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Influence of Project Champions on Sustainability of Early Childhood Development Projects: Case of Baby-Friendly Community Initiative in Dagoretti North Constituency Nairobi County Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to find out the influence of project champions on the sustainability of Early Childhood Development (ECD) projects, a case of the Baby-Friendly Community Initiative (BFCI) project in Dagoretti North Constituency Nairobi County, Kenya. The study was guided by the system approach theory. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population was made up of 507 BFCI project stakeholders while the sample size was 211. The researchers used self-administered questionnaires to collect quantitative data while an interview guide was used to collect qualitative data in the research. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Data collected from the study was analyzed with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 23.0). Triangulated qualitative data was analyzed through themes and content analysis. The study found that project champions determine the sustainability of ECD projects with a high correlation value. Indicators like commitment, confidence level, influence on the community, and the connections a project champion has in the community play a significant role in the sustainability of projects. In-depth discussions with the key informants indicated the importance of project champions. Regression analysis indicated that project champions were significant in predicting the sustainability of ECD Projects. The study recommends that project champions should be appreciated through tokens to motivate them to champion community projects and be involved in planning projects to ensure to take into account the cultural contexts.

Keywords: Project champions, early childhood development projects, project sustainability

Introduction

Stakeholders around the world have raised concerns regarding the sustainability of projects, especially when the donors and government exit and cease to support the projects. Sustainable projects may be seen as those projects whose actions enable implementers to meet current needs without interfering with the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Silvius & Schipper, 2019). The third goal of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims at ensuring healthy lives and encouraging well-being for all. This precise goal by the UN recognizes the critical role good health has to play in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030. It is pertinent to note that this goal is directly linked to other goals like poverty obliteration, ending of hunger and nutrition improvement (Agbedahin, 2019).

In most communities, (Yamada, 2017), noted that for projects to get the support of the communities they were being implemented in, it was important to form links with the key people in the community who could be seen as project champions. Melhado, (2003) defined a project champion as a person within the community where the project is being implemented who uses influence enterprisingly to advocate for project success. (Yamada, 2017), noted that the champions were key to ensuring that projects were accepted and supported in the communities they were being implemented in. Lack of support could easily sabotage the success of the projects. A study conducted on the role of community participation in the sustainability of health projects in Ghana found that as much as the community had a role in sustaining projects, project champions were an emerging issue which played a huge role in how the said communities were able to participate in the projects. As much as many project leaders and even stakeholders have neglected to recognize the role championing has on sustainability, it is high time that champions are actively involved in implementing projects.

In Kenya, notwithstanding the high number of government, non-governmental, and faith-based projects dealing directly with children, many still face the utmost deprivation. This includes

lack of nutrition, lack of immunization, various forms of child abuse, natural calamities, and Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) issues (Fotso, Holding, & Ezeh, 2009). It is noted that 44 out of 1000 and 74 out of 1000 children die before their first and fifth birthday respectively in Kenya. Pneumonia, malaria, and diarrhea are considered to account for high numbers of these deaths (Gewa, Oguttu, & Yandell, 2011). These numbers point to low sustainability rates of projects created to tackle these challenges. There is a need for the government and other stakeholders in the field of ECD to earnestly increase and or develop sustainable projects that can help salvage the situation of the Kenyan child and in the process achieve the SDGs. For this to succeed, it is paramount to establish the aspects that determine the sustainability of projects explicitly in ECD where the number of children who need support has been and is on an upward spiral.

Statement of the Problem

Sustainability has over time evolved from one domain of environmental space to other spheres like the social and economic space. (Block, Gremmen, & Wesselink, 2018), aver that the challenge of attaining project sustainability can be equated to a wicked problem. This they attribute to the nature of sustainability as a multifaceted concept whose attainability encounters myriad challenges. ranging from inadequate knowledge, a high number of stakeholders involved, and enormous resources needed, to interconnectedness of variables influencing sustainability. These gaps that have been highlighted imply that many projects have failed the sustainability test. Projects in the ECD space are no different. To highlight the magnitude of this problem, in Malawi, the World Bank conducted a mapping exercise of 690 community-based childhood centers in four districts and found that more than half had closed (Neuman, McConnell, & Kholowa, 2019). Meaning that the ECD projects had failed the sustainability test. The ripple effect of this was that more than 500,000 children who depended on these centers for nutrition, early stimulation, learning, and nurturing care, had to drop out as indicated by the mapping exercise.

