

**EFFECT OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN STRATEGY
MONITORING AND EVALUATION ON THE PERFORMANCE OF
CATHOLIC PARISHES IN ARUSHA, TANZANIA**

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ABSTRACT

Background: Stakeholder engagement is essential for the performance and sustainability of Catholic parishes, especially where parishes face issues such as inconsistent participation, weak accountability, and limited feedback mechanisms during the strategy monitoring and evaluation (M&E) phase.

Objective: This study examined the effect of stakeholder participation in M&E processes on parish performance, with a focus on spiritual, social, and developmental outcomes.

Methodology: Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study surveyed 460 respondents from diverse stakeholder groups, including clergy, parish council members, apostolic association leaders, and lay faithful. Quantitative data were examined using descriptive statistics and structural equation modelling (SEM), whilst qualitative insights were obtained from semi-structured interviews.

Findings: The results showed a strong positive link between stakeholder engagement in M&E and enhanced parish performance, with a path coefficient of 0.712 between strategy monitoring and parish performance, indicating that stakeholder involvement significantly influences outcomes.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Parishes that actively involve stakeholders in strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation achieve higher levels of community outreach, financial sustainability, and operational efficiency. Catholic parishes in Arusha should

institutionalize participatory M&E systems, ensuring that all stakeholders, particularly lay faithful, are involved in decision-making processes to foster greater accountability, responsiveness, and alignment with community needs.

Keywords: *Stakeholder Engagement, Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation, Parish Performance*

1. INTRODUCTION

Stakeholder engagement has become a vital factor in the effectiveness of organizations across both private and public sectors, with faith-based groups increasingly recognized as key players in community development and social service provision (Freeman, 1984; Oliveira, Pasape, Anderson, and Lindi, 2012; Fernandes & Pardini, 2023). Catholic parishes, in particular, play a distinctive institutional role, serving as spiritual centres, community hubs, and service providers, whose success depends greatly on the active participation of diverse stakeholder groups, including clergy, parishioners, parish councils, and apostolic associations (Burns, Cnaan & Smith, 2019). The alignment of stakeholder interests with organizational strategy is therefore crucial to understanding how faith-based institutions maintain relevance, mobilise resources, and achieve community impact over time (Kujala, Sachs, Leinonen, Heikkinen & Laude, 2022).

Within the broader field of strategic management, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a vital yet often overlooked stage through which organizations assess the progress, relevance, and effectiveness of their strategic plans (Twum, Badu & Boateng, 2024). When stakeholders are actively involved in this stage, organizations benefit from participatory feedback loops, increased accountability, and more responsive strategic adjustments that reflect the changing needs of the communities they serve (Garcia & Lee, 2023; Nelson & Roberts, 2021). Thompson and Zhang (2023) found that parishes that engaged congregants in evaluating strategic outcomes were better positioned to respond to shifting community dynamics, recording improved membership retention and stronger community outreach performance. Similarly, Kaplan and Norton (2015) demonstrated that stakeholder participation significantly boosts organizational outcomes, with measurable improvements in both financial and non-financial performance indicators.

Despite recognizing the importance of stakeholder engagement in organizational strategy, empirical research exploring its specific influence during the M&E phase remains limited, especially within African faith-based institutional contexts (Ngigi & Robert, 2023). Most existing studies focus on parishes in North America, Europe, and South America, leaving a significant gap in understanding the dynamics and outcomes of stakeholder-driven M&E practices in developing regions such as Tanzania (Grandy & Levit, 2021; Garcia & Lee, 2023). In Arusha specifically, parishes within the Archdiocese operate across eight deaneries serving diverse socio-economic communities but face ongoing challenges, including inconsistent engagement practices, limited strategic feedback mechanisms, and fragmented monitoring systems that hinder parish performance (Temba, Kaleshu & Machimu, 2023; Mahimbali, 2022). This study aims to address this critical empirical gap by investigating the impact of stakeholder engagement in strategy monitoring and evaluation on the performance of Catholic parishes in Arusha, Tanzania, thereby generating evidence-based knowledge to inform parish leadership and broader faith-based organizational governance across Sub-Saharan Africa.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Catholic parishes in Arusha, Tanzania, face ongoing performance challenges rooted in inconsistent and insufficient stakeholder engagement practices, especially during the crucial phase of strategy monitoring and evaluation (Ngigi & Robert, 2023). While some parishes within the Archdiocese of Arusha actively involve stakeholders in strategic processes, many still depend on hierarchical decision-making structures that restrict meaningful participation by lay faithful, apostolic associations, and community partners (Mahimbali, 2022). This inconsistency results in fragmented monitoring systems, weak accountability mechanisms, and a failure to incorporate stakeholder feedback into strategic adjustments, ultimately undermining the parishes' ability to achieve their spiritual, social, and developmental objectives (Temba, Kaleshu & Machimu, 2023). Additionally, resource limitations and inadequate strategic planning capacity further impede parishes from maintaining structured and inclusive M&E processes, leaving parish leaders with limited data-driven guidance on how best to enhance their engagement approaches for better performance outcomes (Singletary et al., 2022; Collinge, 2020).

