Abstract: All projects endure to meet a specified need. In the ever-evolving environment, there is essence of making timely and informed decisions which not only integrate sustainable needs but also seeks to satisfy the expectations of stakeholders. Monitoring and evaluation are among the project management functions that not only seek to address the constraints hampering project success but also provide avenue for continuous learning and improvement. Reliable monitoring and evaluation need be contextualized beyond wishful-thinking to action-based reporting and application of the best practices. This paper proposes a framework for investigating the monitoring and evaluation practices that integrate objective and fact-based analysis of the context for sustainable project delivery of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya. In line with Kenya’s Vision 2030, One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project was initiated with an aim of promoting local entrepreneurship and rural development through mentorship and capacity building. The project embraced a workable solution and evaluation model learnt from Japan as a strategy towards accelerating rapid industrialization and socioeconomic growth. However, project impacts are yet to be felt across the counties. The proposed study will use mixed methodologies in order to gain a complete picture of how the phenomenon exists across Kenya.

Keywords: monitoring, evaluation, practices, contextual factors, sustainability, OVOP-project, Kenya.

1.0 Background

Sustainability is a development concern that depicts the ability of a project to offer long-term positive impacts. For this reason, the global sustainable goals or sustainable development goals (SDGs) agitate for development discourses that promote quality of life, integrity of environment and peaceful prosperity of the planet (United Nations Development Group, 2016). Sustainable projects offer continuous flow of benefits, environment stability, equitable and fair distribution of benefits and ensure continuous participation of the community (Project Management Institute, 2021). Nevertheless, concerns have been raised over poor integration of sustainability decisions in the course of project implementation, resulting into stalled and unresponsive projects. Of interest, is monitoring and evaluation practices which is believed to have significant contribution to the sustainability of project (Bukhala and Ganesh, 2016). For instance, in United States the demand of greater positive impacts is compelling project monitoring and evaluation officers to adopt pragmatic approaches that integrate and update sustainable decisions (Saad, 2020). Equally, the demand for better outcomes in development projects is pushing Asian countries to adopt collaborative monitoring and evaluation decision-making processes (Varrall, 2020).

In the middle-east and North Africa, sustainability of development projects is assured through monitoring and evaluation processes that are inter-linked across different sectors and stakeholders (Ramnayake, Wickramarachchi and Wattege, 2017). The trend is not different in South Africa whereby monitoring and evaluation decisions are made through multi-stakeholder approach so as to promote sustainability (Rennkamp, 2020). Sustainability of modern investments projects in East African community is guaranteed through project integrated monitoring and evaluation procedures and processes (Warinda et al., 2020). The situation is not different in Kenya whereby sustainability of development initiatives is anchored in the supreme law which demands for integrated planning and review of development discourses.

Incepted in the year 2008, OVOP-Kenya project aimed at utilizing the locally available resources for job creation, wealth generation and local development Republic of Kenya, 2008). Towards the realization of sustainable
impacts, OVOP project was guided by three principles namely: thinking globally but acting locally, self-reliance and creativity and human resource development. To operationalize the sustainability prospects in the OVOP project, stakeholder needs were integrated with project processes and continuously evaluated. OVOP project embraced a workable solution model learnt from Japan as strategy towards accelerating rapid industrialization and socioeconomic growth. However, the project faced constraints in tracking post implementation. While OVOP project was handed over to the County Governments in the year 2017, concerns are raised over stagnated prospects owing to poor tracking mechanisms.

Past studies have associated inadequacy of monitoring and evaluation processes with poor performance and sustainability of projects (Sedrakian, 2016; Nyakundi, 2018; Kathongo, 2018; Gamba, et al., 2020). Ineffective monitoring and evaluation practices degrades the quality of sustainability decisions. Monitoring and evaluation results helps managers to develop learning areas for continuous improvement of the desired results. Thus, monitoring and evaluation cannot be isolated from other aspects that contribute to project sustainability. This paper conceptualizes monitoring and evaluation as the aspects which are effective in driving the project towards sustainable outcomes namely: monitoring and evaluation planning, data management and engagement. Project context is the internal and external environments in which projects operate and has effects on the project progress and sustainability. In this study, contextual factors are: project leadership and stakeholder participation.