The challenge of unsustainable projects in the ECD circle is a concern of 8 out of 10 donor and government-funded projects irrespective of the setting, target population or the indicators to be attained (Lipman, 2020) This can be attributed to the fact that different dynamics interplay during project implementation to determine sustainability. Hence, the scientific community is tasked with playing a role through research in engaging in the conversation of sustainable development. This can assist us to understand different determinants of sustainability of projects in different settings and specific projects in the ECD sector. This also goes a long way in improving the body of knowledge on the sustainability of ECD projects since a review of the literature has revealed a gap in the determinants of sustainability of ECD projects. It is against the backdrop that this study aimed to find out the effect of project championship on sustainability of early childhood development projects with a focus on the baby-friendly community initiative project in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya.

Theoretical Foundation of the Study

System Approach Theory

Projects can be equated to open systems where different components and stakeholders involved in the project must interrelate for projects to be sustainable. These interrelations are best illustrated using the system approach theory. According to (Voinov & Farley, 2007), the system theory illuminates the dynamic connections and inter-connectedness between different aspects

and team members. According to this theory, systems in the project environment are formed from the frequent interactions and relationships created during project implementation. The system approach looks at sustainable development as the equilibrium created when the three main systems environmental, economic, and social in the project are in balance. The system theory also recognizes the fact that projects are dependent on the environment that they operate in for them to be sustainable. Most project resources, a workforce that implements projects, champions who push the agenda of the projects in the communities, and project leaders who help to customize projects to local contexts and adapt to environmental changes in the project can all be sourced from the immediate environment of the project (Popa, Guillermin, & Dedeurwaerdere, 2020). Porter & Cordoba (2008), commenting on how the system approach can be used to assess project sustainability state that "the approach is an external standard that measures effectiveness based on long-term growth or sustainability."

The study was anchored on the system theory in the sense that for ECD projects to be sustainable, all the dynamics, stakeholders, resources, and interactions must be in a balanced state for the projects to be sustainable. Considering the independent variable in the study, project champions are instrumental in ensuring that the project is acceptable in the community and gains support for sustainability. Since the ultimate aim for sustainable development is to find an equipoise between variables, all the stakeholders must work together in the ECD projects to ensure project sustainability.

Project Champions and Sustainability of Early Childhood Development Projects

Project champions are the invisible forces that make crucial contributions to the implementation of projects in an informal manner. Project champions selflessly promote the agenda of the project at every stage of implementation by pooling resources, obtaining the support of the community, and ensuring that the goals of the project are achieved. Over the years, (Robinson & Brownett, 2018), noted that community-focused projects have opted for the use of project champions in place of officially acquired human resources to drive the agenda of these projects. This they point out is brought about by the desire of people in the host communities to play a part in bringing about change, particularly in projects that target caregivers and children.

Over time, researchers have endeavoured to solve the puzzle concerning the kind of characteristics that would make one qualify to be referred to as a project champion. Markham &Aiman-Smith (2001) posit that the personality of project champions speaks for itself since these are people who are well known in communities where projects are being implemented. It has been observed that project champions are innovative and can use compelling language to communicate project objectives. This enables them to gain confidence from other community members who in turn can accept the project and support its implementation. Oftentimes, project champions take up roles of leading their communities and in most scenarios, they inspire members of the community to exceed their self-gains for the collective gain of the project. A study that examined how project champions influenced the acceptability of a nutritional program among children in Scotland, (McKinley, 2010), stated that without the help of the project champions, implementers of the program would have had a hard time reaching most of the beneficiaries who had lost trust in such projects. The project champions in the project were able to use their inspirational appeal to mobilize community members to enrol in the project.

Project champions are uniquely placed to rely on their connections when exploring new ideas and support for the project. This ability is supplemented by their ability to get the support of the right

people in the community. Rutten, Doree & Halman (2019), state that the "ability to express ideas enthusiastically and confidently" gives project champions the Midas touch that is needed when calling on their extensive connections to support various phases of the project. Woodall, White & South (2012), agree that project champions help to keep projects thriving. This conclusion is made from a study of 7 health projects where they found out that 5 of the projects that had project champions were able to sustain the project activities for a period of more than five years. On the other hand, in a study of 213 projects, scholars found a positive statistical link between project sustainability and project champions. More than 150 projects assessed failed to be sustainable and despite the presence of other variables that could have caused this, researchers identified the lack of project champions as being a leading cause of the lack of sustainability (Strachan, Wright, & Hancock, 2007).