Compounding this operational reality is a significant gap in empirical research exploring how stakeholder engagement during strategy monitoring and evaluation specifically influences parish performance in African contexts. Most existing studies have been conducted in North American and European settings, with findings that may not be applicable to the distinct socio-cultural, economic, and ecclesiastical dynamics of Tanzanian parishes (Garcia & Lee, 2023; Thompson & Zhang, 2023; Nelson & Roberts, 2021). Without contextually grounded, quantitative evidence on the link between participatory M&E practices and measurable performance outcomes, parish leaders in Arusha lack an evidence base to develop more effective engagement strategies (Kariuki, Kitonga & Arasa, 2023). This study therefore fills this gap by empirically examining the impact of stakeholder engagement in strategy monitoring and evaluation on the performance of Catholic parishes in Arusha, Tanzania.

3. OBJECTIVE

To determine the effect of stakeholder engagement in strategy monitoring and evaluation on the performance of Catholic Parishes in Arusha, Tanzania

4. THEORETICAL REVIEW

The Balanced Scorecard (BSC) Theory, developed by Kaplan and Norton (1992; 1996), offers the most suitable theoretical perspective to analyze how stakeholder engagement in strategy monitoring and evaluation influences the performance of Catholic parishes. The BSC theory argues that organizational performance should not be judged solely on financial metrics but should include a wider range of indicators across four interconnected perspectives: financial sustainability, customer satisfaction, internal business processes, and learning and growth (Kaplan & Norton, 1992). This multi-faceted approach to performance measurement is especially relevant in faith-based organizational contexts, where success is measured not only by financial results but also by community outreach effectiveness, parishioner satisfaction, volunteer participation, and operational efficiency (Tawse & Tabesh, 2023). By combining quantitative and qualitative performance indicators, the BSC offers a comprehensive framework that reflects the complex, mission-oriented nature of Catholic parish operations.

The importance of the BSC theory to this study is reinforced by its clear focus on strategic alignment and the need for systematic monitoring and evaluation to maintain organizational

performance. Kaplan and Norton (2015) maintain that organizations which regularly measure and evaluate performance across all four BSC perspectives are better equipped to identify operational gaps, respond to stakeholder needs, and make strategic decisions informed by data. In the context of Catholic parishes, this involves a structured M&E process through which parish leaders and stakeholders jointly assess the effectiveness of outreach programmes, monitor financial contributions, track volunteer engagement, and evaluate the achievement of pastoral objectives (Nelson & Roberts, 2021). The BSC therefore supports the view that stakeholder engagement during the M&E phase is not merely procedural but essential to the quality and depth of performance assessment, ensuring that diverse stakeholder perspectives inform strategic decision-making (Prebanić & Vukomanović, 2023).

Critically, the BSC theory highlights the importance of feedback mechanisms and stakeholder participation as vital components of a strong performance management system, directly aligning with the main focus of this study. When stakeholders actively participate in monitoring key performance indicators, sharing progress reports, and integrating feedback into strategic reviews, the M&E process becomes more transparent, accountable, and organizationally responsive (Garcia & Lee, 2023; Demirkesen & Reinhardt, 2021). Grandy and Levit (2021) also affirm that organizations which use the BSC framework to involve diverse stakeholders in performance evaluation achieve better strategic alignment and more sustainable performance outcomes. Applied to Catholic parishes in Arusha, the BSC theory therefore suggests that parishes which institutionalize participatory monitoring and evaluation processes will demonstrate significantly better performance across financial sustainability, community outreach, operational efficiency, and parishioner engagement aspects, making it the most coherent and empirically grounded framework for this study.

5. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Empirical research on stakeholder engagement during strategy monitoring and evaluation consistently shows a positive link between participatory review processes and organizational performance across different institutional settings. Nelson and Roberts (2021) conducted a study examining strategic review processes in Catholic parishes in the United States, finding that parishes which actively involved stakeholders in reviewing strategic plans were significantly more successful in identifying operational strengths and weaknesses. Their research demonstrated that regular feedback from parishioners and community members led to more relevant and timely strategic adjustments, resulting in measurable improvements in attendance rates, financial contributions, and community engagement metrics. The study further revealed that participatory M&E processes fostered a sense of ownership among stakeholders, ensuring that strategic objectives remained aligned with the community's evolving needs and expectations, thereby supporting long-term parish performance.

Building on these findings, Garcia and Lee (2023) examined the impact of stakeholder engagement during strategy review processes in parishes across South America. They discovered that parishes which held regular strategy review meetings that included input from clergy, parishioners, and local community organizations experienced significantly greater transparency and accountability in their operations. The involvement of diverse stakeholder groups enabled these parishes to evaluate the effectiveness of their initiatives more objectively and make data-driven decisions regarding future strategic directions. Importantly, the study highlighted that stakeholder feedback was a vital element of the iterative strategy-refinement process, leading to continuous improvements in programme effectiveness and overall parish performance. These findings align

with the broader organizational management literature, where Demirkesen and Reinhardt (2021) similarly found that organizations incorporating stakeholder feedback mechanisms into their performance management systems consistently outperformed those relying solely on top-down evaluation approaches.

Thompson and Zhang (2023) extended this research to Protestant parishes in Australia, exploring how stakeholder engagement during strategy reviews influenced parish dynamics and performance outcomes. Their study showed that parishes which involved congregants in assessing strategic results were better able to adapt to changing community dynamics, achieving higher member satisfaction, stronger loyalty, and improved community outreach. The authors also found that without ongoing stakeholder involvement during the M&E phase, parishes risked becoming increasingly disconnected from their communities, which could weaken their ability to fulfil their institutional missions. This is especially relevant in the Tanzanian context, where parishes operate within rapidly evolving socio-economic settings that require flexible and community-oriented strategic management practices (Temba, Kaleshu & Machimu, 2023; Mahimbali, 2022).

Beyond the faith-based sector, broader empirical evidence reinforces the vital role of participatory monitoring and evaluation in enhancing organizational performance. Maurer et al. (2022) established in a qualitative study that stakeholder engagement in outcome evaluation significantly improved the relevance, quality, and impact of organisational initiatives across multiple sectors, with engaged stakeholders consistently contributing insights that internal management teams could not generate independently. Similarly, Ezeh, Ogbu, Ikevuje and George (2024) found that organizations which integrated stakeholder engagement into their performance tracking systems achieved more successful project outcomes, particularly in environments characterised by resource constraints and complex community dynamics. These findings are directly applicable to Catholic parishes in Arusha, where limited resources and diverse congregation needs create conditions under which participatory M&E becomes not merely beneficial but organizationally essential for sustained performance and community relevance.

Despite the expanding body of evidence supporting stakeholder engagement in M&E, a significant empirical gap remains in the African faith-based institutional context. Most existing studies have been carried out in North American, European, and South American settings, with limited focus on the unique challenges and opportunities faced by parishes in Sub-Saharan Africa (Kariuki, Kitonga & Arasa, 2023; Ngigi & Robert, 2023). Additionally, while qualitative insights into the advantages of participatory M&E are well documented, quantitative analyses that measure the extent and statistical significance of the relationship between stakeholder engagement in M&E and specific parish performance indicators are limited (Garcia & Lee, 2023; Nelson & Roberts, 2021). This study consequently addresses these two gaps by providing quantitative empirical evidence from Arusha, Tanzania, offering context-specific knowledge that enhances both scholarly understanding and practical parish governance within the African setting.

6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of this study suggests that stakeholder engagement in strategy monitoring and evaluation, demonstrated through participation in tracking key performance indicators, transparency in sharing progress reports, inclusion of stakeholder feedback, and stakeholder accountability, directly affects the performance of Catholic parishes measured by financial sustainability, operational efficiency, community outreach, and parishioner engagement (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Garcia & Lee, 2023).