2.0 Problem Statement

The One Village One Product (OVOP) was introduced in Kenya in the year 2008. The aim of the project was to promote local entrepreneurship by integrating mentorship and capacity building. The project adopted a workable solution model learnt from Japanese Government as a strategy towards accelerating resource mobilization, industrialization, employment creation and socioeconomic growth. The implementation of OVOP project was steered by the Ministry of Industrialization, Kenya. Through OVOP project, over 500 entrepreneurs were trained and promoted over 20 local products by the year 2016 (Government of Kenya, 2021). In the same period, over 400 entrepreneurs were linked to the relevant service providers for assistance like product research and development, credit access, retail markets and compliance institutions. However, these figures have remained stagnant after handing over the OVOP project to the County Governments in the year 2017. While entrepreneurs were assisted to form cooperative entities so as to consolidate their needs and increase their bargaining power for greater sustainability, most of the cooperatives formed are no longer vibrant and active as evidenced by membership turnover, decreased activities and slowed expansion. Further, most of the enterprises are still struggling as evidenced by decreased production. This is detrimental to the growth and stability of OVOP cooperatives and realization of long-term beneficial impacts. Whereas the county governments have been helping the beneficiaries of OVOP project through business counseling and self-evaluation, these interventions have far reaching effects as evidenced by slowed maturation of the cooperatives. Notwithstanding the interventions, the effectiveness of the follow-up measures is questionable pursuant to the realization of sustainable impacts. Empirical studies have demonstrated that achievement of sustainable impacts is a blend of project management practices relative to the prevailing circumstances (Kaumbulu, Muathe and James, 2020; Kilonzo and George, 2017; Warinda, Nyariki, Wambua, et al., 2020). This dimensional view is context based. It is against the background that this study will investigate the relationship between monitoring and evaluation practices and sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya and how contextual factors (internal and external) interacts with such relationship.

3.0 Research Objectives

The research objectives are:

i. To determine the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya
ii. To establish the influence of contextual factors on sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya.
iii. To examine the interaction between monitoring and evaluation practices, contextual factors and sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya.
4.0 Research Hypotheses

The following are research hypotheses

i. \( H_01 \): There is no significance relationship between monitoring and evaluation practices and sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya.

ii. \( H_02 \): There is no significance influence of contextual factors on sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya.

iii. \( H_03 \): There is no significance interaction between monitoring and evaluation practices, contextual factors and sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya.

5.0 Literature Review

5.1 Monitoring and Evaluation and Sustainability of Projects

Monitoring and evaluation are both systematic methods of tracking the progress of project operations towards achieving the set results (PMI (2017). By procedure, monitoring is conducted continuously to track the transformation of project inputs like resources, activities and plans into the expected outputs. Basically, monitoring focuses on the conformance, efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and performance of project inputs and operations. However, evaluation is done periodically to assess the relevance of outputs in generating sustainable outcomes and impacts. Nevertheless, evaluation supports decisions during auditing of the project. Still, both monitoring and evaluation plays complementary role in promoting sustainable impacts from the projects (PMI, 2021). For instance, monitoring links resources and activities to objectives after which evaluation assesses the contribution of resources and activities to the desired results. Thus, project monitoring is inseparable from project evaluation. Hence, both monitoring and evaluation important step towards successful and sustainable project management (Ooko et al., 2018). But the capacity to plan and manage monitoring and evaluation data is very important aspect of achieving sustainability outputs (Venesa, 2017). This is because the findings from monitoring and evaluation provide evidence-based information for continuous learning and improvement (Kathongo, 2018). This demonstrates the imperative nature of monitoring and evaluation in achieving long-term aspirations of project.