Project championing takes different forms and at different stages of project implementation. It is common to have different champions at each stage from planning to implementation. In the formative phase of the project when most members of the community have not bought into the idea of the project, (Wood, Cornforth, Beals, Taylor, & Tallon, 2018), comment that the presence of one passionate individual that creates awareness and cognizance of the project makes it possible to move the project to the next stage. In the implementation phase, when the project activities start being introduced and embedded in the community, the role of the project champion is in high demand. Roth (2000) noted that this is a critical stage when the levels of community engagement need to be at their level best. Partnerships formed need to be maintained and all stakeholders need to be pulled together to ensure the success of the project. At this point, (Rutten, Doree, & Halman, 2019), state that the project champions are the glue that sticks everything together without whom, "things would go south really first." (Wood, Cornforth, Beals, Taylor, & Tallon, 2018), established that projects that were championed were well position to advance and flourish in the community. A study that looked at resource allocation to non-governmental institutions concluded that projects with proactive champions received more funding both at the initial stage of funding and subsequently during project implementation (Rutten, Doree, & Halman, 2019).

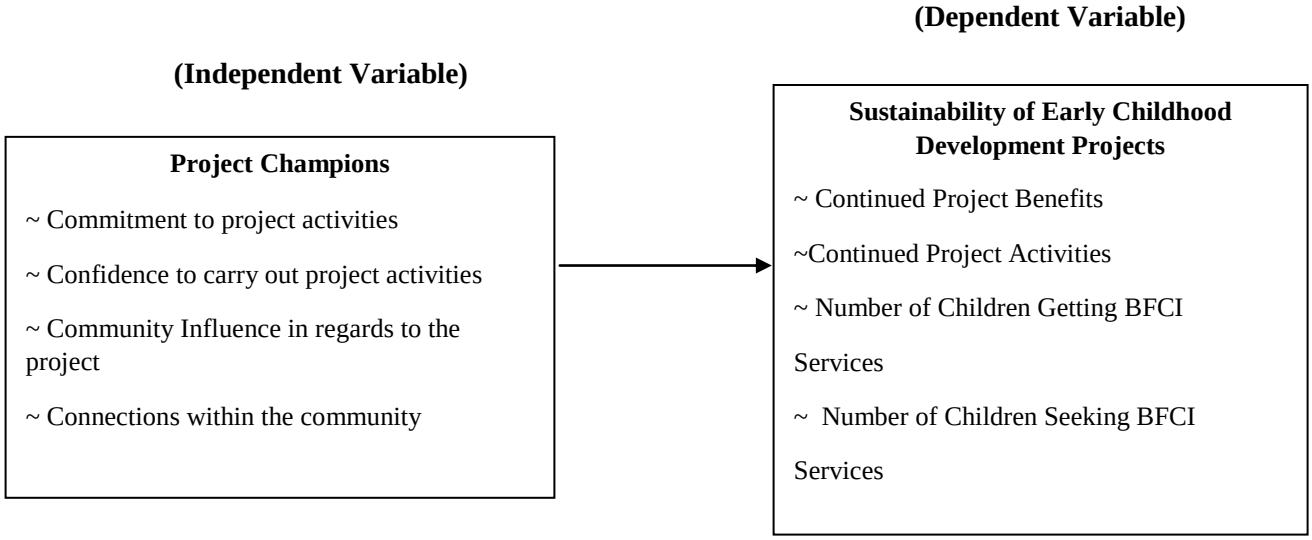
Summing it up, research has revealed that project champions are essential in sustaining projects. The presence of champions in a project holds all stakeholders together without whom, project activities could easily fizzle out. It is important to note that effective project championing calls for an all-rounded approach when campaigning for the project. This means that the champion should not only be specialized in one specific aspect of project implementation but should have the ability to envisage different scenarios in the project and find ways of improving the quality of the project. Project champions in executing their duties should strive to collaborate in every phase of the project rather than antagonizing each other. This is important because championing is a multifaceted process whose success is dependent on the joint performance of everyone involved as opposed to the gallant acts of specific individuals.

