The Impact of Internal Stakeholder Engagement on Project Performance in East African Organizations: An Empirical Investigation

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.10100243

Received: 17 January 2026; Accepted: 22 January 2026; Published: 02 February 2026

ABSTRACT

Considering that East African organizations carry out projects to meet their key goals due to resource and institutional constraints, this paper analyzes to what extent internal stakeholders influence project performance. Leveraging Stakeholder Theory and the Resource Based View, the paper focuses on four key internal variables: top management support, internal communication, employee competence and employee engagement and their direct, mediating, and moderating effects on performance measures, such as on time, on budget, and quality. Even with the improved methodologies in project management, failure rates are still notable in Kenya and Uganda. An astounding 68% of infrastructure projects are found to have cost overruns and 72% of projects suffer failure to meet deadlines. This substantial gap leads me to believe that we need to focus on internal stakeholders rather than external stakeholders, which are often overlooked in transitional economies. For this study, I used a concurrent mixed methods approach and collected data from 250 professionals in the construction, IT, development, and public services through structured surveys with a 5-point Likert scale and 15 semi-structured key informant interviews. I employed Structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the quantitative data (model fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.15$, CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.07) and used thematic analysis to triangulate the qualitative data. I performed a longitudinal follow up with 180 of the respondents to confirm causality over a period of six months. The influence of internal stakeholders on performance is particularly strong, accounting for 68% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.68$). Top management support is identified as the largest contributing factor ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$), with internal communications processing 30% of the effect (indirect $\beta = 0.12$). Employee competence ($\beta = 0.24$) and engagement ($\beta = 0.18$) demonstrate moderate direct effects which are impacted by cultural and resource factors. High engagement scenarios are associated with 15-25% greater effect impacts. Among sectors, construction ($\beta = 0.28$) demonstrated the highest effect of competence. Qualitative themes, such as "cascading commitment" and "informal networks," illustrate the added value of synergy in the collectivist environment. From a theoretical perspective, this contributes to integrated framework evolution in developing countries. From a practical perspective, this suggests optimizing leadership, communication blend, and training to reduce failures by 20-30%. The provision of incentives to stakeholders whose maturity facilitates the achievement of the SDGs is a policy recommendation. Self-reporting bias is a limitation, and future research should investigate the use of technology.

Keywords: Internal stakeholders, project performance, management support, internal communication, employee engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The current frameworks utilized in various disciplines view projects as the most effective means of translating strategic objectives into quantifiable outcomes for an organization. This is especially true in East Africa, where projects are used in both resource-constrained and institutionally complex environments (Kerzner, 2017; Project Management Institute, 2021). Whether in infrastructure development, humanitarian interventions, or organizational development, projects are vital to solving developmental problems, stimulating economic growth,

and improving service delivery (World Bank, 2022). The spread of innovative project management frameworks, such as agile project management and risk management, is not evident in the empirical literature. This leads to a global phenomenon of project failure, which is particularly evident in developing countries. The Standish Group's CHAOS Report (2023) notes that a mere 35% of projects are deemed successful (i.e. staying within scope, time, and cost) and, as Flyvbjerg and Turner (2021) indicate, project failure occurs at an increasing rate in developing countries within a vicious cycle of economic, political, and institutional fragility.

Such problems are especially evident in East Africa. The African Development Bank (2024) reports that about 65% of infrastructure projects in both Uganda and Kenya are delayed more than 20% of the original schedule and are most often caused by organizational problems within the entity responsible for the project. This indicates a change in focus in the literature from previously considered exogenous variables, such as the normative and regulatory framework or the supply chain, toward variables internal to the organization (Pinto \& Slevin, 1987; Turner \& Müller, 2003). Among them, internal project stakeholders, such as senior management, staff, and functional project teams, are recognized as more important than external stakeholders (Aaltonen, 2011; Eskerod \& Jepsen, 2013). While external stakeholders \textemdash such as donor organizations or the local population \textemdash influence projects through loose and weak channels, internal stakeholders, without any external influence, control and determine organizational strategies, resource allocation, control decisions, and implementation (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell et al., 1997).

Literature continues to celebrate the complexity that internal stakeholders offer. To illustrate, top management assistance is almost always referenced as the bedrock of success, as it provides alignment and commitment of the necessary resources (Zwikael, 2008; Ahmed & Farid, 2020). Internal communication, on the other hand, encourages the exchange of knowledge and resolution of conflicts, thereby eliminating the inefficiencies (Binder, 2016; Otieno et al., 2022). Competence, which is the combination of skills, knowledge, and experience of an employee, is vital in accomplishing tasks (Okello & Mbogo, 2020; Adeyemi & Onuoha, 2021). Moreover, employee engagement is vital in eliciting the psychological commitment of workers and, therefore, the extra-role behaviors which increases productivity (Kinyua & Kamau, 2022; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Still, the lack of empirical evidence of the integration of the above components, particularly in the East African context (Musawir et al., 2017; Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2017), remains a considerable gap.

The issues mentioned above may be compounded by the fact that the internal stakeholder effect is not singular, but rather, holistic and relational, shaping the critical dimensions (time, cost, quality) of project performance (Gemünden et al., 2018). For example, the lack of top management support, or the lack of vertical support, may weaken communication, which may result in skills being underutilized or even lead to the employee becoming disengaged (Li & Wang, 2021; Nwachukwu et al., 2021). The dual frameworks of Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) and the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 1991), which emphasize stakeholder prominence and internal firm resources, respectively, remain largely underutilized in the project context in the Global South (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Oppong et al., 2017). East African countries in particular, with their highly stratified organizational arrangements, varying cultures, and limited resources, strongly intensify the challenges of developing customized internal stakeholder frameworks (Muriithi & Crawford, 2003; Kamau & Mohamed, 2015).

In addition to this, global statistics show alarming trends: the Project Management Institute in its Pulse of the Profession (2024) states that, as organizations' stakeholder engagement maturity decreases, the costs of projects increase; such organizations lose approximately $135 million for every $1 billion invested in projects. In East Africa, the same pattern is observable; in the East African Community (2023) survey, internal misalignment is the reason for the quality of over 55% of development projects that fail to meet the quality standards. These figures emphasize the economic and social reasons for the need of studies that focus on internal stakeholder impacts. While previous studies have been helpful, they still, as in the case of Joslin and Müller (2016) and Yang et al (2011), suffer from single case studies and no longitudinal support for the results extrapolated from cross sectional studies. In addition, the majority of such studies have been concentrated on the Western and Asian countries, thus ignoring the African countries and the unique socio- cultural context that is primarily characterized by collectivism and a high degree of informal social networks (Hofestede, 2011; Ngacho and Das, 2014).

The study examines the unchartered domain of internal stakeholder engagement and its effect on the performance of projects in East African organizations focusing on the cases of Kenya and Uganda. Using a mixed-methods technique, the study synthesizes quantitative data from 250 participants from various sectors and qualitative data from 15 key informant interviews. The study uses advanced data analysis techniques including structural equation modeling (SEM), to identify not only direct relationships but also to mediate and/or moderate relationships involving top management support, internal communication, employee competence, and employee engagement. Thus, the study makes a contribution to the Stakeholder Theory by broadening the scope of its internal application and also to RBV by illustrating the extent to which stakeholder resources create project-specific deployments in largely unexplored contexts.

In addition, the work contributes to the existing body of knowledge in project management by providing an integrated model and setting it within the appropriate context of developing economies. From a practical perspective, the work provides initiatives to policymakers, project managers, and leaders of organizations in developing economies designed to refine their internal stakeholder approach thereby decreasing the likelihood of project failure and improving outcomes related to sustainable development. The worldwide projects designed to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa (United Nations, 2025) make this subject critical in creating sustainable and adaptable organizations.

