

**EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND  
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION ON SUSTAINABILITY OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT IN MANDERA  
MUNICIPALITY GREENING PROJECT, IN KENYA**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Purpose of the Study:** The study aims to examine how organizational leadership and community involvement affect the sustainability of the Mandera Municipality Greening project implemented by the County Government of Mandera.

**Research Methodology:** The study employed a descriptive research design targeting 165 employees from Mandera County's environment department, from which a sample of 116 respondents was drawn. The sampling process combined stratified, purposive, and simple random sampling methods. Data collection involved observation of project managers and team members, with primary data obtained through researcher-administered questionnaires. Content validity was ensured through departmental expert review, while internal consistency was measured using the Cronbach alpha reliability index.

**Findings of the Study:** The research revealed that most participants agreed that organizational leadership significantly impacts the sustainability of environmental projects in Mandera County. Similarly, community involvement emerged as a crucial factor affecting project sustainability. The study established a strong positive correlation between both organizational leadership and community involvement with the sustainability of environmental projects in the region.

**Conclusion:** Based on the research findings, it is evident that both organizational leadership and community involvement are essential components for ensuring the sustainability of environmental projects in Mandera County.

**Recommendations:** County governments should prioritize strengthening their organizational leadership structures while ensuring active community participation throughout project implementation.

**Keywords:** *Organizational Leadership, Community Participation, Sustainability, Environmental Project, Mandera Municipality Greening Project*

## INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has emerged as a critical concept in addressing contemporary challenges, particularly in environmental management projects. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines sustainability as everything essential for human survival and well-being that depends on the natural environment (Ajilian, 2014). This concept has become increasingly important in project management, where sustainability aims to ensure long-term success throughout a project's lifecycle while fostering innovation, efficiency, and positive outcomes in businesses (Capozucca & Sarni, 2012). The focus on project sustainability became prominent in the early 1980s, driven by pressure to reduce foreign aid programs, with post-evaluations by USAID and the World Bank revealing low sustainability levels in many development projects post-completion (Sovacool et al., 2021).

Environmental management projects have gained significant attention globally, with varying success rates across different regions. In Europe, countries like Sweden, Canada, and Australia have demonstrated long-term success in over 60% of their environmental projects due to clear regulations and prioritization of environmental issues (Van der Blik et al., 2014). However, the situation differs in Sub-Saharan Africa, where less than 40% of environmental projects reach completion (Hak & Dahl, 2017). These disparities highlight the importance of effective leadership and community participation, particularly in developing countries where active involvement in decision-making, project preparation, tracking, and evaluation is often lacking (Opoku et al., 2019).

The Mandera Municipality afforestation program serves as a notable example of environmental management initiatives in Kenya. This community-driven project addresses deforestation and ecosystem recovery in Mandera County's drylands, taking a holistic approach to both environmental and socioeconomic challenges (UNEP, 2020). The project involves over 1,300 participants, primarily women and youth, from local communities, schools, and government agencies, encouraging community ownership through tree adoption and care programs (Mandera County Government, 2020). Participants receive monthly stipends to improve their families' economic well-being, contributing to both environmental conservation and community empowerment (FAO, 2018).

Kenya's project sustainability challenges are evident in its performance ratings, scoring 49% from 1999 to 2002, significantly lower than neighboring Uganda (59.5%) and Tanzania (70.1%) (Wurzer & Reiner, 2018). The country's projects often suffer from insufficient

financial resources and lack a proper government framework for sustainable development. Research indicates that project sustainability is enhanced through inclusiveness and active involvement of all stakeholders, which fosters pride and ownership, ensuring the venture's longevity for future generations (Lockwood, 2014). This understanding has led to a shift from centrally controlled approaches to those driven by specific community needs, emphasizing the importance of comprehensive research on project sustainability factors in regions like Mandera County.