Conceptual Framework

(Mugenda, 2003) defined a conceptual framework as a scheme of concepts (variables) which when operationalized helps the researcher achieve the set objectives. This study sought to investigate the influence of project champions on the sustainability of ECD projects with a focus on the BFCI project in Dagoretti North Constituency, Nairobi County, Kenya. The framework indicates the relationship that exists between the independent variable (project champions) and

the dependent variable (sustainability of ECD projects). Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of this study.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Methodology

Research Design

The study used a descriptive survey design which was helpful in obtaining data from a large number of participants who took part in the study. This design helps to provide insight into the prevailing situations and state of events related to a specific research problem. (Leedy & Ormrod, 2020) point out that a descriptive study cannot irrefutably ascertain answers to why. A descriptive research design was utilized to get information regarding the prevailing position of sustainability of ECD projects and to explain "what existed" concerning variables or circumstances in the situation.

Target Population

The target population is the complete group of persons or matters from which the researcher intends to take a broad view of the conclusions of the research. The target population in most cases is made up of individuals or matters with varying characteristics and it is also referred to as the theoretical population. The research targeted 500 beneficiaries as per records from the Ministry of Health: Department of Children at Riruta Health Centre data recorded in the "BFCI Form 3 – Primary HealthCare Facility Report." The beneficiaries are spread out through three villages; Muslim (227), Precious (125), and Kanungaga (163). In addition to the beneficiaries, two lead mothers in charge of the mother-to-mother groups, two government officials, two Ministry of Health staff (Ministry of Health) and one staff from the implementing partner of the project were involved in the study.

Table 1: Target Population

Category		Population
Project Beneficiaries	Muslim Village	227
	Precious Village	125
	Kanungaga Village	148
BFCI Stakeholders	Lead Mothers	2
	Government officials	2
	MoH staff	2
	Implementing partner staff	1
TOTAL		**507**

Source: BFCI Form 3 – Primary HealthCare Facility Report

Sample Size

According to (McNeill & Chapman, 2005), sampling is the statistical procedure of choosing a subgroup (known as a "sample") of a populace of interest with the aim of making observations and statistical extrapolations about that population. In this section, the sampling procedure and the sample size are discussed. A sample is a smaller representation or subgroup attained from the available population (Mugenda, 2003). The study adopted the stratified sampling technique. This is a probabilistic sampling technique where the entire population is divided into subgroups or strata after which the sample is randomly selected proportionally from each stratum. The study used the following formula proposed by Yamane (Adam, 2020), to determine the sample size of the project recipients; Yamane (1973) formulae

$n = N/ (1+N^*) (e)^2$

Where n = sample size

N = the population size

e = the acceptable sampling error (7%) at 93% confidence level

Thus;

$n = 500/ (1+500) (0.07)^2$

n =204

To determine the sample size from each stratum, proportionate stratification was used. By means of proportional stratification, this ensures that the sample size from each stratum is proportional to the population size of the stratum (Saini & Kumar, 2018). Strata sample sizes are calculated using the following formula:

$nh = (Nh / N) * n$

where nh is the sample size for stratum h,

Nh is the population size for stratum h,

N is total population size,

and n is total sample size.

Table 2: Sample Size Table

Category		Population	Sample Size
Project Beneficiaries	Muslim Village	227	93
	Precious Village	125	51
	Kanungaga Village	148	60
BFCI Stakeholders	Lead Mothers	2	2
	Government officials	2	2
	MoH staff	2	2
	Implementing partner staff	1	1
TOTAL		**507**	**211**

Sampling Procedure

The study used a stratified sampling technique to select beneficiaries depending on the villages they currently reside in Dagoretti North Constituency; Nairobi County, Kenya. Each village in the study formed a stratum. Simple random sampling of participants from each stratum was done to get participants of the study. This was through assigning beneficiaries' random numbers followed by the creation of a random number table from which the participants were selected. Proportional allocation (nh = (Nh / N) * n) of sample size was used to get the number of participants from each village. Stratified sampling was used in the study since it allowed the researcher to get representatives from all the villages that are covered by the ECD project that was being implemented at the study site. From the possible 500 target population, simple random sampling was used to get a total of 204 project recipients. Due to their low number, the other 7 BFCI stakeholders were not sampled. The total number of study participants was 211.

