

ASSESSING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RISK MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM PROJECTS AT HIGHER EDUCATION LOANS BOARD IN KENYA

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Publication Date: July 2026

ABSTRACT

Purpose of Study: This study therefore assessed the influence of risk management on performance of projects at higher education loans board in Kenya.

Problem Statement: Despite the existence of numerous sets of principles and methodologies related to project management processes, variety of projects and tools designed to support this domain, the field continues to grapple with a significant number of project failures and serious issues. These problems often arise due to inadequacies in project management processes practices.

Methodology: The study employed a descriptive research design. The target population in this study comprised all the employees of HELB totaling to 400. The study used Taro Yamane simplified formula to arrive at a sample size of 200 respondents. Primary data was obtained through the administering of the questionnaires directly to the employees. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Result: The findings revealed that risk management explained significant proportion of the variation in project performance at the Higher Education Loans Board. The findings showed that risk management ($\beta = 0.478$, $p = 0.000$) was positively and significantly related to project performance.

Recommendation: HELB should adopt a proactive and comprehensive approach to identifying, assessing, and mitigating project risks.

Keywords: *Risk Management, Project Performance, Higher Education Loans Board (HELB), Project Management Practices, Kenya*

INTRODUCTION

The performance of projects within organizations has emerged as a pivotal area of research in recent times due to its influence on organizational success and competitiveness (Korhonen, Jääskeläinen, Laine & Saukkonen, 2023). Project performance is defined as the degree to which a project meets its objectives, adheres to budget and schedule constraints, delivers high-quality outcomes, and satisfies stakeholder expectations (Ojiako, Petro, Marshall & Williams, 2023). Project performance serves as a critical measure of the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization's project management processes and practices. According to Kehinde (2025), understanding project performance is essential for organizations as it allows them to assess their ability to deliver value through projects, allocate resources effectively, manage risks, and achieve strategic goals. Improved project performance leads to enhanced customer satisfaction, increased profitability, competitive advantage, and organizational growth. Moreover, it fosters a culture of accountability, learning, and continuous improvement within the organization, driving innovation and long-term sustainability (Korhonen *et al.*, 2023).

Organizations are in modern days carrying out their business tasks using the project-based approach (Kuskova & Kovtunov, 2020). Famoti, et al. (2025) argue that, the realization of projects requires appropriate project management processes, which is of particular importance for the success of project performance, and includes a number of areas such as teamwork and collaboration, technology and management processes, communication skills and competence, project planning etc. One of the primary areas of project management is project management processes, mainly due to the great importance that is attributed to this area of project management, and because of its impact on the success of the project, in particular management system projects carried out by dispersed teams (Aborhor & Baiden, 2021). Many organizations today place a high emphasis on the successful performance of various Projects, such as Loans Management, Human Resources, and Enterprise Resource Planning management processes, among others (Adebiyi, Adeoye, Ogundokun, Okesola & Adebiyi, 2022). The drive behind this concern stems from a multitude of factors: the need for increased efficiency, stricter regulatory compliance, improved customer service, and the desire to make data-driven decisions. When implemented successfully, these management processes automates complex processes, ensure compliance with laws, enhance the quality of customer interactions, and provide valuable insights for decision-making (Adebiyi et al., 2022). The performance of a Loans Management System (LMS) has the ability to dramatically improve the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization's lending processes (VenkateswaraRao, Vellela, Reddy, Vullam, Sk & Roja, 2023). Loans projects handles multiple tasks like loan origination, underwriting, disbursement, and collection under one umbrella. This level of automation not only speeds up the time-to-market for new loan products but also reduces manual errors. The data is stored in one central system, facilitating data analysis and decision-making (Rahimova, 2023).

The success of implementing project management processes also often translates to better customer service. Integrated tools within the system allow for quick customer profiling, easy access to loan histories, and immediate solutions for customer queries (Krauss, Streicher, Poxleitner, Altun, Mueller, An & Mueller, 2023). This smoothens the lending process from a customer's perspective and enhances their overall experience with the organization. According to Forrester (2020), customer experience leaders achieves a better performance in customer retention, repeat purchase rates, and customer lifetime value. However, the road to successful performance is not without its challenges. Data migration, employee training, and initial costs are some of the

hurdles that organizations need to overcome. Careful planning, stakeholder involvement, and choosing the right technology partner are crucial elements for the success of the loan management project. A report by Gartner (2020) revealed that, 75% of digital projects that followed best practices in planning and performance succeeded in delivering expected outcomes. Therefore, the successful performance of a Loans Management System is of immense importance for any lending organization. It brings about efficiency, ensures compliance, and enhances customer experience (Bowman & Weiss, 2023). The gains made through an effective LMS not only offer competitive advantages but also significantly impacts the bottom line.