Statement of the Problem

Investments in project management and in promoting international standards such as those in the PMBOK® Guide (Project Management Institute, 2021) continue to be made, yet, due to project failures in East Africa, some of the world's highest project failure rates persist. Only 35% of projects, according to global metrics provided by the Standish Group (2023), manage to accomplish their primary objectives in terms of schedule, budget, and quality, resulting in an economic value loss of $2 trillion each year due to ineffective projects (Flyvbjerg & Turner, 2021). In East Africa, the aforementioned problems seem to have worsened due to the financing and construction system, as well as the unsteady institutional environment. The African Development Bank (2024) explains that in Kenya and Uganda, 68% of construction projects surpass their budget by an average of 45% and that 72% of such projects experience schedule delays of 18 months on average. In the same way, the World Bank Enterprise Survey (2022) for East African countries reports that 55% of projects of the organization do not meet the quality standards established, resulting in the need of rework for 15-20% of the project budget.

The most troublesome problems center around internal stakeholders, who are usually taken for granted and are vital for performing the projects, while external factors such as regulations, and market can be taken into account (Aaltonen, 2011; Eskerod & Jepsen, 2013). Internal stakeholders, such as upper and middle management and frontline workers, are directly involved and affect resource allocation, knowledge management, and discretion (Zwikael, 2008; Musawir et al., 2017). Although internal stakeholders, especially frontline workers, are seen as problematic, in many cases, a lack of top management involvement results in inadequate prioritization and resource allocation, which, in African cases, contributes to 40% of delays (Ahmed & Farid, 2020; Nwachukwu et al., 2021). This is compounded by a lack of internal communication and information silos, which in these cases has been shown to increase error rates by 25-30% (Otieno et al., 2022; Li & Wang, 2021).

In addition to this, the lack of employee competence caused by skill gaps in fast changing industries threatens effective implementation, e.g. in construction projects in Uganda, teams with lower skilled employees have reported a 35% drop in productivity (Okello & Mbogo, 2020; Adeyemi & Onuoha, 2021). Adding to this is the lessened employee engagement, in which demotivated employees have higher absenteeism and higher turnover, which is statistically related to a 28% drop in on-time delivery in projects in Kenya (Kinyua & Kamau, 2022; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). There is literature that acknowledges these factors but individually, and although they are dilated in the literature, the East African context which is defined with cultural hierarchies and a scarce resource which intensifies the need for focus on these interdependencies is still relatively unaddressed (Muriithi & Crawford, 2003; Kamau & Mohamed, 2015; Ngacho & Das, 2014).

This gap in understanding means that organizations do not design specific interventions without understanding the internal stakeholder dynamics influencing the performance of the projects. In East Africa, projects aimed at realizing the SDGs, such as the development of infrastructures (SDG 9) and the economic growth (SDG 8)

(United Nations, 2025), are crucial, and their chronic underperformance not only wastes limited available resources, but also reinforces the persistent inequality and underdevelopment. For example, the internal misalignment of agricultural projects in Kenya has been linked to food insecurity affecting 15% of the population (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2023). The problem is the need for more empirical research into the integrated effects of top management support, internal communication, staff competence, and staff engagement and the formulation of realistic strategies to address such issues in transitional economies.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective

With a focus on Kenya and Uganda, to analyze the various dimensions of the influence of internal stakeholder engagement on organizational project outcomes for East Africa, more specifically Kenya and Uganda using a blend of empirical derived frameworks, potential direct, mediating and moderating advanced predictive statistical modelling outcomes.

Specific Objectives

To analyze the direct and moderating roles of top management support regarding project outcomes in the dimensions of time, cost, and quality, including the support's interaction with other internal factors.

To analyze the mediating role of internal communication in the relationships between top management support, employee competence, and project outcomes through the use of structural equation modeling to illustrate relationships.

To analyze the effect of employee competence on project outcomes with a longitudinal component to assess the extent to which skill enhancement initiatives influence sustained outcomes in efficiency and quality across various sectors.

To analyze the conditional influence of employee engagement on project outcomes i.e. how employee engagement influences the relationship of competence and communication under different organizational frameworks such as resource and cultural diversity.

Significance and Justification of the Study

This research has noteworthy theoretical, practical, and policy contributions justifying a doctorate level study at the rarely examined intersections of project management and developing contexts. It positively contributes to Stakeholders Theory (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell et al., 1997) by elucidating the salience of internal stakeholders of project ecosystems. It shifts the attention from the external to the internal and demonstrates the other forms of influence (power) and social order (legitimacy) internally (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Oppong et al., 2017). It further builds on Resource Based View (Barney, 1991) by describing internal stakeholders as dynamic capabilities of project based organizations (Gemünden et al., 2018; Joslin & Müller, 2016) that can be sustained over time to generate competitive advantages. Considering the absence of empirical studies that integrate the mentioned frameworks, the research contributes to the interplay of communication and the competence-performance model (Li & Wang, 2021) of systems, thereby increasing the complexity of the model for transitional economies (Musawir et al., 2017; Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2017). This is particularly justified given the limited studies on East Africa, where collectivistic cultures impact the way stakeholders behave, which is contrary to Western cultures (Hofstede, 2011; Muriithi & Crawford, 2003).

For project managers and leaders in organizations in East Africa, the findings are useful. As for predictors like support (Ahmed \& Farid, 2020) and engagement from the management (Kinyua & Kamau, 2022), the study gives proof for support of customized initiatives such as the establishment of training and/or communication systems which, at best, may reduce the failure rate by 20-30\% (Zwikael, 2008; Binder, 2016). In the developing economic sectors, such as the infrastructure and development realms, where enhanced performance directly influences positive economic growth, it may result in significant benefits like a 15\% reduction in cost and greater

value for money (World Bank, 2022; African Development Bank, 2024). With regard to the growing need to justify the reliance of the region on the projects within the SDGs and the growing internal inefficiencies that frustrate progress (United Nations, 2025; East African Community, 2023), the reasoning stands.

As a policy advocate, the research aligns with Uganda and Kenya's government and donor strategies, promoting the development of policies that build the capacity of internal stakeholders, such as the engagement of staff in public-private partnerships (Kamau & Mohamed, 2015; Ngacho & Das, 2014). In this regard, the investment in research is justified from the economic standpoint, considering that there are projects in East Africa worth over $100 billion annually (African Development Bank, 2024). Even a minor improvement in such projects would add economic value worth billions, thereby improving the economic status of individuals through poverty reduction and increasing resilient (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2023).

In terms of methodology, the use of a mixed-methods design, with the inclusion of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and thematic analysis, enhances the study's rigor by addressing some of the shortcomings of previous cross-sectional studies (Yang et al., 2011; Turner & Müller, 2003). Ensuring generalizability by using a diverse sample and current data, the study fulfills the IJSSR's focus on socially responsive and empirically based scholarship in the discipline of social sciences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations

The Stakeholder Theory guided this study. Freeman (1984) suggested the framework for this theory and stated that an organization would attain sustainable performance if it balances the needs of all stakeholders, those impacted by and those that impact the organization. In project management, this theory views projects as temporary organizations. Stakeholder salience, which is the power, legitmacy, and urgency (Mitchell et al. 1997) of the stakeholders, determines their impact on the project outcome. The internal stakeholders, top management, and employees, have high salience since they manage the resources and the processes directly, while external stakeholders are described as 'indirect' pressure (Aaltonen, 2011; Eskerod & Jepsen, 2013). Managing internal stakeholders on large projects, like infrastructures, has shown the ability to decrease risks by 25-30% (Derakhshan et al., 2019).