Research Instruments

The study used a questionnaire to collect quantitative data while qualitative data was collected using an interview guide. (Mugenda, 2003) defined a questionnaire as a research instrument with various questions which help a researcher to gather information on a specific topic from respondents. Questionnaires can be easily standardized and this helps to check on reliability (Fowler, 2019). The questionnaire comprised closed-ended statements with each question targeting specific research questions. The design of the questions was guided by the outlined objectives of the study. A respondent was required to fill all parts. The first part had respondents' background data while part the other parts had items covering the objectives of the study having a five-point Likert scale. Interview schedules were used to obtain information from key informants in the project. In-depth interviews ensure exhaustive and comprehensive information is obtained (Montgomery, 2000). In-depth interviews permit the researcher to get an insight into participants' viewpoints and their understandings through continual one on one encounters (Hicks, Schmeidler, & Kirchner, 2020).

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was divided into three sections comprising structured questions. Section A was comprised of personal information of the respondent such as age, gender, and education level. Section B was composed of questions based on the indicators of project champions such as; commitment to project activities, confidence to carry out project activities, community influence in regard to the project, and connections within the

community. Section C questions were based on the indicators of project sustainability such as; continued project benefits, continued project activities, number of children getting BFCI services, and number of children seeking BFCI services.

Interview Guide

The interview guide was utilized to collect qualitative data from the key informants of the study including two lead mothers who are in charge of the beneficiaries at the community level, two government officials, two Ministry of Health officials, and one implementing partner staff. The guide was instrumental in getting the views of these key stakeholders on project champions.

Pilot Testing of Research Instrument

(Mat Roni, Merga, & Morris, 2019) define pilot testing as a tryout of a research study, allowing the researcher to test the research approach with a small number of participants before carrying out the main study. The questionnaire's pilot testing was done by randomly selecting 20 respondents from a population that did participate in the real study. The selection of the piloting respondents is informed by (Mugenda, 2003) theory, which indicates that the piloting sample should be between 1 % and 10 % of the study sample, depending on the study sample size.

The pilot testing was carried out on an ongoing ECD project that was being implemented in Dagoretti South Constituency Nairobi County because the population of this project shared similar characteristics with those of Dagoretti North Constituency. According to (White & McBurney, 2013), the pilot testing questionnaire was designed as open-ended questions to help identify other research areas that could be added to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered by the researchers, allowing explanation of queries as thought necessary and assessing the respondents' understanding of the questions of research. The questionnaire was drawn to add the feedback from the pilot respondents so as to eliminate ambiguity, inconsistency or redundancy. The researcher involved two experts who are the researcher's supervisor, and lead project managers to check the piloted instruments until such a time that they approved the questionnaires to be capable of getting the required data.

Validity of the Research Instruments

According to (Carmines & Zeller, 2008), validity is simply the means by which a test or an instrument is able to accurately measure what it’s supposed to. They go on to point out that validity helps to strengthen conclusions, inferences, and or propositions. The content validity of the questionnaire was tested by carrying out a pilot on the instruments. Any ambiguity and suggestions noted from the pilot study were corrected on the questionnaires before the actual study. The supervisor was also instrumental in checking both the construct and content validity.

Reliability of the Research Instruments

Carmines & Zeller, (2008) defined reliability as a measure of stability or consistency of test scores, the degree to which the instrument being used in the research gives consistent data under the same condition when the respondents used are the same. The reliability of this study was tested through Cronbach’s Alpha which was used to measure the internal reliability. (Litwin, 2020) points out that Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient usually ranges between 0 (when no variance is reliable) and 1 (when all variance is reliable). When the coefficient is closer to 1.0, this shows that the internal consistency of the items in the scale is very high. An alpha (α) score of 0.70 or higher is considered satisfactory (Kirk & Miller, 2005). The SPSS application was used

to calculate this reliability. The pilot study was also helpful in testing the reliability of the instruments. The Cronbach Alpha for this study was 0.816 which was considered as an excellent level of internal consistency.

Data Collection Procedures

The process started with the researcher obtaining a letter of approval from the university that allowed the researcher to go into the field. On top of this, the researcher sought a research permit from both NACOSTI and the Nairobi County Commission authorizing the study to go ahead. The data to be used in this study was collected by the researcher with the support of well-trained research assistants who administered the questionnaires after intensive training.

The researchers personally conducted the interviews in the qualitative phase with the key informants. Prior to this, the researchers carried out the pilot collection of data to test validity and reliability. The questionnaires mainly consisted of closed-ended statements. The researchers also collected secondary data which helped to supplement the primary data.