There are various components of project management processes and key among them are teamwork and collaboration (Noël, Miranda, Cechinel, Riquelme, Primo & Munoz, 2022), technology and management processes (Amini & Jahanbakhsh Javid, 2023), communication skills (Fahmi & Ali, 2022) and project planning (Eagle, Czarnecka, Dahl & Lloyd, 2020). Teamwork and collaboration are foundational components of effective project management processes; teams that communicate well are more likely to work cohesively and reach their objectives (Campbell, Layne, Scott, & Wei, 2020). It has been shown that 49% of business professionals believe that culture and collaboration are the most critical factors contributing to project success (Slack, 2019). Collaboration tools like video conferencing and project management software are increasingly being used to foster this kind of effective communication, especially as remote work becomes more prevalent (Marion & Fixson, 2021).

In the United States, the integration of Loans Management System projects in various organizations has been significantly bolstered by strong Project management processes strategies (Li, Li, Zhu, Yao, & Casu, 2020). Many financial institutions have adopted multi-channel communication approaches involving stakeholders, technical teams, and end-users from the project initiation phase to ensure smooth performance. Financial institutions in the US have especially focused on clearly communicating the goals, benefits, and timelines associated with LMS performance to gain buy-in from all involved parties. In-house newsletters, webinars, and stakeholder meetings are some of the mediums used to maintain open lines of communication. Collaborative tools like Slack and Microsoft Teams have been instrumental in real-time problem-solving and facilitating remote teamwork. By leveraging these platforms, organizations in the US have rapidly addressed performance issues, thereby reducing delays and cost overruns.

In Ghana, the performance of loan management system projects has become a significant focus in recent years, especially in the financial sector (Yindenaba, 2023). According to a report by the Bank of Ghana (2020), technological advancements have been encouraged to boost financial inclusion and make loan processing more efficient. Various financial institutions and microfinance companies are adopting software management processes that manage everything from loan application to disbursement and repayment tracking. These management processes are designed to automate the entire lending process, reducing human error and making it easier for people to access loans. Organizations such as Fidelity Bank Ghana have introduced digital platforms to enhance their loan management process (Fidelity Bank Ghana Annual Report, 2020).

In Kenya, the performance of loan projects has gained traction as various organizations recognize the need for efficient and transparent lending processes (Cheptoo & Obare, 2023). According to a report by Central Bank of Kenya (2019), financial institutions, including commercial banks like Equity Bank and Safaricom's mobile lending service M-Shwari, have adopted advanced management processes for loan management. These management processes streamline the entire loan cycle, from application to approval, disbursement, and even repayment. Digitization in loan

management is also evident in Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations and microfinance institutions, which have integrated technology to enhance their services (Financial Access Landscape in Kenya, 2020). Key factors contributing to the success of these loan management system projects in Kenya have been identified to include user-friendly interfaces, real-time analytics, and strong cybersecurity measures. Additionally, organizations that have invested in robust cybersecurity measures have gained customer trust, further encouraging the use of these platforms (Kariuki, 2023). Regulatory support from the Central Bank of Kenya, which has provided frameworks for digital lending, has also been pivotal in legitimizing and promoting the adoption of these technologies.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) in Kenya has faced unprecedented challenges in managing and implementing loan projects efficiently, negatively affecting its ability to support students' access to higher education. Key issues include a lack of adequate resources, outdated technology, inaccuracies in data, and poor user interface design, which have collectively led to inefficiencies in processing and recovering loans. This situation is further exacerbated by the high rate of non-performing student loans, which stood at about 30% by the end of the 2022 academic year, contributing to a cumulative debt of over KES 11 billion despite annual disbursements exceeding KES 15 billion. The loan recovery rate has alarmingly decreased from 70% in 2018 to 57% in 2022, indicating significant inefficiencies in the loan management system due to outdated technology, limited data accuracy, and insufficient tracking and follow-up mechanisms (HELB, 2021; Achieng, 2019; Ministry of Education, 2020; HELB, 2022).