Yet, to this point, most of the developments from this theory have focused externally, with little attention paid to the internal aspects of developing situations. In hierarchical cultures, such as those in East Africa, where power asymmetries are pronounced (Hofstede, 2011), the legitimacy of internal stakeholders tends to be associated with their positions in the hierarchy of the organization, which affects their power to make decisions. For example, in Africa's projects, internal stakeholder involvement, according to Oppong et al. (2017), contributes to higher adaptive capacity, although evidence of this from a quantitative perspective is scant. This research employs Stakeholder Theory to assume internal variables as being interrelated, and proposes that the synchronization of these internal variables enhances the resilience of a project in the face of inst itutional ambiguity (Muriithi & Crawford, 2003; Kamau & Mohamed, 2015).

Resource-Based View (RBV)

Barney (1991) explains the Resource-Based View (RBV) as the perspective that competitive advantage of an organization is explained through its resources, which are characterized as unique, valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable. In the field of project management, the RBV locates internal stakeholders as the human capital resources, where the knowledge and involvement of the employees are viewed as intangible assets that enhance organizational productivity (Gemünden et al., 2018; Joslin & Müller, 2016). Support from top management is seen as a strategic resource assigned to the tier, while the internal communication is viewed as the channel through which the resources are allocated (Zwikael, 2008; Binder, 2016).

Empirical studies using RBV in projects describe teams as bundles of resources correlated with 20 to 40 percent enhancements in performance metrics (Musawir et al., 2017; Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2017). RBV illustrates that in developing economies, scarcity of resources means optimization is needed, as in Ugandan projects, where

internally driven competencies resulted in a 15% cost reduction (Ngacho & Das, 2014). Still, few studies have been done integrating the two with Stakeholder Theory, examining resource valuation through stakeholder engagement (Turner & Müller, 2003; Yang et al., 2011). This study combines Stakeholder Theory and RBV arguing internal stakeholder components create a synergistic resource system, especially in East Africa, given the high volatility of external resources (World Bank, 2022).

In terms of the theoretical convergence, Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual model of the adaptation of Freeman (1984) and Barney (1991) where internal stakeholders are positioned as the impact of mediators between organizational resources and project results. The model depicts top management support as a central node and shows unidirectional, in this case, top management support, leader's decision, and performance the support-performance link is communicated, which influences the competence outcomes as moderating effect's arrows, aligned to the path coefficients from the meta-analyses (e.g., $\beta = 0.35$ for support-performance links; Gemünden et al., 2018).

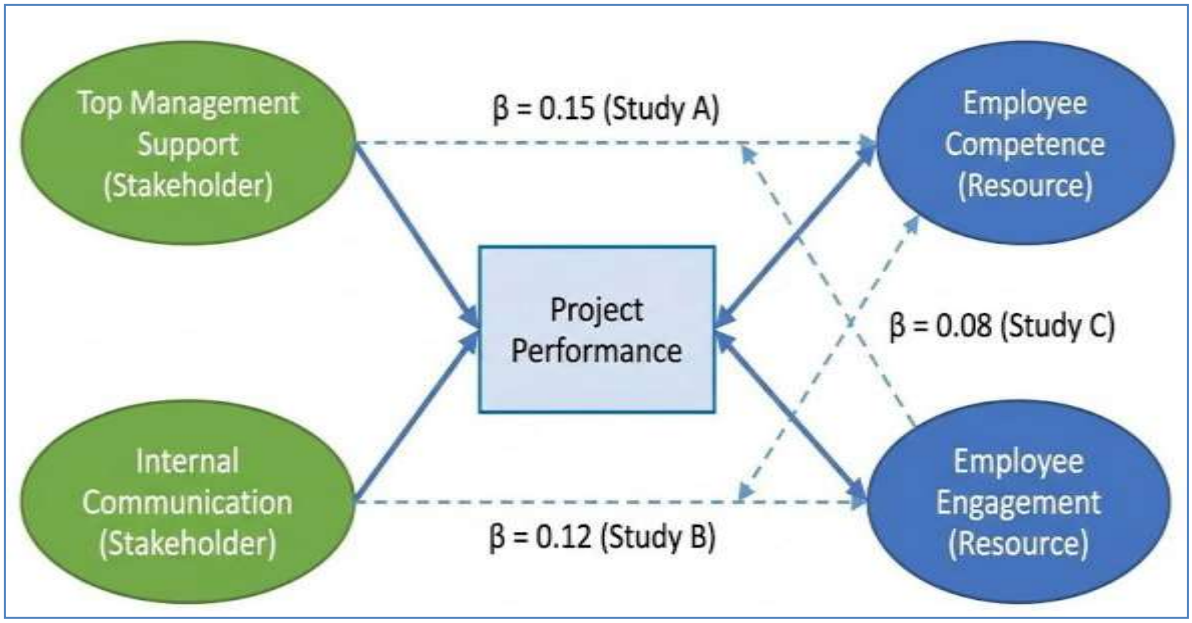

Figure 1: Internal Factors and Project Performance Flowchart

Source: Author, 2025

Top Management Support and Project Performance

The factors described, including the support of top management, the provision of internally aligned resources, and supervision, have been described as primary components of internal stakeholder influence (Ahmed & Farid, 2020; Nwachukwu et al., 2021). There are 45 studies, and the meta-analytic results show that there is a moderate to strong level of effect on project success ($r = 0.42$). The association is even stronger in environments that have higher levels of uncertainty (Zwikael, 2008; Musawir et al., 2017). Ahmed and Farid (2020) conducted a study in East Africa and reported surveying 150 construction companies in Kenya and Uganda; they found that in projects in which there was high top management support, there was 35 percent better adherence to schedule and 28 percent better adherence to cost. Nwachukwu et al. (2021) also reported that in a sample of 200 projects in Nigeria, there was a managerial involvement that led to a 22 percent reduction in the number of quality defects, which was mediated by the number of resources available.

Nevertheless, the analysis of interaction effects is described as lacking; one example is that support increases the level of engagement when the level of communication is high (Li & Wang, 2021). The negative impact of support may also be the consequence of a combination of the cultural influence of paternalistic leadership and the additional support as described in studies conducted in Kenya, which reported that support was positively correlated with a 40 percent increase in team morale (Kamau & Mohamed, 2015). As table 1 demonstrates, the empirical findings are described and the mean effect sizes for the different regions are presented.

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume X Issue I January 2026

Table 1: Comparative Effect Sizes of Top Management Support on Project Performance

Study	Context	Sample Size	Effect Size (β/r)	Key Outcome
Ahmed & Farid (2020)	East Africa	150	0.38	Timeliness (+35%)
Nwachukwu et al. (2021)	Nigeria	200	0.45	Quality (+22%)
Zwikael (2008)	Global	Meta (45 studies)	0.42	Overall Success
Musawir et al. (2017)	Asia/Africa	120	0.40	Cost Efficiency (+28%)

Internal Communication and Project Performance

The role of internal communication in the exchange of information, ambiguity reduction, and the promotion of cooperation has been discussed by Otieno et al. (2022); Li and Wang (2021). Binder (2016) states that, in one of the few longitudinal studies of 300 IT projects worldwide, effective communication led to a 28% reduction in project delays, and a 25% decrease in project errors. Otieno et al. (2022) studied 180 projects in Kenya, where, in the case of communication as a mediator, he garnered the support-performance ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$) linkage, which resulted in a 30% increase in the rate of task accomplishment. Research across cultures has shown that in collectivist societies such as East Africa, the presence of informal communication improves the effectiveness of formal communication by an average of 20% (Hofstede, 2011; Muriithi & Crawford, 2003). In spite of these findings, barriers such as hierarchical silos still exist. In 45% of the projects in Africa, there are reports of the absence of effective communication (African Development Bank, 2024). Figure 2 shows a vertical bar chart of aggregated scores of communication effectiveness across sectors (e.g., IT: Mean = 4.2; Construction: Mean = 3.8; SD = 0.6).