Leadership has emerged as a crucial factor in achieving project sustainability, particularly in environmental management initiatives. According to Althnayan et al. (2022), effective leadership involves organizing, motivating, and assigning tasks to achieve group goals, while navigating the complex interplay of environmental, social, and financial priorities. Research on sustainability and leadership has increased significantly over the past three decades, exploring the interconnected behaviors, practices, and skills that contribute to sustainable outcomes (Hallinger & Suriuankietkaew, 2018). Community participation complements leadership by empowering citizens to take an active role in planning and implementing environmental management strategies, with studies showing that fostering self-reliance contributes to the long-term success of development initiatives (Konrad et al., 2020).

The Kenya Vision 2030 plan exemplifies the country's commitment to sustainable development, aiming to transform Kenya into a newly industrialized, middle-income country providing high-quality life for all citizens in a clean and secure environment. However, climate change presents significant challenges to these aspirations, with recent studies indicating that cement production and fossil fuel use have led to a nearly 5% increase in global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Jiang et al., 2022). This environmental crisis underscores the urgent need for sustainable project management, particularly in developing countries where resources are limited and the impacts of climate change are often most severe. International aid has played a crucial role in supporting communities and governments in making their development projects more sustainable, with donor agencies increasingly focused on the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of these initiatives (Homedes, 2011; Hak & Dahl, 2017).

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Despite substantial government investment in environmental projects targeting public awareness, environmental progress, poverty reduction, and equality (Auya & Oino, 2013), the long-term viability of these initiatives remained a significant concern among researchers.

Studies conducted across various Kenyan regions, including Rwanda, Murang'a, Garissa, Nairobi, Bungoma, Kisii, Pokot, and Machakos, revealed contextual and geographic limitations that required further investigation. Research indicated that over 37% of environmental management projects remained incomplete, while approximately 30% faced complete abandonment due to sustainability issues (Spooner & Small, 2018). While multiple factors contributed to these challenges, there had been limited research documenting these factors' specific relationship to project sustainability. This study addressed both theoretical and methodological gaps by not only capturing participant perspectives but also conducting correlation analyses to determine how selected variables influenced project outcomes.

Previous research by Munyao (2018), Abdi & Kimutai (2018), Ndedi (2017), and Cavens et al. (2017) had examined factors affecting environmental management project sustainability, but these studies were either conducted outside Kenya or in counties other than Mandera. Many of these studies lacked robust theoretical foundations or focused primarily on factors such as finances, technical expertise, project design, and time constraints, while overlooking crucial elements like community involvement, leadership, resource mobilization, and monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, studies within Kenya often concentrated on sectors outside the environmental domain. To address these gaps, the current study examined the influence of organizational leadership, community engagement, resource capacity mobilization, and monitoring and evaluation on environmental management projects in Mandera County, Kenya.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The study sought to find out and evaluate the determinants of sustainability of government funded environmental projects, a case study of Mandera Municipality Greening project.

### **Specific Objectives**

- i. To find out the impact of organizational leadership on the sustainability of environmental projects in the county government of Mandera.
- ii. To evaluate the impact of community participation on the sustainability of environmental projects in the county government of Mandera.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- i. To what extent does Organizational leadership impact the sustainability of environmental projects in the county government of Mandera?

- ii. How does Community participation impact the sustainability of environmental projects in the county government of Mandera?

## **THEORITICAL REVIEW**

The research made use of insights provided by stakeholder theory. The stakeholder theory forms the anchor theory of this study. These frameworks functioned as the study's guiding principles, and they were further discussed in the parts that follow.

### **Stakeholder Theory**

Freeman (1984) stakeholder theory proposes a novel perspective on business entities. He suggests that companies should not be seen as simply earnings camps but as complex social systems that involve various groups with distinct interests. Each of these groups, acts as a stakeholder in the company's success. Shareholders, for instance, have a vested interest in financial returns, while employees seek job security and chances to grow. Customers, conversely, prioritize quality products and services. Freeman posits that managers occupy a crucial role within this dynamic. They act as intermediaries while being keen on the interests of the shareholders and their ability to participate in making decisions. However, their responsibility extends beyond simply appeasing financial backers As Freeman states, effective managers should support the requirements of other stakeholder groups, including employees and customers. By fostering a balanced and inclusive approach, managers can cultivate a sustainable and prosperous environment for the company, ultimately guaranteeing the well-being of both the organization itself and the diverse network of individuals who depend upon it.