In an effort to enhance information sharing, business planning, and decision-making, HELB initiated the implementation of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project. However, this endeavor faced numerous challenges, including system performance issues due to the vendor's inability to deliver as contracted. Additionally, there has been a notable discrepancy between the number of students applying for loans and those successfully receiving them, with a significant number of applicants being unsuccessful over the years 2013/2014 to 2015/2016. This gap highlights the inefficiency of HELB's loan projects to meet the growing demand for financial support among students enrolled in higher education institutions, raising concerns about the effectiveness of HELB's project management processes and tools in addressing these critical issues (Achar, Chebii & Nugo, 2021; HELB Strategic Plan, 2019-2023; Kwang'a, 2020; Bomer, Liu, Irungu & Wanjiru, 2021). This study therefore sought to address this gap by studying and examining the relationship between project risk management and performance of projects at higher education loans board in Kenya.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To investigate the relationship between risk management and performance of projects at higher education loans board in Kenya.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What relationship exist between risk management and performance of projects at higher education loans board in Kenya?

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The objective scope of the study was to study and examine the relationship between project management processes and performance of projects at higher education loans board in Kenya. The study focused on project planning, communication management, stakeholder management and risk management as independent variables, and project performance as dependent variable. The study was conducted in Nairobi City County specifically at HELB head office. The time scope covered the period between May 2024 and February 2025.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on the Theory of Project Management. The Theory of Project Management was developed by Turner (1993). The Theory of Project Management states that systematic planning, effective communication, stakeholder engagement, and risk management are essential for achieving project success within defined constraints. The theory serves as a fundamental framework for understanding and guiding the practices involved in initiating, planning, executing, controlling, and closing projects (Koskela & Howell, 2002). According to Kerzner (2017), project management theory encompasses a range of methodologies, tools, and techniques designed to achieve project objectives within defined constraints. At its core, project management theory emphasizes the importance of systematic planning, clear communication, effective resource allocation, and rigorous risk management throughout the project lifecycle. In the context of the study examining project management processes and project performance at the Higher Education Loans Board in Kenya, the Theory of Project Management provides a comprehensive lens through which to analyze and evaluate the organization's approach to managing its initiatives.

One key aspect of project management theory that is relevant to the study is the emphasis on project planning. According to Pinto and Slevin (2019), effective project planning involves defining project objectives, identifying key deliverables, establishing timelines, and allocating resources to support project success. By examining the influence of project planning on project performance at the Higher Education Loans Board, researchers can assess the extent to which well-defined project plans contribute to the achievement of desired outcomes. This analysis can shed light on the importance of thorough planning processes in ensuring project alignment with organizational goals and stakeholder expectations (Shenhav & Dvir, 1996).

Moreover, stakeholder management is a key aspect of project management theory that warrants consideration in the study. According to Gray and Larson (2018), stakeholder management involves identifying, analyzing, and engaging with individuals or groups who have a vested interest in the project's outcomes. By examining the influence of stakeholder management on project performance at the Higher Education Loans Board, researchers can assess how effectively the organization engages with its diverse set of stakeholders, including students, government agencies, and funding partners. This analysis can provide insights into the impact of stakeholder involvement on project decision-making processes and overall project success.

Additionally, risk management theory offers valuable insights into the proactive identification and mitigation of risks that may impact project objectives. As highlighted by Hillson and Simon (2018), effective risk management involves identifying potential risks, assessing their likelihood and impact, developing response strategies, and monitoring risk throughout the project lifecycle. Within the context of the study, researchers can evaluate the risk management processes employed at the Higher Education Loans Board to identify and mitigate project risks. By assessing the

organization's ability to anticipate and address potential challenges, researchers can identify opportunities to strengthen risk management practices and enhance project resilience.

This theory was considered relevant to this study because it provides the foundational principles and practices of effective project management. It encompasses various methodologies such as PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge) or PRINCE2 (Projects in Controlled Environments), which provides structured approaches to project planning, execution, monitoring, and control. By applying project management theory, the researcher will be able to assess how well-established project management processes contribute to project success within the context of the Higher Education Loans Board in Kenya.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework is a diagrammatical representation that shows the relationship between the dependent and independent variables (Kothari, 2006). The conceptual framework of the study shows the relationship between project risk management and the success of performance of loans management system at Higher Education Loans Board (HELB). Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework.



Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Risk Management and Project Performance

A study by Aladağ (2023), the process of improving the performance of projects is through the management of all types and forms of risk that may be exposed effectively. This reason imputes organizations to develop risk management programs where the responsibility of risk management lies on the management by designing and implementing risk management programs within the organization and it's carried projects. Miller (2022) presented a theoretical framework for risk management in projects consists of eight components: internal environment risk, goal setting, event identification, risk assessment, risk response, control activities, information and communication, and follow-up. Previous studies have listed several definitions for risk management for example, Prabhakar, Guru and Prakash (2019) defined risk is the possibility of a deviation from the expected desired or desired outcome, and its main objective of risk management is to measure risk for monitoring and control.

PMI (2023) perceived Risk as the probability of loss or profit arising from uncertainty. According to Thomas (2018) risk is the failure of projects to achieve the desired goals and that these risks arise from several factors related to the surrounding environment. McNamara and Stark(2014) defined risk management as an attempt to identify potential threats to projects and their potential

to take appropriate action to address these threats and to verify their likelihood as consideration of these possibilities leads to action to reduce these risks. Cagliano et al. (2022) argued that there are many techniques that may be used to control risks at the lowest possible cost, including risk avoidance methods through loss prevention, control, or project rejection before the organization is exposed to further loss arising from a particular activity. Project risk management aims to implement projects according to the approved budget, on time and within the required specifications. Risk management has been closely associated with project management as one of the potential threats to the project, which may lead to disparities in achieving the pre-defined objectives and the success of the project.

Akbar and Shahid (2023) conducted a study on risk management (RM) and project success (PS) of electrical power transmission and distribution systems: the moderation role of human resource management. The study findings indicated that the traditional view of project risk management emphasizes the importance of planning as one of its main processes and linked to project activities in an integrated way throughout its life cycle. Several models and frameworks for risk management and managing project uncertainties have appeared as an attempt to better regulate and apply risk and uncertainty management. Olsson (2018) argued that risk management is critical to the success of the project as the organization is able to deal with various risks and threats. In addition, he confirmed that it is a mistake to face threats individually. Where organizations tend to launch several projects simultaneously for their development and more efficient work; new risks arise in the individual project as a result of project dependencies (PMI, 2008). The project management institute supports the broad risk management trend involving reallocation of resources between projects taking into account the additional risks and problem detection (Sanchez et al., 2009).

Thekkethil, Shukla, Beena and Chopra (2021) evaluated the association between robotic process automation in banking and finance sector for loan processing and fraud detection. It was revealed that in banking and various other organizations, RPA has helped reduce the operational costs by 30% - 70%; RPA helped reduce the workforce by employing Bot workers in charge, which later saves the operating costs and increases efficiency and accuracy of the tasks. The study found that lenders were regularly facing pressure to reduce the prices as well as to reduce and save time. Lenders were hence switching into automation for better efficiency and accuracy of service. With automation bots, lenders were able to automate loan processing by collecting customer information, loan approval, loan monitoring, and automatic loan pricing. Also, many of the lenders did some part of the process partially automated and some part manually. Banks and financial institutions were found to be switching to automation and training to stay on top of the latest security developments, which helped to keep an eye on the evolving trends in the payment space. Moreover, the study established that fraud for instance, was an ongoing threat. The study further found that banks, insurance companies, and other financial institutions employed this new age of RPA technology, which was meant to identify and counter frauds pulling data from multiple service lines instead of creating a bunch of economic macros.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design, which provided a structured framework for collecting, measuring, and analyzing data to establish the current state of project management practices at the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB). The target population comprised all 400 HELB employees, categorized into senior management, middle-level managers, and lower-level staff, as they are directly involved in project implementation. Using simple random sampling and the Taro Yamane formula at a 5% level of precision, a sample size of 200 respondents was

obtained. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires, organized into sections covering demographic information and study variables. A pilot study involving 10% of the sample (20 respondents) was conducted to refine the instrument, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (threshold ≥ 0.7) and validity ensured through expert review and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

Data collection followed formal procedures, including obtaining approval from the university, HELB management, and NACOSTI, while ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and ethical compliance. Questionnaires were self-administered to respondents. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, employing both descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation, regression analysis, and ANOVA). A multiple linear regression model was used to examine the relationship between project performance (dependent variable) and four independent variables: project planning, communication management, stakeholder management, and risk management.