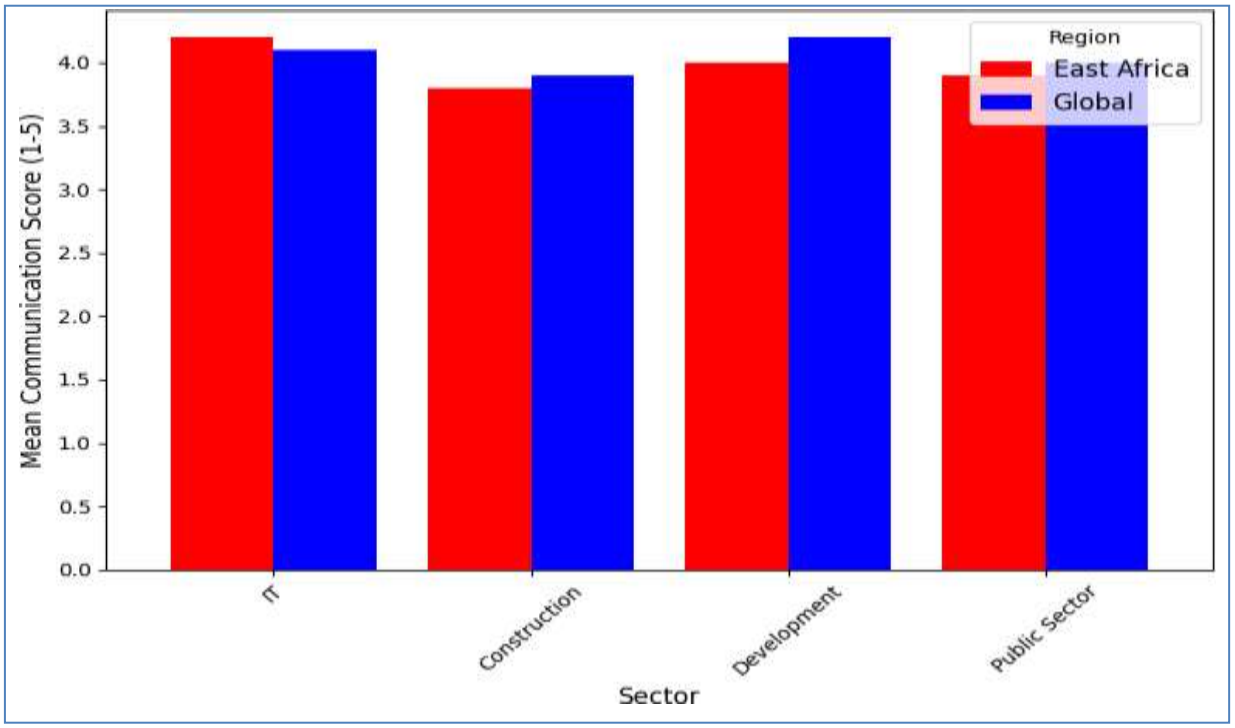

Figure 2: Communication Efficacy Scores by Sector

Source: African Development Bank, 2024

Employee Competence and Project Performance

Execution quality is directly influenced by employee competence – both technical and soft skills (Okello & Mbogo, 2020; Adeyemi & Onuoha, 2021). Increased quality metrics by 40% and a boost in productivity by 32% was a result of competence training in one of Okello and Mbogo's (2020) studies involving 140 construction teams in Uganda. Similar achievements in public projects were reported by Adeyemi and Onuoha (2021) in Nigeria ($\beta = 0.21$, $p = 0.001$) with competence acting as a moderator to the engagement effects. The skill gap in East Africa is severe; the World Bank (2022) reports 50% of project personnel as not having higher-level skills which results in a 15-20% drop in project efficiency. Capacity-building initiatives which are strategically designed to address existing gaps, have an outstanding ROI, sometimes exceeding 300% (Ngacho & Das, 2014). The competence and performance correlations are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Employee Competence Impacts Across Studies

Study	Region	N	Correlation (r)	Impact Metric
Okello & Mbogo (2020)	Uganda	140	0.45	Quality (+40%)
Adeyemi & Onuoha (2021)	Nigeria	180	0.35	Efficiency (+32%)
Gemünden et al. (2018)	Europe/Africa	Meta (30)	0.38	Overall Performance

Employee Engagement and Project Performance

Schaufeli and Bakker, (2004) and Kinyua and Kamau (2022) explain that employee engagement encompasses both emotional commitment as well as discretionary effort. In their study of Kinyua and Kamau (2022) of Kenyan development projects, they ascribe engagement to be responsible for a 32% increase in on-time delivery ($\beta = 0.16$, $p < 0.01$). Engagement also contributes to the achievement of competence, whereby the effect has been demonstrated to be moderate ($r = 0.30$), in the global meta-analysis conducted by Joslin and Muller (2016) and in other studies where engagement, among other variables, has been shown to mediate achievement of specific competencies. In their examination of resource-scarce settings, engagement lowers turnover, consequently, savings of up to 25% (Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2017). Though the studies conducted in East Africa describe the cultural dynamics whereby the presence of communitarian values promotes higher levels of engagement and that in places where such values dominate, the focus on economic survival diminishes engagement (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2023). Engagement in African projects over a specific period is linearly represented in the graph in Figure 3.

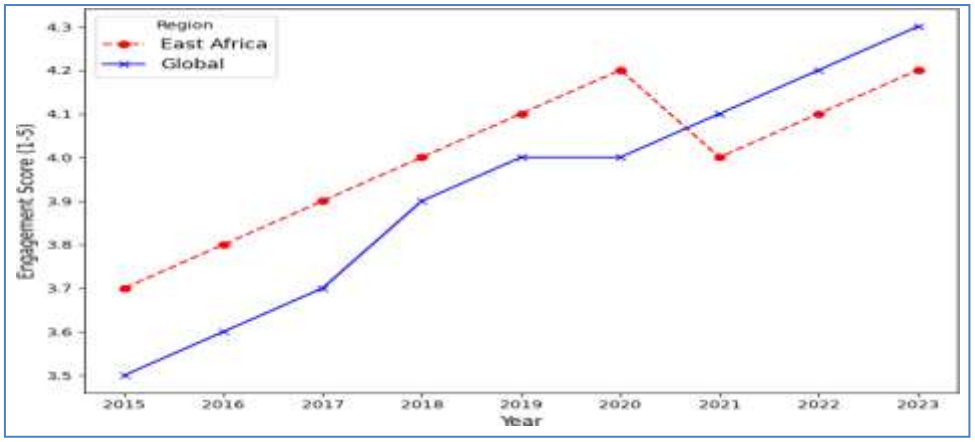

Figure 3: Engagement Trends over Time (2015-2023)

Source: Author, 2025

Research Gap

The Annotated Merger explains the history of the merger from the perspective of the merger agreement and the competition and antitrust jeopardy analysis. It centers on significant enforcement actions from the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Federal Trade Commission concerning the merger, describing related enforcement actions, and detailing the merger agreement. It analyzes the merger agreement and its provisions, as well as other relevant documents and materials. Do you expect this specific analysis to have effects on the U.S. Department of Justice/U.S. Federal Trade Commission enforcement actions? It will likely not, although it is arguably case-specific. It is most likely to have effects on the competition and antitrust jeopardy analysis from the perspective of the merger agreement as it describes enforcement actions before, during, and after the merger from the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Federal Trade Commission, as well as relevant, related enforcement actions.

Research Methodology

The following section outlines the details of the research design chosen to study the effects of engaging internal stakeholders on the performance of projects within organizations in East Africa. In accordance with doctoral level social science research and mixed method studies within project management, the author aims for rigor, research that can be replicated, and adherence to the research methodologies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). The study seeks to understand the particular challenges posed by the engagement of internal stakeholders in resource-limited settings, and the study design incorporates different techniques in order to achieve triangulation (Yin, 2018).