Both Freeman (1984) and the PMI Standards Committee (2004) highlight the importance of considering those who are affected by or can influence an organization's initiatives. Freeman focuses on stakeholders in general, emphasizing their impact on an organization's overall health. The PMI Standards Committee narrows this down to project stakeholders, whose involvement is essential for project success. Both perspectives acknowledge that ignoring stakeholder concerns can lead to failure, and that active participation from stakeholders is key to achieving goals. This theory says it's vital to find and consider all interested parties (stakeholders) from the very beginning of a project, before figuring out how to communicate with them. That is because everyone involved have their own ideas and goals, which could lead to clashes and make things more complicated. To avoid this, the theory suggests having a clear

system where everyone can work together towards the project's success. The direct involvement of all the community and the fact that their needs and opinion are considered at the time when the project is being implemented contributes to the project's success in the long run.

This theory fits well with the current study that focuses on project-management and seeks to evaluate the role of stakeholder engagement. The success of a project depends on involving project participants at all stages, especially during planning and implementation stages. Involving the stakeholders in the case development discussion of the program's strategy and goals can help increase the chances of success. Stakeholder information is a valuable resource for achieving efficiency, profitability, and high-quality results. Managing within stakeholder theory involves minimizing damage and maximizing benefits for each stakeholder group. This creative process is key to building successful organizations. The stakeholder theory however has received a lot of criticisms on its effectiveness in addressing the needs of all the stakeholders in a project or an organization. They have argued that the theory cannot balance the needs and interests of diverse groups, as one or more groups may take a backseat or hold more power, leading to tension and discord in the process. The understanding of each stakeholders' needs is therefore very important in ensuring that each party plays their role effectively.

## **EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

### **Organizational Leadership and Sustainability of Environmental Projects**

Ahsan and Yassin,2016, in their research, investigated in detail how project leadership and teamwork shape the sustainable success of any project. To investigate this, they distributed surveys to employees within manufacturing companies. The information gathered through these surveys was then meticulously examined using a variety of statistical methods, including descriptive statistics, a technique known as Pearson product-moment correlation, and regression analysis. Their analysis uncovered a clear connection: effective project leadership went hand-in-hand with a project's long-term viability. Likewise, the study found a positive association between strong collaboration among team members and the project's ability to be sustained over time.

In a study, Tabassi et al. (2016) investigated how project managers leading sustainable construction projects influence the project's success. They surveyed 70 project managers

working on environmentally friendly buildings. Their findings suggest that project managers' ability to adapt their leadership styles (referred to as "second-order leadership" in the study) is a major factor influencing the achievement of sustainability goals. The study also suggests that a project manager's strong ethical principles are even more important for the construction project to generally succeed. While the original statement uses the term academic integrity, this likely refers to a project manager's commitment to ethical conduct in general.

Mary (2018) examined the influence of project leadership on the effectiveness of programs run by Compassion International in Kitui County, Kenya. The research design relied on gathering data through surveys and focused on capturing a representative sample of the population involved. Questionnaires were sent electronically to participants, and the collected data underwent statistical analysis to uncover underlying patterns and trends. Research indicates that effective leadership is a key factor in achieving successful project outcomes. Furthermore, the study found that strong leadership skills, experience in fostering teamwork, the ability to influence others, and various leadership approaches were all linked to successful project results.

Chofreh et al. (2019) argue that incorporating sustainability into project management can help organizations gain a competitive advantage. They further argue that many organizations fail to manage projects due to conventional project management. Sustainable project management involves planning, monitoring, and controlling project delivery processes considering environmental, economic, and social aspects of a project's life cycle. The concept of sustainability is based on a balance between social equality, environmental protection, and economic prosperity. However, environmental and social dimensions are often neglected in business strategies. The study also noted that project management philosophy is limited to profit without considering social and environmental aspects. Sustainable project management encourages organizations to incorporate sustainability into their business initiatives and contribute to sustainable development by minimizing harmful influences and maximizing positive ones.