Data Analysis Techniques

The process started with the verification of all the questionnaires to ascertain that all questions had been dully filled. This helped identify unanswered questions. The quantitative data that was collected in this study was analyzed through descriptive statistical methods and inferential statistics. These were through analysis of distribution, central tendency, dispersion, correlation, and regression. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS Version 23.0) was used to analyze the data collected. Qualitative data was analyzed through themes and content analysis. Data was presented through the use of frequency tables and narrative analysis, while correlation and regression analyses were used for inferential statistics

Ethical Considerations

Commenting on ethics, (di Norcia, 2006) defined ethics as a way of distinguishing between that which is acceptable behaviour and that which is unacceptable behaviour in a scientific study. The researcher considered four critical ethical practices in addition to others. First, confidentiality was observed through the safeguarding of confidential information from the participant. Second, informed consent was administered to ensure the voluntary involvement of study participants in the research study. Thirdly, through truthful and authentic reporting of data, and outcomes, and the avoidance of misrepresentation, or distortion of data was done to maintain the integrity of the research. Lastly, all the intellectual property that contributed to this study was credited through referencing and citation. Study participants were also informed that the information collected was only to be used for academic purposes.

Findings and Discussions

Questionnaire Return Rate

A total of 204 questionnaires were administered to project beneficiaries in the study. 2 interviews were administered to the lead mothers involved in the project, 2 interviews for the government officials, 2 interviews for the MoH staff, and 1 interview for the implementing partner staff. Table 3 shows the return rate of the questionnaires that were administered to the study participants.

Table 3: Questionnaire Response Return Rate

Category	Frequency Returned	Percentage (%)
Returned and completely filled	192	94.12
Not returned	12	5.88
Total	**204**	**100**

Table 3 shows that the response rate from project beneficiaries was 94.12 %. Overall, the return rate from the participants was 94.12 % was considered sufficient for data analysis as outlined by (Mugenda, 2003) who recommended that a response rate of 50% be used for data analysis.

Interview Guide Completion Rate

Table 4 shows the completion rate of the interview guide that was administered to the study participants.

Table 4: Interview Guide Response Return Rate

Category	Sample Size	Interviews Carried Out	Percentage (%)
Lead Mothers	2	2	100
MoH Staff	2	2	100
Government officials	2	2	100
Implementing partner staff	1	1	100
TOTAL	**7**	**7**	**100**

Table 4 shows that all the Lead mothers, Ministry of Health (MoH) officials, government officials and the implementing partner staff involved in the study were able to respond to the interview guide. implementing partner staff involved in the study were able to respond to the interview guide.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Gender

Table 5 shows that most of the respondents were female at 178 with project beneficiaries accounting for 173 of this number. This implies that most ECD projects target women who are mostly the main caregivers of children. This is consistent with (Emilsen & Koch, 2010) who observed that women were more engaged and involved in ECD projects as compared to men. This ranged from the beneficiaries to the people implementing the projects. Due to their role, the leads interviewed were female. On the other hand, both the MoH staff and the government officials interviewed had an equal representation of males and females of one each. Only one staff of the implementing partner was interviewed who was female.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents According to Gender

Category	Female	Male	Total	%
Project beneficiaries	173	19	192	96
Lead Mothers	2	00	1	1
MoH Staff	1	1	1	1
Government officials	1	1	1	1
Implementing partner staff	1	00	1	1
TOTAL	**178**	**21**	**199**	**100**

Level of Education

Findings in Table 6 show that the majority of the respondents in the study, 44.2%, managed to complete secondary school. This group is followed by respondents who did not manage to complete primary schooling with this group representing 21.6% of the respondents. 20 respondents who have college/university education managed to take part in the study. This number represented 10.1 % of the respondents. The percentage of respondents who have not completed secondary school and those who have not completed primary schooling stood at 20.6% and 3.5% respectively.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents According to Level of Education

Category	Frequency	Percentage
None	00	0.00
Primary school not completed	7	3.5
Primary school completed	43	21.6
Secondary school not completed	41	20.6
Secondary school completed	88	44.2
College/university and above	20	10.1
TOTAL	**199**	**100**

Project Champions and Sustainability of ECD Projects

To establish the influence of project champions on the sustainability of early childhood development projects, the participants were invited to indicate the extent to which project champions influence the sustainability of ECD projects in Dagoretti North Constituency. The indicators in question were; commitment, confidence, community influence, and connections. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Project Champions and Sustainability of ECD projects

