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**EFFECT OF STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATION  
MANAGEMENT ON PERFORMANCE OF ARV SUPPLY  
CHAIN PROJECT BY NASCOP IN KENYA**

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Publication Date: June, 2026

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose of the Study:** To examine the effect of stakeholder communication management on the performance of the antiretroviral (ARV) supply chain project by the National AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections Control Programme (NASCOP) in Kenya.

**Statement of the Problem:** Despite substantial investments in antiretroviral supply chain projects, challenges in project performance, including inefficiencies in service delivery and supply chain operations, persist.

**Methods:** The study was guided by both descriptive and explanatory research designs. The population comprised 541 pharmacists and pharmaceutical technologists across Kenya. A sample of 229 respondents was selected using stratified proportional sampling. Primary data were collected through a structured electronic questionnaire. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

**Findings:** The study established that stakeholder communication management had a positive and statistically significant effect on the performance of the antiretroviral supply chain project. Improved communication among project stakeholders was associated with enhanced project outcomes and overall supply chain performance.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that effective stakeholder communication management is a critical determinant of the performance of antiretroviral supply chain projects.

**Recommendation:** The management of the National AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections Control Programme (NASCOP) should strengthen stakeholder communication management practices in the pharmacies and antiretroviral therapy sites it supports across Kenya. This can be achieved through regular communication, timely information sharing, stakeholder engagement forums, and feedback mechanisms.

**Keywords:** *Stakeholder communication management and performance*

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## INTRODUCTION

The performance of a project or a program can be attributed to the inputs, processes, outputs, and outcome indicators, depending on organizational structures and goals. This can be influenced by several factors, including leadership skills, decision-making capacity, monitoring and feedback systems, the project manager's competence, social conditions, and top management support (Zhu & Mostafavi, 2017). As such, stakeholder roles and engagement related to these factors need to be managed effectively through proper planning and monitoring to ensure the project's objectives are achieved.

Internationally, Standing and Cripps (2015) evaluated the critical success factors required for the successful implementation of electronic health records in Australia and Slovenia. It was noted that project implementation is influenced by a myriad of critical success factors shaped by context, environment, and changes over time. In particular, stakeholder engagement was identified as critical in e-health implementation projects. Moreover, Van Offenbeek and Vos (2016) addressed the management of project issues across varying stakeholder groups in e-health record projects in the Netherlands. It was cited that trade-offs between stakeholders, issue-stakeholder connections, effective communication, and differentiating stakeholder legitimacies are effective.

Freire, Batista, and Martinez (2016) examined project management accreditation in Brazil with reference to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK). The research focused on 10 knowledge areas in the PMBOK, including risk and stakeholder management. Notably, stakeholder identification is considered a significant factor. Furthermore, stakeholder communications planning was identified as critical, with emphasis on identifying the best communication channels for different stakeholders and determining the person responsible for disseminating information.

Stakeholder engagement regarding project performance in the health sector has also been addressed at the regional level. Odugbemi et al. (2018) investigated the role stakeholders play in malaria Rapid Diagnostics Test (RDT) projects within the private health sector in Nigeria. The research highlights key stakeholder management factors that positively influence project performance, which include effective communication. Alignment of stakeholder values and roles and effective communication are key determinants of medical projects.

Stakeholder engagement across health programs is evident not only internationally and regionally, but also nationally. In Kenya, various surveys have been conducted to assess the relationship between stakeholder communication management and project performance. Ochieng and Noor (2023) examined the determinants of health project sustainability across public hospitals in Nairobi, Kenya. Formal communication was identified as a critical factor for project performance. Along similar lines, Abuya, Maina, and Chuma (2015) argue that stakeholder communication management in health projects is critical to determining project success.

The National Aids and Sexually Transmitted Infections Control Program (NASCO) health initiatives in Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) management include the running of an uninterrupted and coherent supply of ARV drugs that should not be negotiable as the lives of patients are at risk. Stakeholders at the level of health facilities, such as the pharmacy staff, need to take responsibility for implementing a correct Antiretroviral (ARV) management process, enhancing inventory management and warehousing procedures, implementing more efficient and reliable procedures of production and transportation, enhancing supply chain coordination and general communication (Olwande & Tumuti, 2021). By so doing, ARVs can be used for patients whenever required, rendering the supply chain with minimal obstacles that can affect the efficiency of NASCO.

