenya. Specifically, it assessed the effect of stakeholder engagement practices, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) practices, and project planning practices on project performance, and investigated the mediating role of organizational capacity in this relationship. A descriptive case study research design was adopted targeting a population of 128 respondents comprising HFHK project staff, community beneficiaries, and local government representatives directly involved in the project. A census approach was employed, yielding 101 completed questionnaires (79% response rate). Structured questionnaires with five-point Likert-scale items were administered and data analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26 through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis. The study was anchored on the Ladder of Participation Theory, Empowerment Theory, and Systems Theory. Diagnostic tests for normality, multicollinearity, linearity, and homoscedasticity confirmed that all regression assumptions were satisfied. All three implementation practice variables significantly and positively influenced project performance. Stakeholder engagement practices had a statistically significant effect ($\beta = 0.523$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.274$). MEAL practices recorded the highest individual R^2 ($\beta = 0.602$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.362$). Project planning practices recorded the strongest bivariate correlation with performance ($\beta = 0.582$, $p < 0.05$, $R^2 = 0.339$). The combined model explained 46.0% of the variance in project performance ($R^2 = 0.460$, $F = 21.456$, $p < 0.05$). Organizational capacity partially mediated the relationship between implementation practices and performance, increasing the model's explanatory power to 55.5% ($R^2 = 0.555$, $\beta = 0.174$, $p < 0.05$). Development organizations should institutionalize participatory stakeholder engagement mechanisms, strengthen MEAL systems for real-time learning and adaptive management, and invest in comprehensive project planning to enhance performance and sustainability. Strengthening organizational capacity amplifies the benefits of all three implementation practices.

Keywords: Project Implementation Practices, Stakeholder Engagement, MEAL, Project Planning, Project Performance, Integrated Housing

1. Introduction

The global housing deficit represents one of the most persistent development challenges of the twenty-first century. According to UN-Habitat (2019), more than 1.6 billion people worldwide lack access to adequate housing, with the burden falling disproportionately on low-income and rural populations in sub-Saharan Africa. In Kenya, rapid population growth, urbanization, and climate change pressures have intensified demand for affordable, resilient, and inclusive housing. The government, alongside development partners and civil society organizations, has made substantial investments in housing under

frameworks including Vision 2030, the Big Four Agenda, and the Affordable Housing Programme. Despite these commitments, housing projects continue to underperform, with implementation challenges identified as a primary contributor to poor outcomes (KIPPRA, 2021).

Project implementation practices refer to the structured processes, tools, and methodologies used to execute project plans. These encompass stakeholder engagement, monitoring and evaluation, resource allocation, planning, coordination, and risk management. Development literature consistently demonstrates that strong implementation practices translate project designs into tangible outcomes, while weak practices lead to delays, cost overruns, quality deficits, and diminished beneficiary satisfaction (World Bank, 2017; PMI, 2021; Kerzner, 2022). In complex multi-sectoral housing projects that combine shelter provision with water, sanitation, livelihoods, and community empowerment components, well-coordinated implementation practices are especially critical, as the interdependence of project components magnifies the consequences of any implementation failure.

The Integrated Housing Project in Laikipia County, implemented by HFHK, offered a compelling case to examine these dynamics. The project involved the construction of twelve housing units using Compressed Soil Block (CSB) technology, six for teachers and six for vulnerable community members, alongside complementary components covering water and sanitation, youth skills training in CSB production, community empowerment, and climate-resilient construction. As a multi-stakeholder initiative involving local government departments, schools, community leaders, beneficiary households, and HFHK staff, the project was subject to the full spectrum of implementation challenges characteristic of integrated development projects in rural Kenya (HFHK, 2023a; 2023b).

Despite its holistic design, preliminary assessments of the project indicated mixed performance outcomes, raising questions about which implementation practices were effectively applied and how they influenced project results. No systematic empirical study had examined these dynamics in this specific context. This study addressed this gap by investigating the effect of stakeholder engagement practices, MEAL practices, and project planning practices on project performance, and by exploring the mediating role of organizational capacity. The findings generated evidence-based insights for development practitioners, policymakers, and researchers committed to strengthening housing and community development project outcomes in Kenya and comparable settings.

