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Project Planning and Performance of Livestock Commercialization Projects in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The performance of livestock commercialization projects plays a critical role in enhancing food security, boosting rural incomes, and driving economic growth in Kenya. Despite the livestock sector's substantial contribution to livelihoods and agricultural GDP, numerous donor- and government-supported initiatives have faced delays, unmet targets, and limited sustainability. For example, the Smallholder Dairy Commercialization Program did not achieve its household and group objectives, largely due to inadequate planning, logistical inefficiencies, and weak coordination. This study therefore examined the influence of project planning on the performance of livestock commercialization projects, focusing on the Kenya Livestock Commercialization Project (KeLCoP). The study was anchored on transformational leadership theory. A descriptive survey design was adopted, targeting 56 staff members drawn from the Project Management and Coordination Unit (PMCU) and County Project Management and Coordination Units (CPMCUs) across 10 counties. The results revealed a significant relationship between project planning and performance of livestock commercialization projects ($r = 0.806$, $p = 0.000$). The coefficient of determination was $R^2=0.650$, hence project planning accounted for 65% variation in project performance. The results establishes that performance of livestock commercialization projects is influenced by project planning. The study concludes that effective and well-coordinated project planning is a key driver of performance in livestock commercialization projects. By shaping how resources, time, and human efforts are managed, planning emerges as a decisive factor in achieving meaningful and sustainable project outcomes. The study recommends that the State Department of Livestock Development and county livestock departments adopt comprehensive and structured planning to enhance efficiency, minimize delays, and improve the performance of commercialization projects.

Key words: Livestock Commercialization Projects, Project Planning, Project Performance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Project planning represents a critical dimension of effective project management, providing the framework through which activities, resources, and timelines are coordinated (Fernandes, Ward, & Araújo, 2022). This encompasses the alignment of human, financial, and material resources, while establishing mechanisms to monitor progress, anticipate challenges, and mitigate risks. Beyond the mere sequencing of tasks, project planning fosters coherence between project goals and the operational approaches employed, ensuring that efforts are systematically directed toward measurable outcomes (Jain, 2021). This process is fundamental in creating predictability and accountability, enabling project teams to respond to uncertainties with agility and informed decision-making, which collectively enhance the likelihood of achieving desired results. Within the context of livestock commercialization projects, project planning assumes a particularly strategic role due to the sector's dynamic and resource-intensive nature (De-Marco & Mangano, 2022). Effective planning in this domain involves meticulous allocation of financial resources to support breeding, feed procurement, and market development, while simultaneously ensuring that skilled personnel are available to manage technical, managerial, and operational tasks (Lemarkat, 2024). Livestock commercialization projects in Kenya have experienced substantial transformation over recent years, largely driven by government policies, private sector investment, and donor-supported initiatives. Between 2018 and 2023, the sector has increasingly shifted from subsistence-oriented production toward more structured, market-focused systems, particularly within dairy, beef, and poultry value chains (Ministry of Agriculture, 2021).

A notable example is the Kenya Livestock Commercialization Project (KeLCoP), launched in 2020 with support from the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which has played a pivotal role in improving smallholder access to markets, enhancing livestock breed quality, and promoting value addition. The initiative targets pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities, with the overarching goal of increasing household incomes and building resilience against climate-related shocks. Despite these positive strides, several livestock commercialization projects have struggled to achieve their intended outcomes, often facing delays, budget overruns, and shortfalls in planned targets. For instance, the Smallholder Dairy Commercialization Program, initiated in 2005 and scheduled for completion in 2012, was extended by six years due to implementation delays and logistical challenges, ultimately concluding in 2019. In terms of output, the project aimed to establish 600 dairy groups and reach 24,000 households; however, only 505 groups were formed (84% of the target), and 15,535 households were engaged (65% of the target), resulting in shortfalls of 95 groups (15.8%) and 8,465 households (35.3%) (Bonilla et al., 2019). Such gaps in performance have been largely attributed to weaknesses in project management practices implemented during the project's execution.