Communication management refers to the systematic planning, implementation, control, and monitoring of the timely exchange of information between a sender and a receiver through an appropriate channel, with expected feedback (Mihai, 2017). Men and Hung-Baesecke (2015) and Markiz, Margono, Wirawan, and Ainur (2017) supported the role of communication management in enhancing performance.

The total number of people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Kenya was estimated to be around 1.5 million in 2017. In terms of incidence, new HIV infections in all age groups decreased from 77,200 in 2010 to 52,800 in 2010. In 2017, there was a 32 percent reduction in the number of new HIV infections in Germany despite population growth (HIV estimates for HIV for 2018). Although the decrease in HIV incidence is encouraging, it is necessary to capitalize on the gains. Kenya must continue its attempts to achieve domestic and global goals, to achieve zero fresh infections, and to free future generations from AIDS.

About 28,200 people died from AIDS-related causes in 2017, compared with 53,900 in 2010, a 48% decrease in the number of AIDS-related deaths at the national level. This decline is directly due to the wider access to ART available with the introduction of free ART in 2003 and the National AIDS / STI Control Program's ability to meet HIV and AIDS treatment, coinfection, and care requirements. For this reason, health facilities providing ART services need to implement processes to ensure uninterrupted therapy, improve viral suppression, and achieve zero new infections (Olwande, 2021).

NASCOP is a health division within the preventive and promotive health services directorate of the Ministry of Health, authorized to spearhead HIV/AIDS programming in Kenya. Its core responsibilities include care and treatment, offering strategic technical support and information, formulation of treatment policies and guidelines, coordination of partners and other stakeholders, and management of the ARV supply chain countrywide (NASCOP [https://www.nascop.or.ke/?page\\_id=868](https://www.nascop.or.ke/?page_id=868), 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019). This is achieved with support and funding from the Government of Kenya, the Global Fund, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), among other donors. With an aim of managing HIV in Kenya, NASCOP, in close collaboration with Kenya Medical Supplies Agency (KEMSA), uses this funding to quantify, procure, and distribute ARVs to the 541 ART health facilities across the country, where the PLHIV receive medication for HIV care and treatment.

Despite NASCOP's many efforts to streamline ART service delivery through the implementation of a robust supply chain project, ARV shortages and crises continue to occur in health facilities across the country. Every gap in the ARV supply chain puts a newborn, infant, man, or woman somewhere in Kenya at risk of infection or probable death. As such, it is mandatory for the program to ensure maximum commodity security at the point of care if the zero-new-infections target is to be attained.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The aim of NASCOP is to manage HIV in Kenya through the distribution of ARV to ART health facilities across the country. This is made possible in part by support and funding

from the Government of Kenya, the Global Fund, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), among other donors. However, one of the challenges for NASCOP in implementing the ARV supply chain project has been ensuring that the care needs of PL HIV are completely met without jeopardizing prevention or treatment quality (Olwande, 2021). Cases of ARV stockouts, untimely deliveries, shortages, and expiries continue to be reported by healthcare workers, particularly in the pharmacy departments of ART health facilities across Kenya. Every stock out of ARV drugs contributes to the unnecessary and premature death of a child, woman or man somewhere in Kenya. Additionally, this brings about low public opinion and a negative public image of NASCOP.

Previous studies have attempted to link stakeholder communication management to project performance at both the international and local levels. Studies (Khan & Rasheed, 2015; Shams et al., 2019) were conducted in regions different from Kenya, making it impractical to adapt their findings to the local context. Furthermore, local studies, including Mutua et al. (2014), Gitau and Makokha (2025), and Mutuku and Mathooko (2014), revealed conceptual gaps because they did not focus on the concepts used in the current study. This survey thus aimed to fill the knowledge gap by investigating the impact of stakeholder communication management on the performance of NASCOP's antiretroviral therapy supply chain project in health facilities in Kenya.