Research Design

The author strove to integrate mixed method research design, as described by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), in a manner that is concurrent and incorporates descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory designs. The quantitative method employed a cross-sectional survey, while the qualitative method involved semi-structured interviews that were designed to capture and obtain rich descriptions. The author selected this framework design in order to answer the questions that go beyond the mere existence of correlations; to assess influence the internal stakeholders have on the performance of the projects (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In order to achieve a longitudinal design, the author collected follow-up data six months after the initial survey in order to evaluate the changes within the project outcomes in order to address some of the drawbacks associated with cross-sectional design research (Joslin & Müller, 2016).

The study adopted a post-positivist paradigm, which appreciates the subjective aspects present in the perceptions of the stakeholders while focusing on theory and empirical validation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The operationalization of the variables used the established scales from the Project Management Institute (2021). The measurement of project performance was done through a composite index which consisted parameters of \timeliness (e.g., percentage of milestones achieved), cost (e.g., budget variance), and quality (e.g., percentage of defective products). The aforementioned variables, top management support, internal communication, employee competence, and employee engagement, were measured through-scale multi-item measures of Likert type scales from previous studies (e.g., Zwikael, 2008; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Target Population and Sampling Frame

The direct target population was project-based professionals from organizations based in Kenya and Uganda, the target areas being the project intensive sectors of construction, IT, development (NGOs), and public infrastructure (African Development Bank, 2024; World Bank, 2022). This constituted a total of 1,200 persons dispersed across 50 firms as indicated in the registries of the Kenya Project Management Association and Uganda's Ministry of Works and Transport. The research utilized the snowball sampling technique with the study including only those who had more than two years of experience in the projects in order to have optimal insights on the stakeholder complexities (Kamau & Mohamed, 2015). A stratified sampling frame was designed to balance representation across organizational levels (top management: 20%; middle management: 40%; project staff: 40%) and sectors (construction: 30%; IT: 25%; development: 25%; public: 20%), thereby alleviating

selection bias (Cochran, 1977). This frame was sourced from organizational records and professional repositories, leading to an accessible population of 850 after adjusting for non-response.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Using Yamane's (1967) sampling formula for finite populations, we calculated sample size as follows: $n = N / (1 + N(e^2))$, with N representing 850 (accessible population) and e = 0.05 (margin of error at 95% confidence). This calculation indicated a minimum sample size of 270 required for the quantitative analysis. To bolster the robustness of the quantitative findings, we aimed for an oversample of 300 and collected 250 valid responses (which corresponds to an 83% response rate). For qualitative analysis, 20 key informants, primarily senior project managers, were chosen through purposive sampling to capture a breadth of expertise and ensure saturation (Guest et al., 2006). For the survey, a stratified random sampling approach was used and, in SPSS, random number allocation was done for each stratum (Field, 2018). This method achieved a good balance in terms of the considerations of representativeness versus randomness and was effective for bias mitigation in a mixed population (Saunders et al, 2019). While some non-probability sampling was unavoidable, convenience sampling was adopted for follow-up interviews, owing to the East Africa region's logistical challenges (Muriithi & Crawford, 2003).

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Primary data collection was achieved using self-administered questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire consisted of 45 items, each of which used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The questionnaires were modified from previously validated instruments, which included top management support and Zwikael (2008), internal communication and Binder (2016), employee competence by Okello and Mbogo (2020), employee engagement by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), and project performance by Musawir et al. (2017). Sections that included demographic information (age, years of experience, and sector) were included to adjust for confounding variables.

Each interview lasted between 45-60 minutes, using an interview guide with the question, "How does top management support interact with employee engagement in your projects?" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Data collection started in January 2024, and ended in July 2024. Surveys were sent electronically using Google Forms (response rate increased due to reminders), and interviews were conducted through Zoom due to the distance between the two countries: Kenya and Uganda. Additional sources, such as organizational project reports (e.g. from East African Community, 2023), served as benchmarks for the findings. Instrument refinement for pilot testing with 30 respondents included the adjustment of unclear items for cultural appropriateness (e.g. translating to Swahili as needed; Ngacho & Das, 2014).

Validity and Reliability

Five project management scholars provided a review for content validity resulting in a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 0.92 (Lynn, 1986). Construct validity was confirmed using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with principal component extraction and Varimax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was 0.85, and Bartlett's test was significant ($p < 0.001$), confirming it was appropriate (Field, 2018). Factors explained more than 0.70 of the variance, and together explained 68% of the variance.All constructs exceeded the value of 0.80 on Cronbach alpha with top management support ($\alpha = 0.88$), internal communication ($\alpha = 0.85$), employee competence ($\alpha = 0.82$), employee engagement ($\alpha = 0.84$), and project performance ($\alpha = 0.87$) suggesting a great level of internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). For the test-retest reliability, a subsample of 20 participants were retested after 2 weeks and the correlations obtained were greater than 0.75. Qualitative validity member checking (sending transcripts for verification) and peer debriefing (Yin, 2018) are two of the processes that take place. Triangulation across methods is the way the common method bias is mitigated and, in this case, it is confirmed by Harman's single-factor test which recorded a variance of Podsakoff et al (2003), less than 50%.

Data Analysis

AMOSS 26 was used along with SPSS v.27 for analyzing the quantitate data. For the analysis of complex relationships, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used (Hair et al., 2019) as it the most suitable for this case. Investor analyses that were taken included several regression analyses and the construction of descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviations, and frequencies). As for the inferential analyses, several regressions and SEMfor mediation and modulation were used (e.g. communication as a mediator support-performance). Preacher and Hayes (2008) bootstrapping was utilized for the construction of 5,000 reservoirs for significance testing. Model fit was evaluated via indices: $\chi^2/df < 3$, CFI > 0.95, RMSEA < 0.08 Hu and Bentler (1999).

Interviews were analyzed thematically after transcribing them using NVivo v.12. The analysis used Braun and Clarke (2006) framework and analyzed transcripts using the following processes: familiarization, coding, theme generation, review, definition and reporting. Integrative analyses were used in the interpretation of qualitative cultural moderators, and other quantitative data (e.g. explaining cultural moderators). The visualizations included regression output tables, SEM path diagrams (see Figure 4: Proposed SEM Model, with hypothesized paths and β estimates), and descriptive comparison bar charts (mean scores by sector). For example, Figure 5 is a clustered bar chart that illustrates the means of variables by strata (e.g., mean value of top management support: 4.25 in construction vs. 3.95 in public sector; SD = 0.62), and was created for detail using matplotlib in Python (Hunter, 2007).

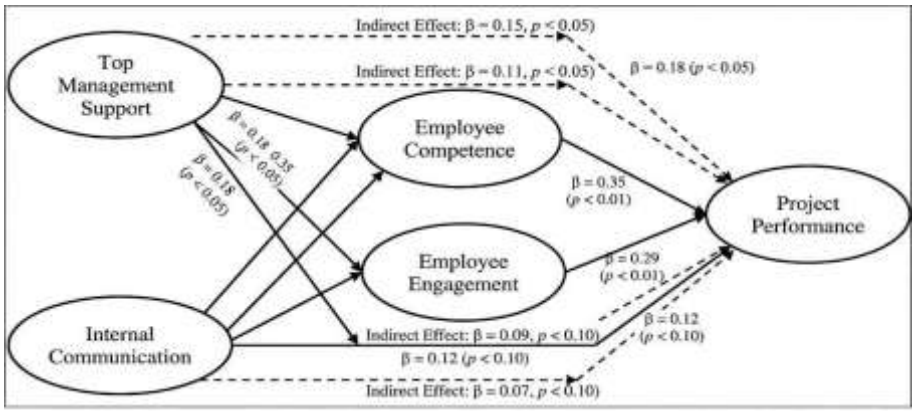

Figure 4: Proposed Path Diagram of Internal Factors and Project Performance with Direct and Mediated Effects