While numerous studies have examined the impact of project management practices on performance in sectors such as construction and water and sanitation, for example Kyalo and Kising'u (2024) in construction projects and Leshinka and Nyaberi (2023) in donor-funded water projects, there is a noticeable lack of research specifically focusing on livestock commercialization initiatives. This study sought to fill the gap by examining the influence of project planning on the performance of livestock commercialization projects in Kenya.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To examine the influence of project planning practice on the performance of livestock commercialization projects in Kenya.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Project planning provides the structural framework that guides the coordination of resources, activities, and timelines to achieve project objectives efficiently (Ranasinghe, Rahmani, Gilbert, & Gharaie, 2025). It establishes a logical sequence of tasks, identifies resource requirements, and sets out the priorities that ensure smooth execution. By offering clarity on the allocation of responsibilities and expected outcomes, planning reduces uncertainty and enhances the ability to manage risks as they emerge (Eyasmin & Ghosh, 2024). It creates a roadmap through which project managers can balance competing demands while maintaining focus on achieving intended results, thereby improving efficiency, accountability, and adaptability throughout the implementation process. According to Gasana, and Njenga (2024) financial resource planning is central to the success of any project, as it ensures that available funds are effectively distributed to cover all essential activities. Through careful allocation and monitoring, managers can avoid financial shortfalls and ensure that critical tasks are not disrupted by inadequate funding. Clear budgeting, cost estimation, and expenditure tracking allow for prioritization of activities that deliver the greatest value (Irfan, Khan, Hassan, Hassan, Habib, Khan, & Khan, 2021). By providing a structured approach to managing financial flows, this aspect of planning minimizes risks of overspending or resource wastage, while strengthening transparency and ensuring that projects remain sustainable over time.

Furthermore, human resource planning emphasizes the importance of aligning workforce capacity with project needs to maximize productivity and ensure smooth implementation (Kholodova & Podgorskaya, 2020). It involves not only identifying the number of people required but also considering the skills, expertise, and training necessary for effective delivery. Proper allocation of roles enhances coordination among team members, prevents duplication of effort, and ensures that specialized knowledge is applied where it has the greatest impact (Maina, 2024). When human resource planning is effectively conducted, it contributes to improved motivation, stronger collaboration, and timely achievement of project milestones. Time planning is vital in ensuring that activities are sequenced logically and executed within appropriate durations (Makombe, 2022). Establishing clear schedules prevents delays, reduces bottlenecks, and improves coordination across different components of a project. This aspect of planning also ensures that interdependent tasks are aligned, allowing one stage to transition smoothly into the next. By setting achievable

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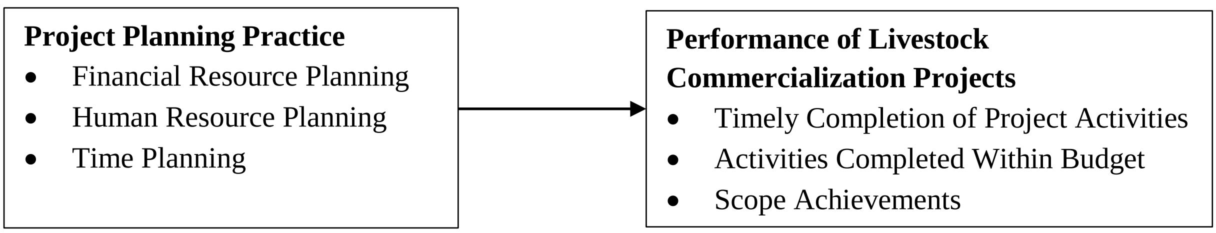
timelines, project managers can track progress more accurately, manage unforeseen disruptions more effectively, and maintain momentum toward overall completion. Efficient time management therefore underpins the predictability and discipline necessary for successful project delivery (Zulu, Siankwilimba, Mwanaumo, & Simamba, 2025).

Performance of projects is reflected through the extent to which planned objectives are realized within established parameters (Shamas, Bilal, Bashir, & Tariq, 2025). Timely completion of activities demonstrates efficiency and effective coordination in execution. When activities are achieved within budget, it highlights strong financial discipline and effective use of resources. Scope achievement, on the other hand, indicates that the planned outputs and deliverables have been successfully met, reinforcing the overall credibility of the project (Merga, 2022). Transformational leadership theory posits that leaders achieve effectiveness by inspiring followers to transcend self-interest, fostering a sense of collective purpose, and promoting innovation and growth as essential drivers of performance (Fareed & Su, 2022). Its central proposition is that leadership is not merely about task execution or transactional exchanges but about creating a vision that galvanizes commitment and instills motivation beyond routine expectations. The theory emphasizes intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational influence as pathways through which leaders elevate followers' capacity to think creatively, embrace change, and pursue higher levels of achievement (Al-Maalouf & El-Achi, 2023). This perspective presents leadership as a process of transformation, where both leaders and followers are engaged in a dynamic relationship that fuels mutual growth and shared success.