### **Research Objective**

To assess the effect of stakeholder communication management on the performance of the ARV supply chain project by NASCOP in Kenya.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### **Stakeholder Theory**

Freeman (1999) introduced a theory that views stakeholders as groups or individuals who affect or are affected by organizational outcomes and the achievement of goals. Stakeholder theory states that organizational management must identify stakeholders and groups affected by an organization or project, understand their needs, and determine actions needed to meet those needs (Bonnafeous-Boucher & Rendtorff, 2016). The extraordinary responsibility to stakeholders includes the efficient use of capital, the timely

provision of accurate information, and effective management. According to Freeman's definition of stakeholders, internal and external stakeholders jointly determine the organization's strategy based on their strengths and interests.

It is noteworthy that stakeholders play an important role in strategy implementation and influence the organization's success. Béji, Yousfi, and Omri (2021) emphasize that effective stakeholder management includes adequate management of the relationship between the organization and stakeholders. In particular, it is important for organizations to focus on proper contracting, communication, motivation, and partnership management. According to Al-Nasser Mohammed & Muhammed (2017), organizations that meet stakeholders' needs and interests perform better than those that do not.

The instrumental perspective of stakeholder management posits that maintaining healthy relationships between stakeholders and the organization increases firm value, thereby positively impacting company performance (Bonnafous-Boucher & Rendtorff, 2016). Effective performance management leads to outcomes that benefit the organization's stakeholders. It is noteworthy that stakeholders have interests and expectations toward an organization or project, and their perceptions often influence behavior that can be destructive or constructive for the organization. In essence, maintaining open and effective communication with stakeholders, both directly and indirectly, shapes their perception of the company, which in turn affects their responses and behavior.

Basically, the direct consideration of stakeholder communication management in the organization meets the prerequisites for meeting stakeholder requirements. In addition, articulated internal stakeholder engagement clarifies the objectives of increasing stakeholder capacity, particularly by empowering internal stakeholders. Therefore, the stakeholder communication variable was anchored on this theory.

### **Theory of Performance**

The theory was pioneered by Harper-Scott in 2006 and highlights six basic attributes that form a framework for describing performance and its measurement. Attributes adopted in the framework are the level of knowledge, level of identity, context of performance, skill level, fixed factors and personal factors. In addition, the theory provides three axioms: immersion, performer's mindset, and reflective practice as elements that further guide the assessment of performance. The rationale of ToP is based on the premise that people can attain extraordinary accomplishments and that worthy accomplishments are achieved at

high levels of performance. This supports the study by building the Stakeholder Human resource management and Stakeholder capacity-building ideologies.

Performance, as a noun, refers to a complex set of activities that integrate knowledge and skills to produce valuable results. A performer can be a group or an individual engaging in a collaborative effort. Performance development is a process with divisions, referred to as levels of performers, that determine performers' positions within it. Obegi and Kimutai (2017) elaborate that higher performance levels can be categorized. For instance, a quality improvement shows that products or results are more effective in meeting stakeholders' expectations. Other levels of performance usable in measurement include knowledge increase, capability increase, cost decrease, and capacity increase. This builds on this study, recognizing that human resource management and capacity-building variables influence performance. Elger's six proposed measures of performance largely address the needs of most performers. Therefore, the project performance construct is anchored on this principle.

### **Empirical Review**

Mutuku and Mathooko (2014) explored the impact of communication on staff motivation. The research employed a descriptive survey approach and targeted 287 participants at Nokia Siemens Networks, including senior executives, middle-level executives, and support employees. The study found that data exchange had the greatest influence on employee motivation, followed by employee participation in the decision-making process and communication channels, whereas 7C communication channels had the least effect. The study shows that company executives include a staff of all executives so that they are experienced in business complexity. The studies reviewed focused on communication within an organization but did not assess project implementation. Instead, the study focused on employee motivation; thus, a conceptual gap exists, which the current study sought to address.

Men and Hung-Baesecke (2015) examined the influence of communication channels and characteristics, such as authenticity and transparency, on employee engagement in China. The results show that face-to-face interaction and social media are the most effective means of creating transparency, authenticity, and employee engagement in China. Organizational transparency and authenticity have a very positive effect on employee engagement. Although the reviewed research examined communication, it was conducted in China,

thereby creating a contextual gap. Projects in China and Kenya operate in different environments; therefore, it would be impractical to generalize the findings to the Kenyan context.