### **Community Participation and the viability and sustainability of environmental projects**

Research by Abdullahi, Ahmed and Sale (2014) examined the relationship between community involvement and the sustainability of environmental and empowerment projects in rural Nigeria's Bauchi state through focus group discussions with project participants, leaders, consultants, and community members. Their findings revealed that community participation

was often limited to providing information, consultation, and plan approval, with locals having minimal influence in key decision-making, project planning, monitoring, and evaluation. Similarly, Saboke and Melchizedek (2017) investigated community inclusion in clean water projects within Rwanda's Ruhango District, utilizing surveys and in-depth interviews with 100 household heads and 20 key water sector figures. Their research conclusively demonstrated that involving various community groups significantly enhanced the long-term viability of these projects.

Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti (2021) highlighted the intricate relationship between social capital and governance effectiveness, finding that increased social capital led to better governance outcomes. Their study of Italian regions revealed that vibrant civic engagement and dense associations resulted in more successful governance in the North, though they noted that the causal relationship between governance and social capital was complex, as institutional design of governance shaped social capital development. They conceptualized social capital as a process where society members enhanced their capabilities to mobilize and manage resources for sustainable improvements in quality of life, influenced by factors such as grants, service-level agreements, and social inclusion policies.

In the Kenyan context, Alelah and Mueke (2017) investigated community involvement in water and sanitation resource management in Rhonda Slum, Nakuru County, employing cluster sampling and both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis. Their research established a positive correlation between local participation and the long-term effectiveness of WASH programs. This finding was further supported by Githinji's (2013) study in Mutomo District, Kitui County, which identified controllers and implementers, geographical factors, and community involvement as the most significant factors affecting the sustainability of Community Based Projects (CBPs).

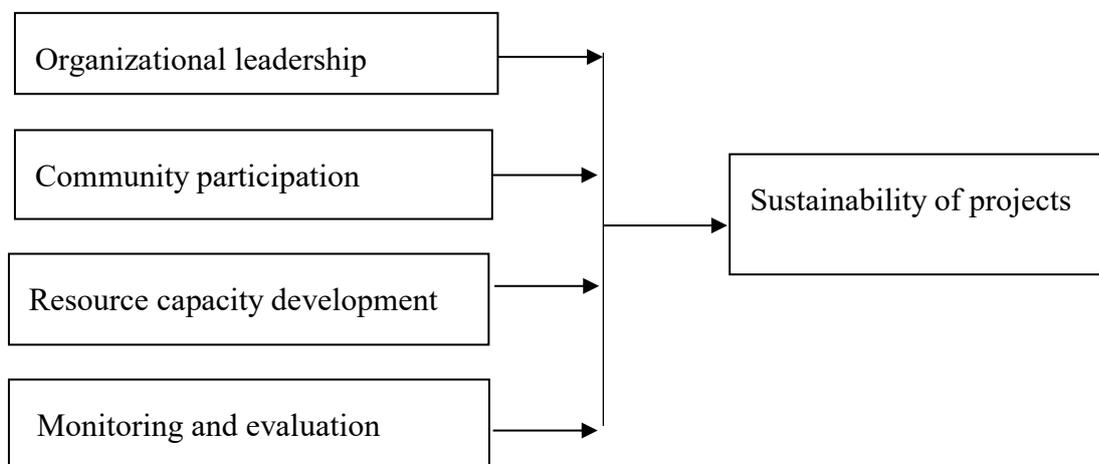
Katz and Sara (2017) found that community-based approaches significantly enhanced sustainability by enabling communities to access information, control funds, build capacity, and participate in quality projects. This was reinforced by Mrangu's (2018) study in Bagamoyo district, Tanzania, which revealed that project failures were often attributed to ineffective community participation, poor monitoring, and mismanagement of funds. The research emphasized that encouraging active participation at all levels of project design and implementation was essential for sustaining programs, with locally initiated programs showing greater potential for sustainability. Success factors included comprehensive planning, effective

program operations, proper budget allocation, strong public relations, human commitment, teamwork, and strategic location selection.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### Independent Variable