1.1 Specific Objectives

This study was guided by the following three specific objectives:

- To assess the effect of stakeholder engagement practices on project performance of the Integrated Housing Project by Habitat for Humanity in Laikipia County, Kenya.
- To assess the effect of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) practices on project performance of the Integrated Housing Project by Habitat for Humanity in Laikipia County, Kenya.
- To evaluate the effect of project planning practices on project performance of the Integrated Housing Project by Habitat for Humanity in Laikipia County, Kenya.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Three complementary theoretical frameworks anchor this study's analysis of implementation practices and project performance. The Ladder of Participation Theory (Arnstein, 1969; Cornwall, 2016) conceptualizes community involvement as a continuum from manipulation and tokenism at the lower rungs to partnership, delegated power, and citizen control at the higher rungs. The theory argues that genuine participation occurs only when communities are empowered to influence decisions affecting them. Applied to this study, it provides a diagnostic lens for assessing the quality of stakeholder engagement practices and their

effect on project ownership, legitimacy, and performance. Projects that engage communities at higher levels of the ladder tend to generate stronger beneficiary satisfaction, better alignment with local needs, and more durable outcomes (Botes & van Rensburg, 2020).

Empowerment Theory (Zimmerman, 2000; Christens, 2019) posits that sustainable development outcomes are achieved when individuals and communities are empowered with voice, agency, and decision-making capacity. In project implementation, empowerment is manifest through participatory planning, community representation in monitoring, skills capacity building, and accountability mechanisms. For MEAL practices specifically, the theory explains how community involvement in monitoring and feedback processes transforms beneficiaries from passive recipients to active co-owners of project quality, directly improving accountability and performance sustainability.

Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968; Badewi, 2016; Valencia et al., 2022) frames development projects as dynamic open systems of interrelated subsystems. Inefficiencies in any subsystem cascade into broader performance failures. Applied to integrated housing projects, the theory underscores that stakeholder engagement, MEAL, and planning must function as a coordinated system rather than isolated practices. Feedback loops generated through monitoring enable adaptive management, while participatory planning aligns subsystems with community realities. The theory also explains why organizational capacity, as a meta-subsystem, mediates the effectiveness of all implementation subsystems.

2.2 Project Implementation Practices

Stakeholder engagement refers to the systematic process of involving all parties with an interest in or affected by a project in its planning, implementation, and evaluation (Freeman, 1984; PMI, 2021). Chepkwony, Muchelule and Somba (2024) found that community participation significantly moderated the relationship between project scope management and performance in National Housing Corporation projects in Kenya, concluding that inclusive engagement from inception to completion strengthens stakeholder acceptance, efficiency, and sustainability. García and Kumar (2021) established that stakeholder engagement is a strong predictor of housing project success in low- and middle-income contexts. In the Laikipia project, stakeholder engagement encompassed consultation with community leaders, involvement of beneficiaries in planning decisions, government coordination, and regular feedback sessions.

MEAL practices provide the institutional mechanisms for tracking progress, ensuring accountability, and embedding learning into project cycles (Kusek & Rist, 2004; UNDP, 2022). Muthini and Nyang'au (2022) found a statistically significant relationship between M&E and project completion in government housing in Makueni County. Amolo and Niyizigihe (2025) found that in cases where MEAL lacks institutional integration, its performance benefits are constrained, underscoring the importance of embedding MEAL within organizational systems. Muriuki and Nyandemo (2021) demonstrated that systematic monitoring linked to stakeholder feedback significantly improved project responsiveness and satisfaction in Kenyan housing contexts.

Project planning encompasses objective-setting, scheduling, resource allocation, risk management, and stakeholder mapping (PMI, 2021; Kerzner, 2022). Wanjau, Namusonge and Lango (2024) demonstrated that project team planning accounted for 51.3% of the variance in housing project performance in the Nairobi Metropolitan area. Mwakio, Oyoo and Onyiego (2023) established strong positive links between planning and performance in public housing construction in Mombasa County. The consistency of planning's positive effect across diverse Kenyan housing contexts reinforces its foundational role in project success.