Markiz, Margono, Wirawan, and Ainur (2017) examined the influence of leadership style, organizational communication, and job satisfaction on employee performance at construction companies in Jakarta. Generalized Structural Component Analysis (GSCA) was used to evaluate the results of this study. This shows that organizational communication affects employee performance. It was also found that job satisfaction is an intermediate variable between organizational communication and construction performance. However, the reviewed paper reveals a contextual gap since it was conducted in Indonesia. Furthermore, there is a methodological gap, as the reviewed study employed Generalized Structured Component Analysis, whereas the current research applied linear regression to the data. The use of different analytical methods may yield different findings; hence, the need to conduct this study using linear regression analysis.

Njeri and Were (2019) examined the determinants of project efficiency among NGOs in Kenya. The key aspects included: top management support, project scheduling, project team commitment, and project culture. The survey used a descriptive design and targeted 304 respondents, including senior managers, shop managers, field workers, and accountants. The results showed that management support, project culture, project planning, and project team involvement had a significant influence on project effectiveness in NGOs in Kenya. However, the studies reviewed showed a conceptual gap in failing to focus on organizational communication as a variable. Instead, it focuses on senior management support, project culture, project planning, and project team involvement.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Both descriptive and explanatory research designs were employed. The study target population comprised 541 pharmacists and pharmaceutical technologists across Kenya. A sample size of 229 pharmacists and pharmaceutical technologists was used. Stratified proportional sampling was applied. An electronic questionnaire was used to collect primary data. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentages, means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistics, including correlation and regression, were used to test the relationship between the variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive Statistics

#### Stakeholder Communication Management

Stakeholder communication management was found to be influential in the success of the ARV supply chain project, as shown in Table 1. Scale: 1 strongly disagree; 2 Disagree; 3 Neutral; 4 Agree; 5 strongly agree.

**Table 1: Communication Management**

Statements (N=185)	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std. Dev.
The facility has a well-defined communication plan	30.3%	43.8%	7.6%	16.2%	2.2%	2.16	1.10
The facility has a reliable communication channel	9.7%	20.0%	8.6%	47.0%	14.6%	3.37	1.23
There is a reliable information system in use in the facility	9.2%	20.5%	7.6%	48.1%	14.6%	3.38	1.22
Meetings are regularly held to give departmental updates	11.9%	9.7%	0.0%	32.4%	45.9%	3.91	1.39
Facility uses various means of communication, including face-to-face and social media	6.5%	9.2%	5.9%	68.1%	10.3%	3.66	1.00

The facilities, pharmacy, and ART clinic have a communication linkage	5.9%	60.0	0.0%	18.9%	15.1%	2.77	1.26
There is reliable communication between the facility and the sub-county level	70.3	6.5%	0.5%	16.2%	6.5%	1.82	1.39
There is reliable communication between the facility and NASCOP.	10.8	9.7%	0.0%	25.9%	53.5%	4.02	1.38
<b>Aggregate Mean</b>						<b>3.3</b>	<b>1.27</b>

Respondents (79.4%) agreed that there is reliable communication between their facilities and NASCOP. Reliable communication between facilities and the sub-county was inconsistent among the majority of respondents, as indicated by a mean of 1.82 and a standard deviation of 1.27. In addition, the study disclosed that most respondents agreed that there is use of varied means of communication, like social media (3.66), regular holding of meetings (3.91), availability of a reliable system of communication in the facility (3.38), and presence of a reliable communication channel in the facility (3.37). In general, the aggregate score of 3.3, with a standard deviation of 1.27, indicated that although the respondents seemed aligned with a neutral stance, they were mainly inclined to agree that aspects of stakeholder communication management influence the performance of the ARV supply chain project by NASCOP. The findings concur with those of Markiz, Margono, Wirawan, and Ainur (2017), whose study concluded that organizational communication influences efficiency and performance.