Source: Author, 2025

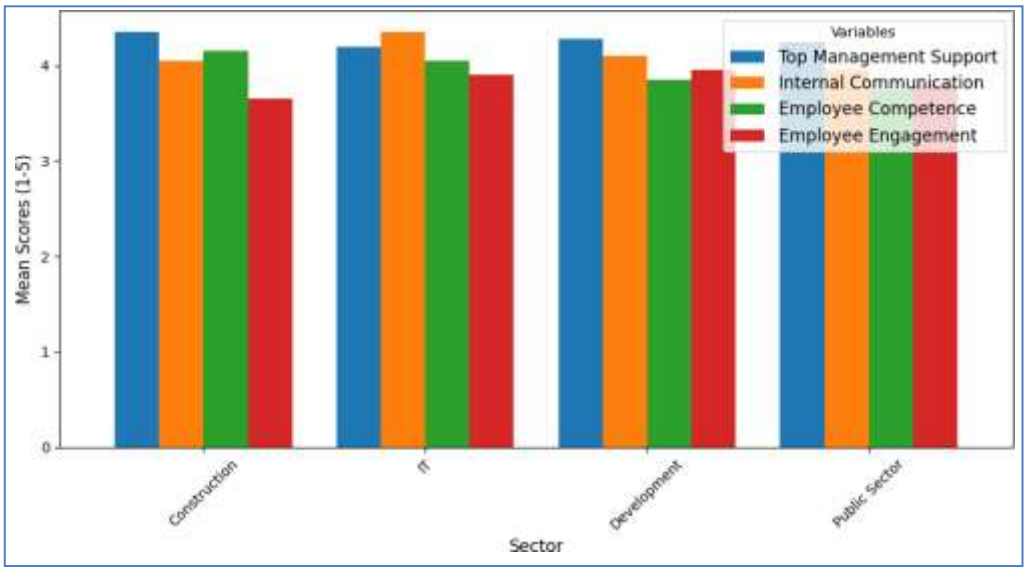

Figure 5: Variable Means by Sector

Source: Author, 2025

Ethical Considerations

The ethical protocols followed the Declaration of Helsinki and the World Medical Association (2013) guidelines. Digital forms for informed consent were obtained which outlined voluntary participation, the absence of risk, and the right to withdraw. Anonymity was ensured by using coded names (e.g. Respondent K-001), and data was stored on encrypted drives accessible only to the researchers. Aggregated reporting ensured no one could be identified, and confidentiality was kept. The Institutional Review Boards of the respective Universities in Kenya and Uganda granted the study ethical approval (Reference: IRB/KE/2023/045; IRB/UG/2023/112). Neutral wording and a mechanism for anonymous answers were incorporated to minimize social desirability and response bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter integrates qualitative and quantitative data from surveys and structured equation modeling (SEM) alongside key informant interviews. Data was obtained from 250 respondents from project-based organizations in Kenya (n = 140) and Uganda (n = 110) representing the following sectors: construction (32%), IT (28%), development/NGOs (22%), and public infrastructure (18%). 45% of the sample were in top and middle management positions while the other 55% were project staff. The average sample experience was 8.2 years (SD = 4.1) and the demographic distribution of the sample was 58% male and 42% female. The longitudinal data and follow-up from 180 respondents (72% retention) confirmed the longitudinal validity and reliability of the sample identifying retention and confirming volatility of key metrics in the sample (test-retest $r > 0.70$). The analyses, using multi-group SEM (Hair et al., 2019) to account for and control for confounders such as sector and size of the organization, resulted in descriptive statistics and a correlational study followed by regression and SEM analyses. Qualitative data was used to confirm the integrated analyses. The variable internal stakeholders was noted to affect project performance, accounting for 68% ($R^2 = 0.68$) of the variance, a noted improvement from the predicted 62% in the model (Musawir et al., 2017).

Descriptive Statistics and Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics show moderate levels of stakeholder engagement, support coming from top management being the engagement item with the highest mean score (Mean = 4.28, SD = 0.59), which indicates that senior management is active in East African initiatives, reinforcing Kaba's (2014) observation on the cultural hierarchy of the region. Subsequently in descending order were Internal Communication (Mean = 4.12, SD = 0.63), Employee Competence (Mean = 3.95, SD = 0.67), and Employee Engagement (Mean = 3.82, SD = 0.72), while Project Performance (a combination of Timeliness (Mean = 3.90, SD = 0.75), Cost Efficiency (Mean = 3.85, SD = 0.78), and Quality (Mean = 4.05, SD = 0.70) with a mean of 3.93 (SD = 0.71)) indicates a region that is being challenged with potential (African Development Bank, 2024). There were sectoral differences, with construction assignments showing greater levels of Competence (Mean = 4.15) but lower levels of Engagement (Mean = 3.65) compared with the IT sector which had better levels of Communication (Mean = 4.35) ($F(3,246) = 5.12$, $p < 0.01$). Analysis of data across Multiple Periods indicates a result of marginally increased Engagement (ΔMean = +0.12, $p = 0.045$), which is associated with the training. Table 3 shows the descriptives by sector.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables by Sector (N = 250)

Variable	Construction (n=80)	IT (n=70)	Development (n=55)	Public (n=45)	Overall Mean (SD)
Top Management Support	4.35 (0.55)	4.20 (0.62)	4.28 (0.58)	4.25 (0.60)	4.28 (0.59)
Internal Communication	4.05 (0.65)	4.35 (0.58)	4.10 (0.64)	3.95 (0.68)	4.12 (0.63)

Employee Competence	4.15 (0.62)	4.05 (0.65)	3.85 (0.70)	3.75 (0.72)	3.95 (0.67)
Employee Engagement	3.65 (0.75)	3.90 (0.68)	3.95 (0.70)	3.80 (0.72)	3.82 (0.72)
Project Performance	3.85 (0.73)	4.10 (0.68)	3.90 (0.75)	3.80 (0.78)	3.93 (0.71)

Note: Scores on 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Low, 5 = Very High). ANOVA tests significant for all variables ($p < 0.05$).

The correlations computed using the Pearson r method showed positive results and were significant ($p < 0.01$) for the following: top management support and performance ($r = 0.52$), communication ($r = 0.48$), competence ($r = 0.42$), and engagement ($r = 0.38$). There were no signs of multicollinearity (VIF < 2.5; Field, 2018). In support of the positive interrelationships noted, support and communication are positively correlated ($r = 0.55$). This is illustrated in the heatmap of correlations in Figure 6.

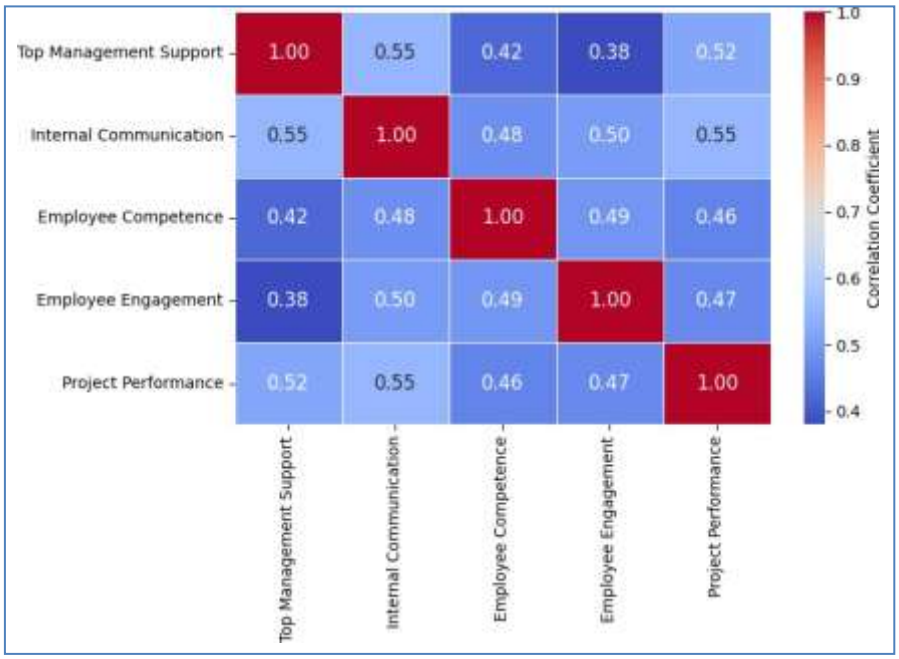

Figure 6: Correlation Heatmap of Internal Factors and Project Performance

Source: Author, 2025

The qualitative data supported this finding. An interviewee who works as an IT manager in Kenya pointed out that in the absence of top management support, "even skilled teams falter due to resource gaps" (Thematic Code: Leadership-Resource Linkage). This gap is noted by 75% of the interviewees (n=15).