	Statement	1		2		3		4		5		MEAN	SD
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	The commitment of project champions like mentor mothers to the ECD project is necessary for the sustainability of the project	6	3.1	2	1.0	2	1.0	26	13.5	156	81.3	4.7	0.823
2	Project champions like CHVs involved in the ECD project are committed to activities of the project.	4	2.1	3	1.6	4	2.1	39	20.3	142	74	4.6	0.789
3	Lack of commitment of project champions to the project influences the sustainability of the ECD project.	4	2.1	1	0.5	00	00	32	16.7	155	80.7	4.7	0.692
4	The confidence of the project champions plays a role in the sustainability of the ECD project.	17	8.9	20	10.4	12	6.3	51	26.6	92	47.9	3.9	1.327

5	The project champions involved in the ECD project possess the confidence that can influence the sustainability of the ECD project.	22	11.5	3	1.6	7	3.6	37	19.3	123	64.1	4.2	1.314
6	Project champions having good connections within the community is vital for the sustainability of the ECD project.	21	10.9	6	3.1	8	4.2	52	27.1	105	54.7	4.1	1.301
7	Project champions taking part in the ECD project have good connections that can help in the sustainability of the project.	4	2.1	00	00	1	0.5	42	21.9	145	75.5	4.7	0.691
8	Project champions involved in the ECD project have the ability to influence the community in relation to the project.	19	9.9	21	10.9	15	7.8	56	29.2	81	42.2	3.8	1.344
9	The capacity of project champions to have community influence plays a role in the sustainability of the ECD project.	5	2.6	5	2.6	10	5.2	52	27.1	120	62.5	4.4	0.908
	Composite mean and Standard Deviation											4.4	0.486

From Table 7, the study beneficiaries agree that project champions determine the sustainability of early childhood development projects. This is indicated by a composite mean of 4.4 and a standard deviation of 0.486. The findings of the study in statement 1 reveal that the commitment of project champions involved in the project is important to the project. The indicator had a mean of 4.7 and a standard deviation of 0.823. The presence of committed project champions who push for the agenda of the project can be the difference between success and failure in achieving project objectives (McKinley, 2010). In statement number 2, the respondents agreed that the project champions who were part of the ECD project were committed to the project. This was represented by a mean of 4.6 and a standard deviation of 0.789. This pointed to the faith the project beneficiaries had in the project champions. The study further sought to know if lack of commitment of project champions influences the sustainability of ECD projects and the result showed that the participants were in agreement with this. The indicator has a mean of 4.7 and a standard deviation of 0.692. The result is supported by (Woodall, White, & South, 2012), who noted that community members were more prone to supporting projects whose champions were seen to be committed and present in the project. In statement number 4, the respondents agreed that the confidence of project champions plays a role in the sustainability of projects. This was shown with a mean of 3.9 and a standard deviation of 1.327.

The study further inquired whether the project champions involved in the ECD project possessed confidence that could influence the sustainability of the ECD project. The findings

revealed that the respondents viewed the project champions as confident enough and this could play a part in the sustainability of the project. The indicator had a mean score of 4.2 and a standard deviation of 1.314. In statement number 6, the study sought to know if project champions having good connections within the community is vital for the sustainability of the ECD project. The indicator had a mean of 4.3 and a standard deviation of 0.8 meaning that the participants were in agreement with the statement. This is in sync with(Rutten, Doree, & Halman, 2019), who posit that connections enable project champions to link well with service providers in the community hence enhancing service delivery. Which contributes to project sustainability. On the question of whether the project champions taking part in the ECD project had good connections that could help in the sustainability of the project, the responses had a mean of 4.7 and a standard deviation of 0.691. This indicates that the participants believe that the champions involved in the project possess good connections that can help in the sustainability of the project.

The study in statement number 8 inquired if the project champions had the ability to influence the community in any way in relation to the project. A mean of 3.8 and a standard deviation of 1.344 shows that the respondents thought the champions could make the community influence the project. This could result in sustainability if it is a positive influence or a lack of sustainability if it is a negative influence. Lastly, the study sought to know if the capacity of project champions to have community influence plays a role in the sustainability of the ECD project. The indicator had a mean of 4.4 and a standard deviation of 0.908. The message the project champions take to the community can help gain the support of the community or not (Roth, 2000). Markham &Aiman-Smith (2001), in a study on the role of project champions in sustainability, concluded that creating a positive image for the project in the community could go a long way in making the project sustainable since this will influence the community members to support the project.