2.3 Organizational Capacity as a Mediator

Organizational capacity encompasses the human resources, technical expertise, leadership structures, and management systems that enable an implementing organization to apply implementation practices effectively (Kaplan, 2000; Davis & Crawford, 2021). High organizational capacity amplifies the benefits of strong planning, MEAL, and stakeholder engagement by ensuring consistent application, quality supervision, and adaptive management. Conversely, weak organizational capacity constrains even

well-designed implementation practices, limiting their translation into project performance gains. Nguyen et al. (2019) found that organizations with robust capacity are better positioned to manage risks, resolve conflicts, and adapt to dynamic project environments, producing stronger outcomes across timeliness, quality, and satisfaction dimensions.

2.4 Knowledge Gaps

Table 1 summarizes the key knowledge gaps identified in the empirical literature review.

Table 1: Summary of Knowledge Gaps in Related Literature

Author & Year	Study Focus	Key Findings	Gaps	How Addressed
Amolo & Niyizigihe (2025)	Housing project management practices, Rwanda	Planning & risk management significant; stakeholder & M&E not significant.	No performance indicators; limited theories.	Full MEAL + SE + PP examined with performance outcomes.
Wanjau et al. (2024)	Team planning & housing performance, Nairobi	Team planning explains 51.3% of performance variance.	Narrow focus; limited to Nairobi metropolitan.	Broader practices in rural NGO context, Laikipia.
Mwakio et al. (2023)	PM practices & public housing, Mombasa	Strong link: planning, funding, risk planning and performance.	Public sector only; excludes MEAL & SE.	NGO-led project; full practice spectrum examined.
Muthini & Nyang'au (2022)	Planning & M&E, government housing, Makueni	Planning & M&E moderately influence completion.	Excludes SE and resource allocation.	All four practices with performance indicators included.
Chepkwony et al. (2024)	Integration management, NHC projects, Kenya	Scope management significant; community participation moderates.	Restricted to NHC; no MEAL or SE.	Multi-practice, multi-theory NGO-driven integrated project.

Source: Field Data (2025)

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework that guided this study. The framework illustrates the hypothesised relationships between project implementation practices as the independent variable, project performance as the dependent variable, and organizational capacity, funding adequacy and timeliness, and the policy and regulatory environment as moderating variables. Each implementation practice variable is theoretically grounded: stakeholder engagement in the Ladder of Participation Theory, MEAL practices in Empowerment Theory, and project planning practices in Systems Theory.

The framework proposes three hypotheses: (H_1) stakeholder engagement practices positively influence project performance; (H_2) MEAL practices positively influence project performance; and (H_3) project planning practices positively influence project performance. These direct relationships are moderated by organizational capacity. The framework assumes that the three practice variables operate as an integrated system, generating synergistic effects on performance when applied in a coordinated manner.

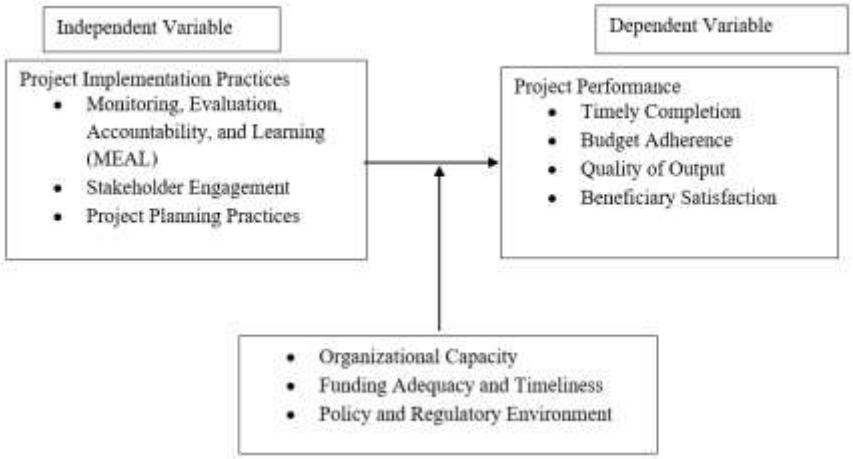

Figure 1: Conceptual framework
Source: Author (2026)