### **ARV Supply Chain Project Performance**

Research on the ARV supply chain project performance focused on lead time, the adequacy of ARV quantities supplied, and patient satisfaction, as per the availability and adequacy

of drugs at pharmacies for dispensing. The variables studied all had a mean above 3, suggesting that the respondents believed the variables influence the ARV supply chain project's performance. Research findings in Table 2 presented respondents' opinions on statements regarding NASCOP's performance of the ARV supply chain project at their facilities. Scale: 1 strongly disagree; 2 Disagree; 3 Neutral; 4 Agree; 5 strongly agree.

**Table 2: ARV Supply Chain Project Performance**

Statements N=185						Mea	Std.
	1	2	3	4	5	n	Dev.
Drugs are delivered within a stipulated 2-week lead time	8.6%	11.9%	5.4%	48.1%	25.9%	3.7	1.2
Drugs are supplied in required quantities	3.2%	28.1%	3.8%	37.8%	27.0%	3.6	1.2
Patients receive sufficient drugs during their appointments	4.3%	10.8%	10.8%	62.7%	11.4%	3.7	1.0
Patients are satisfied with the ART services offered	11.9%	6.5%	7.6%	64.9%	9.2%	3.5	1.1
The facility has adequate stocks of ARVs as per the monthly consumption	2.7%	18.4%	2.2%	64.3%	12.4%	3.7	1.0
The ARV management process is sustainable in the facility	10.8%	15.1%	3.2%	53.0%	17.8%	3.5	1.3
<b>Aggregate mean</b>						<b>3.6</b>	<b>1.1</b>

Most of the respondents agreed that their facilities had adequate ARV stocks for monthly consumption (76.7%), that patients received sufficient drugs (74%), and that drugs were delivered within the stipulated lead time (74.1%). This implies that the respondents were comfortable with the amount of ARV stock supplied, given their patients' monthly

consumption. Additionally, the respondents agreed that their patients are satisfied with the ART services offered (mean=3.5) and that commodity management is sustainable in the health facilities (mean=3.5). The aggregate score of 3.6, with a standard deviation of 1.1, indicated that the majority of respondents agreed with the statements on project performance, with minimal deviation from the majority opinion. The project performance indicators in this study were based on elements like timeliness, as in agreement with Korrapati and Nair (2010) and Nyaga (2024), and sustainability of commodity management, as supported by Ibbs and Kwak (2000).

### Correlation Analysis

The survey also aimed to establish how the stakeholder communication management relates to the performance of the ARV supply chain project. This was executed using the Pearson correlation at 0.01 significance level. Table 3 shows the correlation of the variables.

**Table 3: Correlation of Variables**

Variable		Project Performance	Communication Management
Project Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Communication Management	Pearson Correlation	.690**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

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

The outcome indicated that communication management had a positive and significant correlation to project performance at 0.690.

### Regression Analysis

This subsection presents regression results that establish the effect of stakeholder communication management on the performance of NASCOP's ARV supply chain project in ART health facilities in Kenya. Results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Regression Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients
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		<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>1</b>	(Constant)	0.298	0.157	1.896	0.06
	Communication Management	0.370	0.085	4.332	0.000
Dependent Variable: Project Performance					

The study showed that stakeholder communication management had a positive and significant impact on project performance, with a coefficient of 0.37. The findings imply that stakeholder communication management is a significant determinant of performance, consistent with Markiz, Margono, Wirawan, and Ainur (2017), who evaluated the impact of organizational communication on employee performance in Jakarta's construction firms and concluded that it influences efficiency and performance. Therefore, improvement in stakeholder communication management is expected to enhance the ARV supply chain project performance by NASCOP.

## CONCLUSION

The study findings led to the conclusion that pharmacy stakeholder communication management had a positive and significant effect on the performance of the ARV supply chain project by NASCOP in ART health facilities in Kenya. The implication is that improving pharmacy stakeholder communication management will enhance the performance of NASCOP's ARV supply chain project in ART health facilities in Kenya.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Communication management calls for a strong, up-to-date, and reliable communication mechanism if the parties involved are to execute their duties efficiently and promptly. The study, therefore, recommended that NASCOP management should strengthen communication management. This can be enhanced by holding regular technical working group meetings to provide departmental updates, using various communication media, including social media, and establishing a reliable communication channel among facilities, sub-county, county, and national ARV supply chain stakeholders.

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