In summary, the general findings show that project champions are essential to project sustainability. This is supported by (Nyaruhucha, Msuya, Mamiro, & Kerengi, 2009), who in a study that looked at the sustainability of nutritional projects in Tanzania brought the same conclusion on the important role project champions had to play to ensure that the activities of the projects were accepted in the community and stigma towards malnourished children and caregivers was reduced.

Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis on Project Champions and Sustainability of ECD Projects

The in-depth interviews with the key informants were of the opinion that;

Lead Mother "… *i try my level best to get connections that can help the mothers assigned to me. Ensuring that I have links and referrals that I can give the mothers when the children are sick or even when the mothers themselves are sick."*

Government officials *"… the role of the CHVs in this project is very important. They are actually our champions. Through home visits, they ensure that we no mother is left behind in the program."*

MoH staff *"… we solely rely on the lead mothers to ensure that the mothers are convinced to attend every training session and all clinic session. They help us in painting the project in good light."*

Implementing partner staff *"… we work hand in hand with the CHVs in the three units; Muslim, Kanungaga, and Precious so that we can reach as many mothers as possible. Without them, we would only be able to get a handful."*

The triangulation of quantitative data and the qualitative data confirms that project champions are indispensable in project sustainability. When project champions are involved in every step of project implementation, the success rate increases greatly (Gattiker & Carter, 2009).

Correlation of Project Champions and Sustainability of ECD Projects

The study sought to investigate the relationship between project champions and the sustainability of Early Childhood Development projects using the Pearson Correlation Method. The results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Correlation of Project Champions and Sustainability of ECD Projects

		Sustainability of ECD Project	Project Champions
Sustainability of ECD Projects	Pearson Correlation	1	.655**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	192	192
Project Champions	Pearson Correlation	.655**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	192	192

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

As shown in Table 8, there is a strong relationship between project champions and the sustainability of early childhood projects with a magnitude of (r=0.655, P<0.000). This is an indication that project champions lead to an increase in project sustainability.

Regression Analysis

The regression model was applied to predict the dependent variable (sustainability of the project) when independent variables (project champions) change. The regression model is as illustrated below;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Sustainability of ECD projects (dependent variable)

β_0 = Constant or intercept of the regression line

β_1 = Regression coefficient for each independent variable

X_1 = Project Champions (Independent variable)

ε = Error Term

The results are presented in Table 9;

Table 9: Regression Analysis

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient		
	B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
(Constant)	.628	.366		1.716	.088
Project Leadership	.525	.074	.553	7.116	.000

From Table 9, the regression model becomes

$$Y = 0.628 + 0.525X_1$$

Table 9 shows that the independent variable i.e. project championship being at zero constant, the sustainability of Early Childhood Development projects will be 0.628. The simple linear regression was run to predict how sustainability of early childhood development projects is affected by project champions. The results indicate that a unit increase in project champions will lead to a 0.525-unit increase in the sustainability of ECD projects like the BFCI considering all other factors are constant. Project champions p (.000) < .05) This implies that project champions are significant to the prediction sustainability of ECD projects. This is in line with the study by (Simane & Zaitchik, 2019), done in the Blue Nile Highlands of Ethiopia to evaluate the sustainability of community based projects and the results were consistent with the ones for the current study that project champions had an integral part to play in ensuring that the whole community supports the project. This is also supported by (Sandhu, 2019), who notes that project champions are the link between the project leadership and the community and they help the leadership to implement the project in the community without whom, the project would easily fail.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study concluded that project champions play an instrumental role in the sustainability of early childhood development projects. The results are in agreement with many scholars who pointed out that project champions play a major role in ensuring that the communities support projects. Some of the indicators that make project champions instrumental in project sustainability as agreed with project beneficiaries include a high commitment level to the projects and the ability to influence community members to support the project.

Recommendations

Project champions are critical to the sustainability of projects and should be treated as such. Volunteer project champions should be appreciated through tokens that can motivate them

to continue championing the project in the community. It is also prudent to involve the project champions in planning the activities of the project as most of them live in the communities where these projects are being implemented. This makes it easy to take into account the cultural context when planning activities. This study focused on Early Childhood Development, it is recommended that another study be carried out to look at determinants of sustainability of projects that target other age groups, like youth projects.

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