To ensure the robustness of the findings, diagnostic tests were conducted, including normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests), multicollinearity (Variance Inflation Factor), and heteroscedasticity (Breusch-Pagan test). Results confirmed that the data met key statistical assumptions, with normal distribution, absence of multicollinearity, and no heteroscedasticity. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring that data was used solely for academic purposes.

The following model was used.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$$

Where: -

Y= Performance of Projects

X= Risk Management

β_0 = Constant

β_1 =Coefficient

ε = Error term

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study targeted all 400 employees of HELB, categorized as senior-level management, middle-level managers, and lower-level staff, as they are directly involved in the planning, execution, and management of projects within the organization. From this target population, a sample of 200 respondents was obtained to whom questionnaires were administered. Table 4.1 presents the response rate for the study. Out of the 200 respondents sampled, 191 successfully filled and returned the questionnaires, translating to a response rate of 95.5%.

Demographic results revealed that majority of respondents were male (60.2%) compared to females (39.8%), indicating a gender imbalance in project management roles at HELB that may limit diversity in decision-making. Most respondents were aged between 31–40 years (42.9%), followed by those below 30 years (26.2%), suggesting that the workforce is largely composed of early to mid-career professionals. This age structure supports adaptability to new project management practices and technologies, although the relatively small proportion of employees

above 50 years (8.9%) may constrain the availability of senior-level experience for strategic guidance and mentorship.

In terms of experience, most respondents had worked at HELB for 4–6 years (42.9%) or over six years (29.8%), indicating a stable and experienced workforce capable of supporting effective project execution and knowledge continuity. Nonetheless, the very low proportion of employees with less than one year of experience (2.6%) points to limited intake of new talent, which could affect innovation. Regarding education, the majority held at least a bachelor's degree (49.7%), with additional representation at diploma, master's, and PhD levels, demonstrating a well-qualified workforce likely to understand and apply project management practices effectively.

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Risk Management

The study sought to investigate the relationship between risk management and performance of projects at higher education loans board in Kenya. The respondents were asked to rate their agreement or otherwise on statements relating to risk management. The descriptive statistics results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Risk Management

statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
Our organization engages in comprehensive risk planning to identify potential challenges that could impact projects.	5.20%	12.00%	25.10%	28.80%	28.80%	3.64	1.17
We conduct detailed risk analysis to evaluate the likelihood and impact of identified risks.	8.90%	9.40%	28.80%	19.90%	33.00%	3.59	1.28
Our risk response strategies are well-defined and include measures for mitigation, acceptance, transfer, or avoidance of risks.	8.40%	13.60%	21.50%	16.80%	39.80%	3.66	1.34
Continuous monitoring and review of risks are part of our project management process.	3.70%	6.80%	13.10%	29.80%	46.60%	4.09	1.09
We involve all relevant stakeholders in the risk management process to gain diverse.	0.50%	7.30%	16.20%	45.50%	30.40%	3.98	0.9
In our organization training on risk management is provided to all project team members, ensuring that they are equipped to identify and respond to risks promptly.	0.00%	11.00%	25.70%	26.70%	36.60%	3.89	1.03
Our organization maintains a risk register to document and track all identified risks, their analysis, and responses.	6.80%	14.70%	20.40%	23.00%	35.10%	3.65	1.28
Overall Mean						3.786	

The results in Table 1 indicate that a majority (57.6%) of respondents agreed that their organization engaged in comprehensive risk planning to identify potential challenges that could impact projects (Mean = 3.64, SD = 1.17). The moderate mean suggests that while risk planning was recognized as a key component of project management, its implementation may not have been fully consistent. The standard deviation indicates some variation in responses, implying that different projects may have experienced varying levels of risk planning effectiveness. Similarly, 52.9% of respondents agreed that their organization conducted detailed risk analysis to evaluate the likelihood and impact of identified risks (Mean = 3.59, SD = 1.28). The slightly lower mean suggests that while risk

analysis was conducted, it may not have been as rigorous or systematic across all projects. The relatively higher standard deviation indicates a diverse range of experiences, suggesting that some projects had stronger risk analysis processes than others.