Sustainability of projects is based on the assumption that the available resources will be utilized efficiently and effectively so as to attain the long-term benefits, while factoring the priorities and possible consequences (Sulemana, 2018). The findings for a study by Kithinji (2019) on the role of monitoring and evaluation on effectiveness of Non-governmental projects in Kenya led to the conclusion that monitoring and evaluation promotes project effectiveness. In a related study by Rogito, Maitho and Nderitu (2020) on how monitoring and evaluation capacities affects sustainability of irrigation projects in Kenya, sustainable impacts were associated with the capacity to plan, organize and utilize monitoring and evaluation results. However, the two studies by Kithinji (2019) and Rogito, Maitho and Nderitu (2020) were contextually limited to irrigation and non-governmental projects respectively. The findings had limited generalization with regard to the population and geographical settings. The proposed study will overcome the limitation by observing how the phenomenon exists in One Village One Product Project in Kenya.

Engagement of stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strengthens the validity and quality of M&E findings and therefore is a good practice in project management (Makau, Mackenzi and Nicole, 2018). In this regard, Okul and Nyonje (2020) did a study on the relationship between stakeholder involvement and utilization of project evaluation findings for program improvement in Kenya whereby engagement was found to increase usability of monitoring and evaluation results leading to greater results. Nevertheless, the concept of monitoring and evaluation was assessed relative to the utility of the M&E results thus limiting the knowledge on how M&E impacts on long-term impacts of project. In Ghana, Sulemana (2018) studied the role stakeholders’ participation in monitoring-evaluation on performance of government projects whereby stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation was found to increase projects sustainability. Nevertheless, the study was based on qualitative methodology which lowered the validity for concluding and inferring the findings. Instead, the proposed study will integrate both qualitative and quantitative methodologies so as to increase the validity for concluding and generalizing the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on sustainability of (OVOP) project in Kenya. This argument leads to the following proposition:
Proposition One: There is no significant relationship between monitoring and evaluation and sustainability (OVOP) project in Kenya.

5.2 Monitoring and Evaluation, Contextual Factors and Sustainability of Projects

Projects operate in an open system. An open system is a situation whereby both internal and external environments are in constant contact with project operations (PMI, 2021). The internal factors of a project include but not limited to the goals, culture, resources, technologies, physical assets and leadership. The external factors include stakeholders, politics, economics, government policies and also the global arenas. However, both external and external environments are very dynamic to an extent of affecting project stability (Filippov, Mooi and Weg, 2012). Whereas the internal factors are predictable and easily controllable, they become more volatile and complex after exposure to the external factors. This may be detrimental to the scope creep. Thus, flexible and adaptable strategies are needed to stabilize and navigate the project to the end (Gronevall and Danilovic, 2014). But, past empirical studies have generated mixed signals on the role of project environment in stimulating sustainable impacts.

For instance, Mauro and Carvalho (2017) did a study to evaluate the key factors of sustainability in project management context in Brazil. In that study, the perceptions of project managers were analyzed through exploratory factors analysis and sustainability was found to be greatly triggered by resources, stakeholder’s management, economic and competitive environments. However, the findings could neither explain the strength of the internal and external factors in predicting the suitability of project. In addition, the findings were based on the assumption that the relationship between the variables was linear. In the proposed study, the influence of contextual factors (internal and external) on the sustainability of OVOP project will be considered from both linear and nonlinear perspectives.

In Malaysia, Chow, Zailani, Rahman et al. (2021) did a survey on the impact of sustainable project management on sustainable project planning and success in manufacturing firms. While using as sample size of 231 respondents, data was analyzed through partial least square method and the findings showed that sustainable project management factors namely: economics, social and environment have linear and nonlinear effects on sustainability. It implies that external factors catalyze project sustainability. Nevertheless, the generalization of the findings was limited due to contextual and geographical limitations. Hence, the need to explore the phenomenon under different environments as proposed in this paper, for more generalizable findings.

In Rwanda, Muthoni and Khan (2021) conducted an exploratory study on the factors influencing sustainability of renewable energy projects whereby internal and external factors were found influence on the project sustainability. However, the study focused on linear relationship ignoring existence of multiple or nonlinear relationships. This leads to the following propositions.