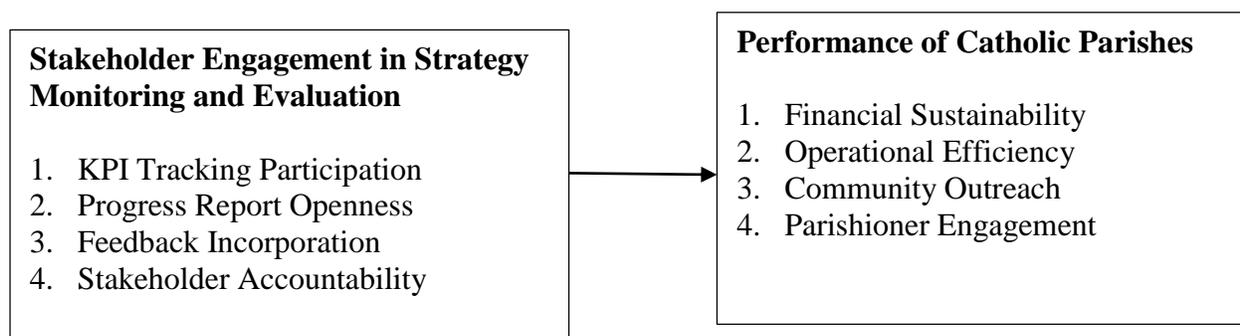


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

7. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a pragmatic research philosophy, utilizing a mixed-methods research design that combined a cross-sectional survey approach with qualitative interviews to thoroughly examine the impact of stakeholder engagement in strategy monitoring and evaluation on the performance of Catholic parishes in Arusha, Tanzania. The target population consisted of stakeholders from 56 parishes across the eight deaneries of the Archdiocese of Arusha, including parish priests, members of parish councils, leaders of apostolic associations, and lay church members, totaling 625,084 individuals (Archdiocese Website, 2022). Stratified random sampling was used to ensure proportional representation across stakeholder groups, with Yamane's (1967) formula applied to determine a sample size of 400 lay church members. Additionally, a 10% purposive sample was selected from parish priests (n=12), parish council members (n=28), and apostolic association leaders (n=20), resulting in a total sample of 460 respondents, of whom 401 provided valid responses for analysis.

Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to lay parishioners and semi-structured interviews conducted with key parish stakeholders, with all survey items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Data quality was ensured through pilot testing, expert review, and internal consistency assessment using Cronbach's alpha. Quantitative data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS, including measurement model assessment through factor loadings, composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity tests such as the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio and Fornell-Larcker criterion. Structural model evaluation involved analyzing path coefficients, the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2_{predict}). Meanwhile, qualitative data from interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis to validate and enrich the quantitative findings (Hair et al., 2019; Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020).

8. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Demographic Characteristics

A total of 401 valid responses were analyzed. The demographic profile of respondents was examined to establish representativeness across stakeholder categories within Catholic parishes in Arusha, Tanzania. The results indicate broad participation across leadership, lay faithful, and different organizational levels.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Status / Role	Lay Faithful	321	80.0
	Priest	22	5.5
	Apostolic Association Member	18	4.5
	Apostolic Association Leader	16	4.0
	Parish Council Leader	11	2.7
	Council Member	8	2.0
	Parish Council Member	5	1.2
Age	Below 25 years	39	9.7
	26–35 years	66	16.5
	36–45 years	111	27.7
	46–55 years	120	29.9
	Above 55 years	65	16.2
Gender	Male	218	54.4
	Female	183	45.6
Organizational Level	Parish	323	80.5
	Deanery	74	18.5
	Archdiocese	4	1.0
Highest Education Level	Degree	86	21.4
	Diploma	84	20.9
	Postgraduate	58	14.5
	O-Level	57	14.2
	A-Level	55	13.7
	Primary	42	10.5
	Professional Qualification	19	4.7

Source: Researcher’s results 2025

The results reveal that most respondents were lay faithful (80%), which is fitting, considering that parish performance is mainly experienced and evaluated at the congregational level. Clergy and formal leadership groups were also represented, ensuring an institutional perspective in the data. The age distribution shows a mature respondent base, with 57.6% aged between 36 and 55 years. This indicates that the responses were given by individuals likely to have substantial parish experience and a well-informed understanding of strategic processes. Gender representation was relatively balanced, with males making up 54.4% and females 45.6%, reflecting inclusive participation. Most respondents operated at the parish level (80.5%), aligning directly with the unit of analysis. Educational qualifications showed that over 56% held diplomas, degrees, or postgraduate awards, suggesting that respondents had adequate academic capacity to understand strategy monitoring and evaluation processes and to assess parish performance reliably.

9. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were computed to examine the central tendency, dispersion, and distribution characteristics of the study variables. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation	401	4.421	0.441	-0.245	-0.669
Performance of Catholic Parish	401	4.633	0.477	-0.782	-0.768

The findings indicate that respondents reported high levels of stakeholder engagement in strategy monitoring and evaluation ($M = 4.421$, $SD = 0.441$). This suggests strong agreement that parishes involve stakeholders in KPI tracking, progress reporting, feedback incorporation, and accountability mechanisms. The relatively low standard deviation indicates consistency in perceptions across respondents. Similarly, the performance of Catholic parishes was rated highly ($M = 4.633$, $SD = 0.477$), indicating that respondents generally perceived their parishes as performing well in financial sustainability, operational efficiency, community outreach, and parishioner engagement. Regarding normality, both variables exhibit slight negative skewness (0.245 and 0.782), indicating that responses were moderately concentrated toward the higher end of the Likert scale. Kurtosis values (-0.669 and -0.768) fall within acceptable thresholds (± 2), confirming that the data approximates normal distribution. These results suggest that the data are statistically suitable for advanced multivariate analysis, including PLS-SEM structural modelling.

Measurement Model Analysis

The measurement model was evaluated for factor loadings, reliability, and convergent validity. The results, outlined in Table 4, indicate that all constructs meet the acceptable standards for internal consistency and validity.

Table 3: Measurement Model Analysis

Construct	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Performance of Catholic Parish (PCP1)	0.974	0.956	0.971	0.919
Performance of Catholic Parish (PCP2)	0.977			
Performance of Catholic Parish (PCP3)	0.924			
Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation (SME1)	0.862	0.894	0.922	0.703
Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation (SME2)	0.886			
Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation (SME3)	0.774			
Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation (SME4)	0.867			
Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation (SME5)	0.797			

Source: Researcher's results 2025

The results show high reliability and convergent validity for the constructs, evidenced by strong factor loadings (all above 0.70), Cronbach's alpha scores above 0.70, and AVE values over 0.50. These findings confirm that the constructs used in the study are both reliable and valid for subsequent analysis.

Discriminant validity was evaluated using both the HTMT ratio and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The HTMT ratio for *Performance of Catholic Parish* and *Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation* was 0.766, which is below the threshold of 0.90, confirming that the constructs are distinct. Furthermore, the Fornell-Larcker criterion results showed that the square root of the AVE for each construct is greater than its correlation with other constructs, indicating adequate discriminant validity. Moving to the structural model analysis, the path coefficient between *Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation* and *Performance of Catholic Parish* was 0.712, with a T-statistic of 23.597 and a p-value of 0.000, confirming a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between the two. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for *Performance of Catholic Parish* was 0.507, indicating that 50.7% of the variance in parish performance can be explained by strategy monitoring and evaluation. The effect size (f^2) for this relationship was 1.029, indicating a

substantial effect. Additionally, the predictive power (Q^2) for the *Performance of the Catholic Parish* was 0.505, indicating strong predictive relevance.