### Dependent Variable



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design to explore participants' thoughts, opinions, and feelings, as emphasized by Alexandrie (2017) for its effectiveness in describing behaviors, attitudes, and values. The target population comprised 645 individuals, including 165 Mandera County government employees and 480 environmental management group members. Using Krejcie and Morgan's formula, a sample of 116 participants was selected through random and purposive sampling methods, aligning with Mugenda and Mugenda's (2012) recommendation of using 10-30% of the population. Data collection utilized standardized questionnaires with a 5-point Likert scale, which Chaudhry (2015) noted as effective for gathering in-depth answers and enabling critical thinking. A pilot study involving twelve participants validated the research instruments, with content validity ensured and reliability confirmed through Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.7. Data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistics using Excel and SPSS version 26, with the study utilizing a multiple regression model:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \epsilon,$$

where Y represented sustainability of environmental projects,

X<sub>1</sub> denoted organizational leadership,

$X_2$  indicated community participation,

$\beta_0$  was the constant term,  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$ ,  $\beta_3$ , and  $\beta_4$  were beta coefficients and  $\varepsilon$  represented the error term. The analysis results were presented using charts and tables to ensure comprehensive understanding of the findings.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The study achieved a high response rate of 89.2% (103 out of 116 surveys), which exceeded the 70% threshold considered adequate for data analysis according to Mugenda (2012) and Babbie (2015). The demographic analysis revealed that male respondents constituted 60.2% (62) of the participants, while females represented 39.8% (41), with the small gender margin showing no significant differences in responses. Age distribution indicated that the majority of respondents (38.8%) fell within the 46-55 years age bracket, followed by 32.0% aged 36-45 years, 15.5% aged 26-35 years, and 13.6% aged over 55 years, suggesting that most participants were mature adults with substantial experience in environmental activities. Educational qualifications were evenly distributed among diploma holders (29.1%), bachelor's degree holders (29.1%), and certificate holders (26.2%), indicating that respondents possessed adequate knowledge and skills related to environmental management programs. In terms of working experience, 35.0% of participants had worked at the program for over 8 years, 33.0% for 3-5 years, 19.4% for 6-8 years, and 12.6% for 2 years or less, demonstrating that the majority of respondents had extensive experience with environmental projects in Mandera County, thereby enhancing the credibility of their perspectives on project execution trends.

## **CORRELATION ANALYSIS**

The study utilized correlation coefficients, as suggested by Cohen et al, (2013), to determine the strength of the correlation between variables. A p-value below 0.05 indicated a significant relationship, while a r value below 0.5 was weak and above 0.5 was considered strong. The study reveals that four independent variables, organizational leadership, Community participation, are linearly correlated with the sustainability of environmental projects in Mandera county. This is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Correlations Analysis Between Organizational Leadership and Sustainability

		Organizational Leadership	Community Participation	Sustainability
Organizational leadership	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	103		
Community participation	Pearson Correlation	.474**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	103	103	
Sustainability	Pearson Correlation	.480**	.666**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	103	103	103

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

Organizational leadership has a weak but significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.480$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) with project sustainability, suggesting that the right leadership style can improve project sustainability. Therefore, sustainable environmental projects should employ appropriate leadership styles. This implies that, the environmental projects that needs to be sustainable in their activities should employ the right organizational leadership styles. The study reveals a strong positive correlation ( $r = .666^{**}$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) between community participation and project sustainability, indicating that involving community members in projects is vital for their understanding and sustainability.