Proposition Two: There is no significance influence of contextual factors on sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya.

Proposition Three: there is no significance interaction between monitoring and evaluation practices, contextual factors and sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya.

6.0 Theoretical Framework

Sustainability theory is the founding theoretical framework for the study. System theory of management will be used as a support theoretical framework. Felix Ekard advanced sustainability theory in the year 2009 in order promote practices that have greatest positive impacts on social, economic and environment components (Morfaw, 2014). Sustainability theory empathizes on conscious decisions that lead to long-lasting to the current and future generations. For project to be sustainable, there is need to integrate the needs emanating from project environments with the sustainability decisions. The current study considers sustainability theory as the best placed in explaining the linkage between contextual factors (internal and external) relative to the sustainability of OVOP project, given monitoring and evaluation practices.

Developed by Katz and Kahnstates in 1990s, system theory of management states that organizations operate through sub-systems that are interlinked, interrelated, interdependent and coordinating holistically in order to
achieve the set goals (Cutlip, Center, and Broom, 2006). Subsystems are very useful as they feed organization by providing resources, customers, raw materials, labour, stakeholders, policies and therefore organizations are in continuous of adjustments in order to adapt to the environment changes. Similarly, project organization operate in an open system whereby environment provide inputs such as resources, technology, labour and stakeholders into the projects (PMI, 2021). Inputs are then transformed through processes and procedures into the desired outputs and outcomes. For projects to deliver, there must be effective transformation of inputs and balanced restoration of equilibrium. The only mechanism for such realization is through adaptation to changing needs. In this study, system theory of management will be used to in the argument that sustainability of OVOP project depends on the effectiveness of internal and external (contextual) factors through feed mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation.

7.0 Conceptual Framework

The conceptualization for the interaction between monitoring and evaluation practices, contextual factors and sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptualization of the interaction between monitoring and evaluation practices, contextual factors and sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Moderating Variable</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation Practices</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Sustainability of OVOP Project in Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Business growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Data management</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Employment creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Community participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual Factors</td>
<td>Internal factors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Goals and objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Donor requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Client needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Economic factors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s (2022)

The dependent variable is sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project and its measures are business growth, employment creation and community participation. Past empirical literature induces that sustainability is achieved based on the way projects are monitored and evaluated. For this reason, monitoring and evaluation practices is perceived to have directly linkage with the sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya. Monitoring and evaluation is indicated by monitoring and evaluation planning, data management and engagement. The role of project environment in shaping sustainability of project remains a controversial debate in literature. Whereas internal factors are more controllable in determining the project outcomes given monitoring and evaluation practices, external factors are perceived to be more dynamic with severe implications on the project. This is because external forces are difficult to predict and control. For this reason, contextual factors (internal and external) are perceived to have both direct and non-direct influence on project sustainability.

8.0 Discussion

This paper provides an empirically supported research framework aimed at evaluating the sustainability of One Village One Product (OVOP) project in Kenya. Sustainability of OVOP project is conceived as achievable given monitoring and evaluation practices and controlled environment. The conceptualization for the interaction
between monitoring and evaluation practices, contextual factors and sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project is supported by past empirical studies. The contribution of the environment (contextual factors) to the sustainability of OVOP project is perceived from both linear and nonlinear dimensions. However, the linkage between sustainability and monitoring and evaluation practices is perceived linear perspective. This is supported by literature whereby studies draw strong intersection between monitoring and evaluation in achieving sustainable impacts. Also, monitoring and evaluation is cited as a potential contributor to the sustainable realization of project goals.

9.0 Conclusion

Project sustainability ensures that positive impacts are enjoyed by beneficiaries for longer periods. However, achieving sustainable impacts requires informed decisions that integrate both project processes and its environment. For this reason, the project context is critical when conducting monitoring and evaluation relative to the long-term gains from a project. Hence the need to investigate the interaction between monitoring and evaluation practices, contextual factors and sustainability of One-Village-One-Product (OVOP) project in Kenya.

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11.0 References

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