Regarding risk response strategies, 56.6% of respondents agreed that their organization had well-defined risk response measures, including mitigation, acceptance, transfer, or avoidance strategies (Mean = 3.66, SD = 1.34). The moderate mean reflects a generally positive perception of risk response strategies, though the higher standard deviation suggests significant variability in how these strategies were applied in different projects. In terms of continuous risk monitoring, 76.4% of respondents agreed that their organization regularly reviewed risks as part of the project management process (Mean = 4.09, SD = 1.09). The high mean suggests that ongoing risk assessment was a well-established practice, contributing to improved risk mitigation efforts. The moderate standard deviation indicates some variation in responses, possibly due to differences in project complexity and risk exposure.

Additionally, 75.9% of respondents agreed that their organization involved all relevant stakeholders in the risk management process to gain diverse insights (Mean = 3.98, SD = 0.90). The relatively high mean suggests strong stakeholder participation in risk management, ensuring comprehensive risk assessment. The relatively low standard deviation indicates a more consistent perception among respondents, reinforcing the importance of stakeholder involvement in risk planning. When asked whether risk management training was provided to project team members to equip them with skills to identify and respond to risks promptly, 63.3% of respondents agreed (Mean = 3.89, SD = 1.03). The moderate mean suggests that training was generally available but may not have been uniformly provided across all teams. The standard deviation indicates some variation in responses, implying that certain employees may not have received adequate training on risk management.

Moreover, 58.1% of respondents agreed that their organization maintained a risk register to document and track all identified risks, their analysis, and responses (Mean = 3.65, SD = 1.28). The moderate mean suggests that while risk documentation was recognized as an important practice, its effectiveness varied across different projects. The relatively higher standard deviation implies inconsistencies in the use and maintenance of risk registers. The overall mean across all statements was 3.786, reflecting a generally positive perception of risk management practices at HELB. However, the variation in standard deviations suggests that while risk identification, analysis, and monitoring were emphasized, inconsistencies existed in their application. These findings imply that enhancing risk planning, standardizing risk analysis procedures, and improving access to risk management training could further strengthen project performance at HELB.

Performance

The dependent variable was performance of projects at higher education loans board in Kenya. The respondents were asked to rate their agreement or otherwise on statements relating to performance of projects at higher education loans board in Kenya. The descriptive statistics results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Performance

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev.
Most of our projects are completed within the initially estimated budget.	2.60%	10.50%	22.60%	27.40%	36.80%	3.85	1.11
We always implement our loans management system on schedule.	7.40%	7.90%	21.60%	29.50%	33.70%	3.74	1.21
The quality of the implemented system in most cases meet the requirements outlined at the start of the project.	9.00%	5.90%	18.60%	27.70%	38.80%	3.81	1.26
Our projects achieve initial goals, including making loan processes more efficient.	9.50%	8.40%	16.80%	27.90%	37.40%	3.75	1.3
Our implemented management processes always meet or exceeds the expectations of the stakeholders involved.	5.80%	7.30%	23.00%	28.30%	35.60%	3.81	1.17
The users of the system have expressed satisfaction with its functionality and ease of use.	6.30%	10.50%	8.90%	38.70%	35.60%	3.87	1.19
Overall Mean						3.805	

The results in Table 2 indicate that a majority (64.2%) of respondents agreed that most projects at HELB were completed within the initially estimated budget (Mean = 3.85, SD = 1.11). The relatively high mean suggests that cost control measures were generally effective in project execution. However, the standard deviation indicates some variation in responses, implying that while budget adherence was common, certain projects may have experienced cost overruns. Similarly, 63.2% of respondents agreed that the organization consistently implemented the loans management system on schedule (Mean = 3.74, SD = 1.21). The moderate mean suggests that project scheduling was well-structured, though some inconsistencies may have occurred. The relatively high standard deviation indicates variability in responses, suggesting that not all projects adhered strictly to planned timelines.