### MULTIPLE REGRESSION RESULTS

Multiple regression is a statistical method used to analyze the connection between variables and their impact on project sustainability. This study aimed to determine if organizational leadership and community participation, significantly affect the sustainability of government-funded projects. The results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Model Summary for the Relationship Between Organizational Leadership, Community Participation and Sustainability

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
1	.692 <sup>a</sup>	.478	.468

The study reveals a strong correlation between strong leadership, community involvement and the sustainability of environmental projects, suggesting that when these factors are combined,

project sustainability can improve by 54.4% at the county level. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** ANOVA<sup>a</sup> Between Organizational Leadership, Community Participation and Sustainability

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	49.317	2	24.658	45.840	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	53.792	100	.538		
	Total	103.109	102			

Further, analysis of variance was computed to test the suitability of the regression model in predicting the relationship between the variables. The study demonstrates that the model accurately predicts the relationship between organizational leadership and community participation and sustainability of environmental projects in Mandera county, with a calculated  $F_{(2,100)} = 29.27$  greater than the critical F-value. ( $F_{1,100} = 3.92$ ). The results are presented on Table 4.

**Table 4:** Regression Coefficients<sup>a</sup> of the Relationship Between the Variables

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	S. E	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.818	.357		2.291	.024
	Organizational Leadership	.260	.101	.212	2.583	.011
	Community Participation	.582	.084	.566	6.895	.000

Regression coefficients were calculated and results are illustrated in table 19, the purpose was to develop the model for predicting the changes in sustainability given the beta values of the variables. Organizational leadership, Community involvement and sustainability of environmental projects. The research reveals that organizational leadership significantly impacts the sustainability of environmental projects in Mandera county. Every increase in leadership by one unit translates into a 26 % change in the levels of sustainability of a project. Conversely, a unit change in community involvement results in a 58.2% change in project sustainability. Therefore, improvement of the community involvement might help to promote sustainability of the projects in the environment. This means that by improving community

involvement in the projects could improve project sustainability. The findings show that the four determinants are important in raising the level of project sustainability. This study confirms the proposition of Kalisa and Gathiru (2023) and Isaboke and Melchizedek (2017) who pointed out that leadership, resource and monitoring and evaluation have significant correlation with project sustainability.

The multiple linear regression can be modeled as follows for all the four variables.

$$Y = 0.818 + .260X_1 + .582X_2$$

Y= sustainability;  $X_1$ = organizational leadership,  $X_2$ = community participation

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research findings, this study concluded that the sustainability of the Mandera Municipality greening project was significantly influenced by the interplay of organizational leadership and community engagement. The evidence demonstrated that efficient leadership played a pivotal role in project sustainability, with strong organizational direction creating a foundation for successful project implementation and long-term viability. More importantly, the research established that community engagement served as a crucial catalyst for project success, with direct community participation substantially increasing the likelihood of project sustainability.

The findings underscored that when communities were actively involved in project planning, implementation, and monitoring, their sense of ownership and commitment to the project's success increased markedly. This symbiotic relationship between strong organizational leadership and meaningful community participation emerged as a fundamental framework for sustainable environmental projects in Mandera County, offering valuable insights for government agencies, businesses, and other stakeholders involved in environmental conservation initiatives. The study's conclusions provide a clear roadmap for future environmental projects, emphasizing that success and sustainability are most effectively achieved through the combination of competent leadership structures and robust community involvement, rather than through isolated interventions or top-down management approaches.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The results have indicated that projects that attain sustainability should have an effective organizational leadership and ensure that the community is involved at all stages that will ensure that the project has effective objectives and goals to reach

sustainability. The results have also shown that sustainability require timely planning and effective management. On the basis of these results the following commendations are made.

- ii. The researcher suggests that the county government of Mandera should advocate for effective organizational leadership in all the projects to ensure that there the required results. This can be done through making of a policy by the county government demanding for the practice of the same by the projects.
- iii. The project team should consider community participation through ensuring that all the projects they undertake are locally managed. This can be done through encouraging meetings on the site only and educating the beneficiaries on the management.

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