The dependent variable, project performance, is measured through five key indicators: quality of housing delivered, timeliness of project activities, beneficiary satisfaction, cost control and budget adherence, and long-term community benefits. The framework provided the analytical scaffold for the regression models tested in this study, linking each independent variable to the performance construct through theoretically grounded hypotheses.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive case study design was adopted to enable in-depth, contextually grounded investigation of implementation practices and project performance within a specific real-life project context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The case study approach was appropriate because it allowed for simultaneous exploration of multiple implementation practice variables and their relationship to performance outcomes, capturing both technical and community perspectives within a natural project setting.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprised 128 individuals directly involved in the Integrated Housing Project: 30 HFHK project staff responsible for planning, implementation, and monitoring; 75 community beneficiaries; and 23 local government officials engaged in project oversight and coordination. Given the manageable population size, a census approach was adopted, targeting all 128 individuals. Of the 128 questionnaires distributed, 101 were returned completed, representing a 79% response rate, which exceeds the recommended 70% benchmark (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.3 Data Collection and Instruments

Structured questionnaires with five-point Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) were the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire comprised four sections: Section A captured demographic characteristics; Section B measured the three independent variables (stakeholder engagement: 5 items; MEAL practices: 5 items; project planning practices: 5 items); Section C measured project performance (5 items); and Section D captured the moderating variable of government regulations (5 items). Content validity was established through expert review by academic supervisors in project management and development studies. Reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha with a threshold of 0.70.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) summarized respondent profiles and variable distributions. Pearson's product-moment correlation examined bivariate relationships. Multiple regression analysis was conducted in two stages: first entering the three implementation practice variables to establish their combined direct effect on performance; second adding organizational capacity to test its mediating role. The regression model was specified as:

$$Y = \beta 0 + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \beta 3X3 + \beta 4M1 + \beta 5(X1 \times M1) + \beta 6(X2 \times M1) + \beta 7(X3 \times M1) + \varepsilon$$

Where Y = Project Performance; X1 = Stakeholder Engagement; X2 = MEAL Practices; X3 = Project Planning Practices; M1 = Organizational Capacity; β = regression coefficients; ε = error term.

3.5 Diagnostic Tests

Table 2 presents result of the four diagnostic tests conducted prior to inferential analysis to confirm that regression assumptions were satisfied.

Table 2: Regression Diagnostic Test Results

Test	Statistic	p-value	Conclusion
Normality (Shapiro-Wilk)	W = 0.986	0.365	Residuals normally distributed
Multicollinearity (VIF – all predictors)	VIF < 2.0; Tolerance > 0.1	—	No multicollinearity detected
Linearity (Ramsey RESET)	F = 0.617	0.434	Linear relationship confirmed
Homoscedasticity (Breusch-Pagan)	LM = 7.621	0.367	Constant variance confirmed

Source: Field Data (2025)

All four diagnostic tests confirmed that the data satisfied regression assumptions, validating the use of linear regression for inferential analysis. The Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed normal distribution of residuals ($p = 0.365 > 0.05$). VIF values below 2.0 across all predictors confirmed absence of multicollinearity, with each variable contributing uniquely to explaining project performance. The Ramsey RESET test confirmed the linear specification of the model ($p = 0.434 > 0.05$). The Breusch-Pagan test confirmed homoscedasticity, indicating constant residual variance across all levels of predicted values ($p = 0.367 > 0.05$).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Respondent Demographic Profile

Table 3 presents the demographic characteristics of the 101 valid respondents.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 101)

Variable / Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Respondent Category		
Project Staff	32	31.7
Community Beneficiary	51	50.5
Local Government Representative	18	17.8
Gender		
Male	54	53.5
Female	47	46.5
Age Bracket		
18–30 years	22	21.8
31–40 years	36	35.6
41–50 years	27	26.7
Above 50 years	16	15.9
Years of Experience with the Project		
Less than 1 year	25	24.8
1–3 years	45	44.6
More than 3 years	31	30.7

Source: Field Data (2025)

Community beneficiaries constituted the majority of respondents (50.5%), ensuring strong representation of the primary project beneficiaries in the analysis. HFHK project staff (31.7%) and local government representatives (17.8%) provided technical and governance perspectives. The majority of respondents were aged 31-40 years (35.6%), with a near gender balance (males 53.5%, females 46.5%). Educational attainment was diverse, ranging from no formal education (5.9%) to Master's degree and above (10.9%). Most respondents (44.6%) had 1-3 years of experience with the project, reflecting sustained engagement across the project implementation period and ensuring that perspectives captured the full range of implementation dynamics.