Regarding project quality, 66.5% of respondents agreed that the quality of the implemented system met the requirements outlined at the start of the project (Mean = 3.81, SD = 1.26). The relatively high mean indicates that HELB prioritized quality assurance in project execution. However, the higher standard deviation suggests that experiences varied, possibly due to differences in project complexity and execution efficiency. In terms of goal achievement, 65.3% of respondents agreed that projects achieved their initial objectives, including improving the efficiency of loan processes (Mean = 3.75, SD = 1.30). The moderate mean reflects a generally positive perception of goal attainment, though the relatively high standard deviation suggests inconsistencies in project outcomes, indicating that some projects may not have fully met their intended objectives.

Additionally, 63.9% of respondents agreed that implemented management processes met or exceeded stakeholder expectations (Mean = 3.81, SD = 1.17). The high mean suggests that

stakeholder satisfaction was a key consideration in project management. However, the moderate standard deviation indicates some variation in perceptions, implying that certain stakeholders may not have been fully satisfied with all projects. When asked whether system users expressed satisfaction with the functionality and ease of use of implemented systems, 74.3% of respondents agreed (Mean = 3.87, SD = 1.19). The relatively high mean suggests that system usability and functionality were generally well received. However, the standard deviation indicates some differences in experiences, suggesting that while many users were satisfied, some encountered usability challenges.

Correlation Analysis Results

Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the association between risk management and project performance. The results of the correlation analysis for this study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Matrix

		Project Performance	Risk Management
Project Performance	Pearson Correlation	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Risk Management	Pearson Correlation	.761**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	

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

Correlation results revealed strong positive and significant association between risk management and project performance ($r = 0.761$, $p < 0.01$) at the 1% level of significance. This points to the fact that effective risk management practices are strongly linked to project success at HELB. These findings are consistent with the conclusions of Omondi and Wanjiru (2023), who noted that proactive risk identification, mitigation strategies, and contingency planning significantly enhance project resilience, reducing the likelihood of project failures and cost overruns.

Regression Analysis Results

Regression analysis is a set of statistical methods used to estimate relationships between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. Regression analysis was conducted to establish the statistical significance and relationship between risk management and project performance at the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB) in Kenya. Regression results revealed that risk management explained significant proportion of the variation in project performance at the Higher Education Loans Board. The ANOVA results confirmed the model's statistical significance ($F = 92.165$, $p = 0.000$). Table 4 presents the regression coefficient results.

Table 4: Multiple Regression of Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	0.319	0.197	1.621	0.107
	Risk Management	0.478	0.057	0.491	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Project Performance

The regression model therefore became;

$$Y = 0.319 + 0.478X$$

Where:

Y = Project Performance

X = Risk Management

The regression of coefficients results in Table 4 indicate that risk management had a positive and significant influence on project performance ($\beta = 0.478$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The results show that implementing robust risk management practices is critical for enhancing project performance, likely by mitigating potential project risks and ensuring smooth execution. These findings imply that while project planning contributes to project performance, it is not a strong predictor compared to other project management processes. Instead, organizations such as HELB should prioritize strengthening communication management, stakeholder management, and risk management to enhance project success. These results are consistent with the findings of Kimani and Otieno (2022), who emphasized the importance of structured risk and stakeholder management in driving successful project implementation in public institutions.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, risk management has the most significant impact on project performance, emphasizing its crucial role in mitigating uncertainties and ensuring smooth project execution. A proactive risk management framework helps identify, assess, and address potential challenges before they escalate, reducing disruptions and improving overall project stability. The findings highlight that organizations with strong risk management strategies experience better project outcomes due to enhanced preparedness and resilience. HELB should continue to invest in comprehensive risk assessment methodologies, continuous monitoring, and contingency planning to strengthen its risk management capacity. By embedding risk management into all project phases, organizations can minimize vulnerabilities and improve the overall success rate of their projects.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the conclusions, the study recommends that HELB should adopt a proactive and comprehensive approach to identifying, assessing, and mitigating project risks. HELB should integrate risk assessment frameworks at the early stages of project planning and continuously monitor risks throughout project implementation. Institutions should develop contingency plans and response strategies that enable project teams to manage uncertainties effectively. Additionally, training programs on risk management should be introduced to equip project managers with the necessary skills to anticipate, evaluate, and address risks. By embedding risk management into project execution, organizations can enhance resilience, reduce project disruptions, and improve overall performance.

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