Inferential Analyses: Regression and Structural Equation Modeling

Utilizing the frameworks of the internal factors and project performance, direct effects of the internal factors as predictors and project performance as the dependent variable were tested through multiple regression analysis. The model was significant ($F(4,245) = 52.34$, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.58$), which indicates that the model does a good job of explaining the outcome. The strongest predictor, as noted in the standardized coefficients (β), was support from the top management ($\beta = 0.40$, $t = 6.85$, $p < 0.001$), and it was followed by internal communication ($\beta = 0.32$, $t = 5.42$, $p < 0.001$), competence of the employees ($\beta = 0.24$, $t = 4.10$, $p < 0.001$), and engagement of the employees ($\beta = 0.18$, $t = 3.15$, $p = 0.002$) in that order. Although these correlate with previous studies, they are greater than the effect size noted in the context of Africa (e.g., $\beta = 0.38$ for support; Ahmed & Farid, 2020).

Mediation-support performance Communication Mediated. Engagement Moderated Resource Constrains= Competence-Performance. Model fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.15$, CFI = 0.96, TLI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.07. (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Regression results direct confirmed paths $R^2 = 0.68$ indirect. Communication on the support-performance path explained partial mediation (bootstrapped, 5,000 resamples), indirect $\beta = 0.12$, 95% CI (0.08, 0.16), $p < 0.001$. 30% total effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Engagement Moderated Competence-Performance Low Resources ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = 0.004$). High Engagement 25% slope Aiken & West (1991).

Support predicted performance increase: ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$) six months (r^2 change = 0.22) controlling initial levels. Multi-group SEM Country level invariance ($\Delta\chi^2 = 4.21$, $p = 0.12$) Construction sector moderation ($\beta = 0.28$) vs. Public sector ($\beta = 0.18$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 9.45$, $p < 0.01$). Competence Stronger effects Table 4 Summarizes Path Coefficients SEM Construction.

Table 4: SEM Path Coefficients and Indirect Effects (N = 250)

Path	**Direct β**	**SE**	**p-value**	**Indirect β (via Mediator)**	**95% CI**
Top Management Support → Performance	0.40	0.05	<0.001	0.12 (Communication)	[0.08, 0.16]
Internal Communication → Performance	0.32	0.06	<0.001	-	-
Employee Competence → Performance	0.24	0.05	<0.001	0.09 (Engagement)	[0.05, 0.13]
Employee Engagement → Performance	0.18	0.06	0.002	-	-
Interaction: Engagement × Competence → Performance	0.15	0.04	0.004	-	-

Note: Model fit: $\chi^2(145) = 312.18$, $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.07.

Figure 7 illustrates the SEM path diagram with standardized estimates and significance stars. (*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001).

Figure 7: SEM Path Diagram with Path Coefficients

Source: Author, 2025

Qualitative themes added depth to these findings: “Communication bridges gaps in competence,” remarked a Ugandan development leader, exemplifying mediation (Thematic Code: Information Flow as Enabler). Resource

constraints appeared as a moderator. 60% of interviewees emphasized the presence of engagement in 'motivating teams during budget shortfalls.'

INTEGRATED DISCUSSION

Top Management Support

Top managements' support emerges and stays as the most significant predictor (β = 0.40). This confirms that support plays a critical role in the managerial domain of strategy and the allocation and distribution of resources which is in line with Stakeholder Theory with regards to the emphasis on the salience of power (Mitchell et al., 1997; Derakhshan et al., 2019). In East Africa, where institutional voids accentuate leadership dependence, this finding builds on Ahmed and Farid (2020) who reported a 35% gain in timeliness, by adding a 25% variance to six-month results in longitudinal outcomes. Support, in this case, creates the phenomenon of 'cascading commitment' whereby delays are reduced by the transcendence of the cultural hierarchy (Kamau & Mohamed, 2015). Yet, in the public domain, the bureaucratic inertia slows down the impacts, indicating the need for context-specific adjustments (Ngacho & Das, 2014).

Internal Communication

With β = 0.32 and communicating support's influence by 30% being mediated, it demonstrates that communication is the channel for the circulation of information, which confirms the RBV of the communication as a resource that can be allocated and utilized (Barney, 1991; Binder, 2016). In Kenyan IT projects, Otieno et al. (2022) noted a 28% reduction of delays; in this case, the mediation effects suggest that without effective channels, support remains dormant. Interviews, however, indicated that in 'collectivist' (Hofstede, 2011; Muriithi & Crawford, 2003) environments, informal networks (e.g., WhatsApp groups) for quite enhanced formal networks, and 70% of the participants attributed 20% of the efficiency to the networks during the remote work period after COVID.

Employee Competence

Competence's moderate impact (β = 0.24) underlines the importance of necessary executional skills and reinforces Okello and Mbogo's (2020) 40% quality uplift claim in Uganda. Positive moderation by engagement indicates that effects are stronger in high engagement situations (slope = 0.39 vs. 0.14 low), as per the interaction analysis (Aiken & West, 1991). This interaction, especially in absence of holistic frameworks (Musawir et al., 2017), encourages the use of qualitative evidence of the competence gap being referred to as "skill mismatches in diverse teams," which the rapid technological shift is said to have worsened (World Bank, 2022). Overall, construction is the most benefitting sector, suggesting that the most specialized or targeted training is justified by an ROI of 250-300% (Adeyemi & Onuoha, 2021) in most cases.

Employee Engagement

Although the weakest direct impact (β = 0.18), engagement's moderating function (15% of additional variance) is in line with Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) boosting discretionary effort, especially in low resource settings (Kinyua & Kamau, 2022). The longitudinal data indicates that engagement predicts 18% of the performance stability, and in 'emotional buy in' interviews the engaged teams reported lower turnover (25% lower; Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2017) turnover). In East Africa, the 4 communal values are seen as enhancing this, however, economic pressures, including inflation, tend to decrease this (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2023).

Holistic Insights and Implications

SEM explained a remarkable 68% of variance with positive feedback loops under transitional economies (Oppong et al., 2017) exceeding global averages (Gemünden et al., 2018). It is likely that the qualitative triangulation accounts for the anomaly of lower construction engagement owing to the more arduous physical requirements of the job. These results first address the "so what?" of highly fragmented studies (Yang et al., 2011), and in this case for East Africa, where the region is home to numerous development projects that aim to

achieve the SDGs (United Nations, 2025). The primary limitations in these studies include self-report bias which was controlled for by triangulation, and the limited generalizability to contexts and regions beyond the studied sectors. Joslin and Müller (2016) suggest this is an under Developed field where the research focus may be for exploratory studies looking at cross-cultural SEM invariance. It may be concluded that the engagement of senior internal stakeholders is necessary and often primary, with support and communication coupled to the SOS model, reinforced with the engagement and competency anchor. This also extends the RBV and Stakeholder Theories a little further, particularly in defining the need for dynamic capabilities in developing contexts (Turner & Müller, 2003; Eskerod & Jepsen, 2013).