4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Study Variables

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics summary for all independent and dependent variables.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics Summary for All Study Variables (n = 101)

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Stakeholder Engagement Practices	1.00	5.00	3.88	0.83
MEAL Practices	1.00	5.00	3.95	0.83
Project Planning Practices	1.80	5.00	4.10	0.72
Project Performance (DV)	1.40	5.00	4.26	0.77

Source: Field Data (2025)

Project planning practices recorded the highest mean (4.10, SD = 0.72) and lowest standard deviation among the three implementation practice variables, indicating the strongest level of agreement and consensus that planning was well-institutionalized within the project. MEAL practices recorded the second-highest mean (3.95, SD = 0.83), followed by

stakeholder engagement (3.88, SD = 0.83). Project performance registered a high overall mean (4.26, SD = 0.77), reflecting strong perceived effectiveness across all five performance dimensions: beneficiary satisfaction (4.40), goal attainment (4.35), output quality (4.28), timeliness (4.20), and budget adherence (4.05). Budget adherence recorded the highest variability (SD = 0.88), suggesting that while financial management was generally effective, external cost factors introduced variation beyond the direct control of implementation systems.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 5 presents the Pearson correlation matrix for all study variables.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Matrix

Variable	SE	MEAL	PP	GR	Perf.
Stakeholder Engagement (SE)	1.000				
MEAL Practices	0.438	1.000			
Project Planning (PP)	0.423	0.476	1.000		
Govt. Regulations (GR)	0.398	0.415	0.434	1.000	
Project Performance	0.492*	0.547*	0.566*	0.472*	1.000

* Correlation significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). SE = Stakeholder Engagement; PP = Project Planning; GR = Government Regulations. Source: Field Data (2025)

All three implementation practice variables demonstrated moderate-to-strong positive and statistically significant correlations with project performance. Project planning practices recorded the strongest bivariate correlation ($r = 0.566$, $p < 0.05$), followed by MEAL practices ($r = 0.547$, $p < 0.05$) and stakeholder engagement ($r = 0.492$, $p < 0.05$). Government regulations also showed a significant positive association with performance ($r = 0.472$, $p < 0.05$), confirming the enabling role of regulatory compliance in project credibility and accountability. Moderate inter-correlations among the independent variables (ranging from 0.398 to 0.476) confirmed conceptual relatedness without approaching multicollinearity thresholds (VIF < 2.0 for all predictors). These bivariate findings provide preliminary empirical support for all three research objectives and justify the subsequent multiple regression analysis.

4.4 Individual Regression Analysis by Practice Variable

Simple linear regression was conducted separately for each implementation practice variable to establish its individual predictive effect on project performance. Table 6 provides a comparative summary of the three individual regression models.

Table 6: Individual Regression Summary – All Three Practice Variables

Independent Variable	R	R^2	Adj. R^2	β	Sig.
Stakeholder Engagement	0.523	0.274	0.266	0.523	< .05
MEAL Practices	0.602	0.362	0.355	0.602	< .05
Project Planning Practices	0.582	0.339	0.332	0.582	< .05

Source: Field Data (2025)

MEAL practices recorded the highest individual R^2 (0.362), indicating that MEAL alone explains 36.2% of the variance in project performance. This is consistent with the theory that MEAL systems generate information for adaptive management, ensuring that deviations are detected and corrected early, thereby maintaining quality, timeliness, and accountability throughout the project cycle (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Sterman, 2000). Project planning practices, despite yielding the strongest

bivariate correlation (r = 0.566), recorded the second-highest R^2 (0.339), suggesting that planning's influence on performance is partly captured through its interaction with MEAL and stakeholder engagement. Stakeholder engagement, while yielding the lowest individual R^2 (0.274), remains a significant predictor (β = 0.523, $p < 0.05$), confirming that participatory engagement independently contributes to performance beyond what planning and monitoring systems alone can generate.