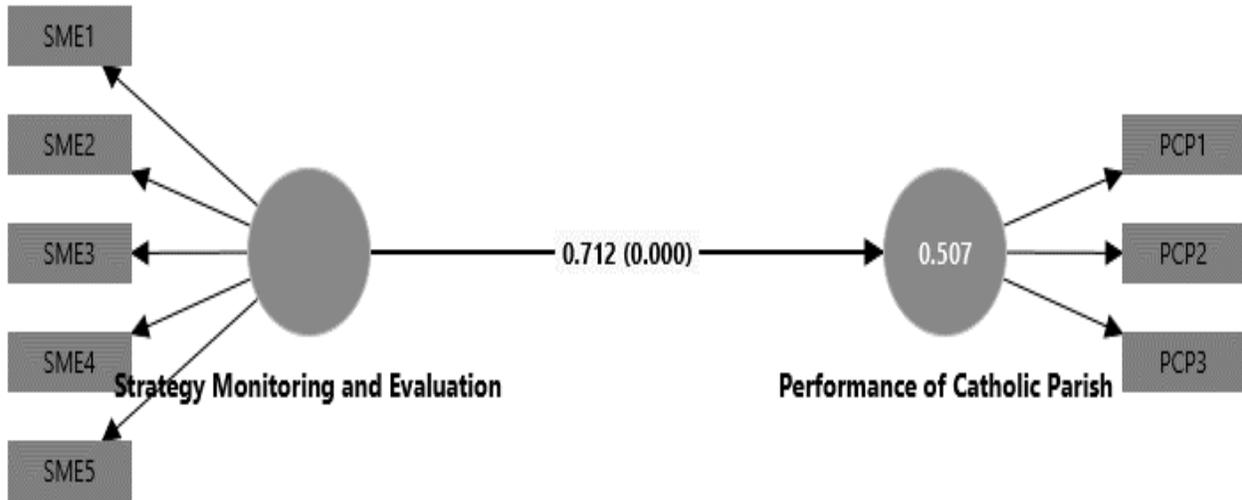


Figure 2: Structural Model Indicating Path Coefficient and P-Value

The results from the structural model analysis support the hypothesis that stakeholder engagement in strategy monitoring and evaluation significantly improves the performance of Catholic parishes in Arusha. Discriminant validity was assessed using both the HTMT ratio and the Fornell-Larcker criterion. The HTMT ratio for Performance of Catholic Parish and Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation was 0.766, which is below the threshold of 0.90, confirming that the constructs are distinct. Additionally, the Fornell-Larcker criterion results showed that the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds its correlation with other constructs, indicating sufficient discriminant validity. The path coefficient between Strategy Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Catholic Parish was 0.712, with a T-statistic of 23.597 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong, statistically significant positive relationship. The coefficient of determination (R^2) for Performance of Catholic Parish was 0.507, meaning that 50.7% of the variance in parish performance is explained by strategy monitoring and evaluation. The effect size (f^2) for this relationship was 1.029, considered a large effect, while the predictive relevance (Q^2) was 0.505, demonstrating strong predictive capability for the model. These findings emphasize the crucial role of stakeholder engagement in improving parish performance, validating the study's hypothesis.

10. DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study offer strong empirical evidence that highlights the importance of stakeholder engagement in strategy monitoring and evaluation for improving the performance of Catholic parishes in Arusha, Tanzania. The notable positive relationship between strategy monitoring and parish performance (path coefficient = 0.712, $p < 0.000$) underscores the vital role of stakeholder participation in ensuring that parishes align their strategic objectives with community needs. This result aligns with previous studies, such as those by Kaplan and Norton (2015), who stressed the value of stakeholder involvement in monitoring and evaluating strategic outcomes to achieve long-term organizational success. By actively involving stakeholders, parishes can enhance accountability, transparency, and responsiveness, key elements for maintaining community outreach and strengthening parishioner relationships. The findings also

support the theoretical foundations of the Balanced Scorecard (BSC), which posits that a multi-dimensional approach to performance measurement, including stakeholder feedback, yields more comprehensive and effective strategic adjustments (Kaplan & Norton, 1996).

Furthermore, the study's high R^2 value (0.507) shows that over half of the variation in parish performance can be linked to the quality of stakeholder engagement during strategy monitoring and evaluation. This aligns with research by Garcia & Lee (2023) and Thompson & Zhang (2023), who found that regular and inclusive strategy reviews promote sustainable improvements in organizational outcomes, including financial sustainability and community impact. The significant effect size ($f^2 = 1.029$) further confirms that stakeholder engagement substantially influences parish performance. The predictive power ($Q^2 = 0.505$) affirms the robustness of the model, indicating that parishes involved in structured and participatory monitoring processes are better prepared to anticipate challenges and adapt to evolving community dynamics. These findings highlight the importance of parish leaders to establish participatory M&E systems as a vital element of effective strategic management, ensuring that all stakeholders are actively involved in shaping the future direction of their parishes.

11. CONCLUSIONS

This study confirms that stakeholder engagement in strategy monitoring and evaluation plays a vital role in enhancing the performance of Catholic parishes in Arusha. Active participation from various stakeholders, including clergy, parish councils, and lay faithful, significantly improves accountability, transparency, and the overall responsiveness of parishes to community needs. The strong relationship between stakeholder engagement and parish performance underscores the importance of institutionalizing participatory M&E processes to ensure sustainable growth and alignment with the parish's spiritual and community objectives.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Catholic parishes in Arusha adopt a more inclusive and structured approach to strategy monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that all relevant stakeholders are actively involved in the process. Parishes should focus on developing transparent feedback mechanisms, regularly assess their performance across multiple dimensions, and make strategic adjustments based on input from both clergy and lay members. By fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement, parishes can strengthen their community impact and better fulfil their spiritual, social, and developmental mandates.

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