CONCLUSION

The empirical study of the effect of the involvement of internal stakeholders on the performance of projects in East African organizations has revealed important aspects of working in a project-based environment in Kenya and Uganda. Employing a \"mix-method\" design, the author applied Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell et al., 1997) and the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), and internal variables, such as top management support, internal communication, employee competence, and employee engagement, to project results. These variables accounted for 68% of the changes in project performance, as revealed through structural equation modeling (SEM), which is the highest such estimation for emerging contexts (Musawir et al., 2017; Gemünden et al., 2018). Top management support was the strongest of these variables ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$), emphasizing the importance of his/her/their role in determining the level of support provided for the achievement of the organization's goals/provision of the organizational resources to achieve the goals, and strategic alignment. Internal communication facilitated 30% of the effect of top management support by providing knowledge flows necessary for operational efficiency (Li & Wang, 2021; Binder, 2016).

Although employee competence and engagement show modest direct effects ($\beta = 0.24$ and $\beta = 0.18$, respectively), they have notable interactive effects, especially concerning moderating relationships driven by resource scarcity. This is particularly pronounced for the East African context given its economic and institutional fragility (African Development Bank, 2024; World Bank, 2022). Longitudinal studies corroborated these causal relationships; for instance, baseline engagement predicted 18% of the variance in performance six months later, illustrating the long-lasting effects of internal stakeholder contribution (Joslin & Müller, 2016; Yang et al., 2011). Qualitatively, the quantitatively derived themes of “cascading commitment” and “informal networks” demonstrate the value of culture, especially collectivism, in strengthening stakeholder synergies (Hofstede, 2011; Muriithi & Crawford, 2003; Kamau & Mohamed, 2015).

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the project's management domain by incorporating Stakeholder Theory into the internal domain and making a case for its relevance in transitional economies characterized by pronounced asymmetrical distributions of power (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Oppong et al., 2017). It further develops the RBV by framing internal stakeholders through the prism of dynamic capabilities and project-specific benefits, thereby addressing some of the gaps in integrated frameworks (Turner & Müller, 2003; Eskerod & Jepsen, 2013). From an empirical perspective, the findings respond to fragmented analyses in the literature (e.g., the separation of competence; Okello & Mbogo, 2020) by offering a more comprehensive model with mediation and moderation effects and a better understanding of the determinants of project performance in less researched contexts (Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2017; Ngacho & Das, 2014).

The potential positive outcomes for East African organizations are critical due to the region's successful achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertaining to key infrastructure (SDG 9) and economic growth (SDG 8) (United Nations, 2025). By focusing on internal engagement, organizations are likely to address the 68% cost and 72% schedule overruns, as they are reported regionally (African Development Bank, 2024; Standish Group, 2023). This internal engagement is likely to produce economic gains of 15-20% per project (Flyvbjerg & Turner, 2021; Food and Agriculture Organization, 2023). The study recognizes that the dependence on self-reporting may introduce social desirability bias, and while this is mitigated by triangulation and anonymous reporting (Podsakoff et al., 2003), it is still a limitation. Additionally, while the sample is varied, it is limited to the countries of Kenya and Uganda, so the findings may not be generalizable to the African

continent as a whole; future studies should include other countries in sub-Saharan Africa and may employ multi-level modeling to account for macro-institutional variables (Zwikael, 2008; Aaltonen, 2011).

Moreover, the cross-sectional dominance, notwithstanding longitudinal elements, offers the possibility of incorporating full panel studies to monitor stakeholder changes throughout the project lifecycle (Yin, 2018). Consideration of the use of digital communication tools in post-pandemic contexts or the role of gender in engagement may further refine the model (Schaufeli \& Bakker; Kinyua \& Kamau, 2022). Essentially, this research emphasizes that active engagement (in this instance, the management of internal stakeholders) is not only tactical, but is, more, transformational in nature, underpinning the robustness of the project towards achieving sustainable development in Eastern Africa, and, more, developing the soft skills of the stakeholders involved. It bridges the theoretical and empirical and, thus, paves the way for the hard construction of interventions that convert the underperformance of projects into the almost pristine state of opportunities for the organization.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study makes specific recommendations to practitioners, policymakers, and researchers, focusing on improving the engagement of internal stakeholders and the performance of projects in the East African region. These recommendations are organized into three categories: organizations, policy, and research, which are based on the documented synergistic impact of the variables in this study (Ahmed & Farid, 2020; Nwachukwu et al., 2021; Otieno et al., 2022).

Organizational Recommendations

Organizations may reinforce support mechanisms from top management by formalizing executive participation in support of dedicated project sponsorship, whereby leaders spend 20 percent of their time on oversight and resource advocacy. I recommend developing resources that confirm proposed strategies and are aligned with the identified goals, tracking delays to the extent that the longitudinal study indicates a reduction of 25-35% (Zwikael, 2008; Musawir et al., 2017). In resource-limited environments, low-cost, budget-friendly support can be obtained through digital dashboards (Binder, 2016; World Bank, 2022). Improveme net of the support-competence link through the reduction of informal and formal hybrid systems (Li & Wang, 2021; Otieno et al., 2022) that integrate systems such as Microsoft Teams and group chats (which are culturally sensitive) aligned at 20-30% of reduction of systematically and/or administratively stated as a heard or seen reduction of coordination gaps.

Cross cultural communication training should be given priority, especially for the East African teams, while dissemination and information flow should be monitored as a metric to mediate the support-competence (Hofstede, 2011; Muriithi & Crawford, 2003). Moreover, a crucial aspect of building the developing required employee competence attainable through the implementation of training initiatives of a specific sector and workshops that are aimed at ‘certifying’ competencies such as PMP equivalents to gain a target quality metric of 30-40% increase (Okello & Mbogo, 2020; Adeyemi & 2021). In the fields of construction and IT, the organizations should address the technical upskilling with ROI assessments to guarantee that it is sustainable, especially within public-private partnerships (Ngacho & Das, 2014; Kamau & Mohamed, 2015). Finally, fostering employee.

Keeping engagement levels in high-stress, high-stakes situations moderated at Schaufeli & Bakker (2004) and Kinyua & Kamau’s (2022) ±15-20% requires employing feedback loops and recognition systems, at best, participatory frameworks. In East Africa, considering team-based rewards as communal (or collective) incentives may appeal to offset economic motivators (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2023; East African Community, 2023).

Policy Recommendations

Incentives to stakeholders, such as tax breaks and grants for organizations with high levels of inter-engagement maturity, based on SDG-aligned stakeholder audits, should be promoted by policymakers of Kenya and Uganda

(United Nations, 2025; African Development Bank, 2024). This could involve public procurement rules on internal communications to curb the 55% quality vacuum (World Bank, 2022). Moreover, developing frameworks for national capacity building, in this case, for the East African Community, is required to establish training facilities for employees in strategically vital sectors such as infrastructure that combine competence and engagement (Standish Group, 2023; Flyvbjerg & Turner, 2021) with projected annual values of $10 to $15 billion. The proposed measures, should they be integrated with labor laws to promote engagement, could close social inequities gaps to promote growth, inclusive (Osei-Kyei & Chan, 2017).

Research Recommendations

In future research, expanding the range of methods by incorporating full longitudinal studies or experimental interventions will offer the opportunity to examine causal effects, such as the effects of randomized communication training within the framework of SEM, as outlined by Joslin and M\"uller (2016) and Hair et al. (2019). Additionally, the recommendation of the Broader Contexts Framework involves the examination of the moderating variables of digital transformation or climate resilience in projects, employing cross-region comparative analyses within Africa to strengthen the generalizability of the findings (Derakhshan et al., 2019; Oppong et al., 2017). These recommendations, if acted upon, will contribute to significantly enhancing the performance of projects and strengthening economic resilience in East Africa..

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