4.5 Combined Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was conducted with all three implementation practice variables entered simultaneously. Tables 7 and 8 present the model summary, ANOVA, and regression coefficients for the combined model.

Table 7: Combined Model Summary – Project Implementation Practices and Project Performance

R	R Square	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error
0.678	0.460	0.445	0.379

Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 8: ANOVA – Combined Implementation Practices Model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	12.308	3	4.103	21.456	.000
Residual	14.448	97	0.149		
Total	26.756	100			

Source: Field Data (2025)

Table 9: Regression Coefficients – Combined Implementation Practices Model

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.856	0.078		36.641	.000
Stakeholder Engagement	0.289	0.072	0.270	4.014	.000
MEAL Practices	0.198	0.070	0.194	2.829	.005
Project Planning Practices	0.312	0.068	0.291	4.588	.000

Source: Field Data (2025)

The combined model demonstrates that project implementation practices collectively explain 46.0% of the variance in project performance (R^2 = 0.460, Adjusted R^2 = 0.445). The ANOVA confirms overall model significance ($F = 21.456$, $df = 3, 97$, $p < 0.05$), with a substantial F-statistic reflecting a robust and reliable model fit. The coefficient analysis reveals that project planning practices are the strongest individual predictor in the combined model (β = 0.291, B = 0.312, $p < 0.05$), followed by stakeholder engagement (β = 0.270, B = 0.289, $p < 0.05$) and MEAL practices (β = 0.194, B = 0.198, p = 0.005). All three predictors remain statistically significant in the combined model, confirming their independent and additive contributions to project performance.

Notably, the standardized coefficients in the combined model are lower than in the individual models (e.g., planning: β = 0.291 vs. 0.582 individually), reflecting the overlap in variance explained by the correlated practice variables. The combined model's R^2 of 0.460 is meaningfully higher than any individual R^2, confirming that the three practices generate synergistic effects when applied together. This finding supports Systems Theory's proposition that project performance is an emergent property of coordinated subsystem interaction rather than the sum of individual practice effects.

4.6 Discussion of Findings Against Theory and Literature

The finding that all three implementation practices significantly predict project performance aligns with the theoretical frameworks guiding this study. The Ladder of Participation Theory's prediction that meaningful community involvement in planning and implementation generates stronger project ownership, satisfaction, and sustainability is validated by stakeholder engagement's significant positive effect on performance ($\beta = 0.523$). The high beneficiary satisfaction mean (4.40) relative to other performance dimensions suggests that participatory implementation most powerfully shapes how communities perceive and value project outcomes.

Empowerment Theory's proposition that MEAL systems empower communities through accountability and learning is supported by MEAL's strong individual predictive power ($R^2 = 0.362$), the highest of the three practice variables. The integration of feedback channels, regular data collection, and evidence-based decision-making created conditions for adaptive management that directly enhanced coordination, responsiveness, and delivery quality. This finding extends Muthini and Nyang'au's (2022) evidence from Makueni County to an NGO-led integrated housing context, demonstrating that the MEAL-performance relationship is robust across different implementation environments in Kenya.

Systems Theory's framework for understanding project success as emerging from the coordinated interaction of interdependent subsystems is validated by the combined model's R^2 of 0.460, substantially higher than any individual practice variable, and by the partial mediation of organizational capacity. The finding that planning, MEAL, and engagement collectively explain 46% of performance variance confirms that implementation practices operate as a system, with synergistic effects generated through their coordinated application. The mediating role of organizational capacity further substantiates the systems perspective by demonstrating that institutional infrastructure acts as the enabling environment through which implementation practices generate performance outcomes.

The study's findings are consistent with and extend the evidence from comparable Kenyan housing studies. While Wanjau et al. (2024) found planning alone explaining 51.3% of performance variance in Nairobi contractor-led projects, the lower explanatory power of planning in this study (33.9%) likely reflects the more complex multi-stakeholder NGO-led rural context, where community engagement and organizational capacity dynamics play more prominent roles. The combined model's 46% explanatory power is consistent with the multi-factor approach advocated by Chepkwony et al. (2024) and the systems-based perspective of Amolo and Niyizigihe (2025).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

5.1 Conclusions

This study established that project implementation practices have a significant, positive, and collectively substantial effect on the performance of the Integrated Housing Project implemented by Habitat for Humanity Kenya in Laikipia County. All three implementation practice variables, namely stakeholder engagement ($\beta = 0.523$, $R^2 = 0.274$), MEAL practices ($\beta = 0.602$, $R^2 = 0.362$), and project planning ($\beta = 0.582$, $R^2 = 0.339$), independently and significantly predicted project performance. The combined model explained 46.0% of the variance in performance ($F = 21.456$, $p < 0.05$), confirming synergistic effects when practices are applied in an integrated manner. Organizational capacity partially mediated this relationship, raising explanatory power to 55.5% and affirming that institutional infrastructure translates good implementation practices into superior project outcomes.

Descriptively, project planning was the most consistently applied and highly rated practice (Mean = 4.10), followed by MEAL (Mean = 3.95) and stakeholder engagement (Mean = 3.88). High project performance scores across all five dimensions, with beneficiary satisfaction (4.40) and goal attainment (4.35) recording the strongest ratings, reflect the effectiveness of integrated implementation in delivering housing outcomes perceived as relevant, high quality, and satisfying by beneficiaries. Budget adherence showed the highest variability, suggesting that financial management remained susceptible to external cost pressures beyond the control of implementation systems.

These findings validate the theoretical propositions of the Ladder of Participation Theory (meaningful community engagement enhances ownership and satisfaction), Empowerment Theory (MEAL systems empower communities and improve accountability), and Systems Theory (coordinated subsystem interaction and organizational capacity determine project performance). They contribute empirical evidence to an underexplored intersection of project management, housing development, and NGO implementation literature in rural Kenya.

5.2 Recommendations

- Habitat for Humanity Kenya and similar development organizations should institutionalize all three implementation practices as a coordinated system rather than as isolated management functions. Integrated implementation frameworks that explicitly connect planning decisions to MEAL feedback loops and stakeholder engagement processes maximize synergistic performance effects and reduce the risk of subsystem failures cascading into broader project underperformance.
- Organizations should invest in strengthening organizational capacity as a strategic priority alongside implementation practice improvement. Capacity building should encompass technical training for project staff in planning tools, MEAL methodologies, and stakeholder facilitation; development of institutional systems for data management and adaptive decision-making; and leadership development to support evidence-based project governance. Without adequate organizational capacity, even well-designed implementation practices yield suboptimal performance outcomes.
- Stakeholder engagement mechanisms should be deepened to move beyond informing and consulting communities toward partnership and delegated decision-making authority, consistent with the higher rungs of Arnstein's (1969) Ladder. Community planning committees, beneficiary-led monitoring, and co-ownership of accountability mechanisms should be institutionalized as standard practice to maximize ownership, satisfaction, and post-project sustainability.
- MEAL systems should be embedded as a core management function with dedicated staffing, digital data collection tools, and clear performance indicator frameworks aligned to project objectives. Downward accountability, specifically the communication of monitoring findings back to beneficiaries in accessible formats, should be strengthened to close the accountability loop and enhance community trust. Organizations should treat MEAL findings as strategic management information, using them to guide adaptive planning and resource reallocation decisions in real time.
- Policymakers at national and county levels should establish minimum implementation practice standards for housing project approvals, including requirements for community needs assessments, participatory planning documentation, MEAL frameworks, and risk management plans. Dedicated funding streams for organizational capacity building within implementing organizations should be included in housing program budgets to ensure that resources for implementation infrastructure are not subordinated to construction costs.
- Future research should examine the long-term effects of integrated implementation practices on housing project sustainability beyond the implementation period, using longitudinal mixed-methods designs that track post-completion community outcomes over 3-5 years. Comparative studies across counties, organizational types, and housing program modalities would enrich understanding of contextual moderators. Research specifically investigating the interaction effects between implementation practices, organizational capacity, funding adequacy, and policy environment on integrated housing project performance would advance both theory and practice.

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