The theory recognizes that leadership extends beyond authority and structural control into the realm of values, emotions, and intrinsic motivation performance (Fareed & Su, 2022). By highlighting how leaders foster trust, model integrity, and articulate a compelling vision, the theory underscores the psychological and relational dimensions of leadership that shape team cohesion and organizational culture. Such emphasis on the leader's ability to create meaning and instill a sense of belonging reveals why transformational leadership is consistently associated with improved engagement, higher commitment, and stronger performance outcomes (Ahmad, Abdulhamid, Wahab, & Nazir, 2022). It shifts attention away from rigid command models toward a relational approach that strengthens adaptability and creativity qualities especially significant in managing projects that operate in uncertain and dynamic environments.

Transformational leadership theory enriches project planning by positioning leaders as visionaries who inspire commitment, stimulate innovation, and cultivate ownership among stakeholders (Nauman, Musawir, & Riaz, 2024). Leaders employ inspirational influence and individualized consideration to motivate participants to move beyond routine task allocation. This approach engages team members in a collaborative process that integrates creativity and adaptability into planning. It also strengthens coordination, enhances problem-solving, and builds resilience. As a result, project plans become dynamic roadmaps shaped by shared purpose and long-term sustainability. Effective project planning directly influences project performance by ensuring that resources, tasks, and timelines are systematically aligned with objectives. Well-structured planning enhances coordination, minimizes risks, and promotes efficient use of financial, human, and time resources, leading to improved completion rates and quality outcomes (Hinderink & Sterkenburg, 2022). Consequently, projects are more likely to achieve their intended scope, stay within budget, and meet deadlines, reflecting higher overall performance. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework showing the relationship between the project planning and performance of livestock commercialization projects.



Independent Variable **Dependent Variable**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

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Past empirical studies have assessed how project planning is linked to project performance. Muute and James (2019) examined the role of project planning practices in influencing construction project performance in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Their study focused on planning aspects such as human resources, financial management, material utilization, and time scheduling, collecting data through semi-structured questionnaires administered to 125 project managers. The results indicated that firms that emphasized personnel management, conducted regular trainings, and maintained adequate funding achieved smoother project completion. Additionally, effective use of materials, clearly defined project outcomes, and well-structured time plans contributed to overall performance. The study concluded that robust planning across these areas significantly enhances project success. Kyalo and Kising'u (2024) investigated the effect of project planning practices on the performance of road construction projects in Kwale County, Kenya. Using a correlational research design, the study sampled 236 project team members overseeing 59 projects under the Kenya Rural Roads Authority, with 148 respondents involved in 37 projects. Data were collected through a cross-sectional survey and analyzed using SPSS version 26 with descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that effective planning of project scope and resources had a statistically significant positive impact on project performance.

Leshinka and Nyaberi (2023) assessed the project management practices and implementation of donor funded water and sanitation projects in Central Rift Region, Kenya. The study indicated that when project management practices including stakeholder involvement, project team training, project evaluation, and risk management were analyzed collectively against project implementation, the model demonstrated an excellent fit of 99.6%, suggesting that these practices together strongly predict successful implementation. Individually, stakeholder involvement ($p = 0.046$) and project evaluation ($p = 0.024$) were significant predictors, while project team training ($p = 0.800$) showed an insignificant positive effect. Risk management also emerged as a significant predictor ($p = 0.021$) and exerted the greatest influence on implementation ($\beta = 7.633$), followed by stakeholder engagement ($\beta = 1.192$), project evaluation ($\beta = 0.116$), and lastly project team training, which had a negative influence ($\beta = -0.672$). These findings highlight the critical role of risk management and stakeholder engagement in driving successful project implementation.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the positive influence of project planning on construction and road project performance, their contexts differ significantly from livestock commercialization initiatives. The focus on construction projects means that findings on resource allocation, human resource management, and time planning may not fully translate to agricultural or livestock-based settings. Specifically, financial, human, and time planning in livestock commercialization involve unique considerations such as production cycles, animal welfare, and market linkages, which were not addressed in prior research. Moreover, earlier studies did not explore how these planning practices interact to influence project outcomes in the commercialization of livestock. To address these gaps, the current research specifically assessed the influence of financial resource planning, human resource planning, and time planning on the performance of livestock commercialization projects.

4. METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was used for the study. This design was selected due to its capacity to gather data in authentic environments, its suitability for a substantial sample size, and its alignment with the study's restricted geographical focus. Furthermore, this approach facilitated the collection of data from participants in their natural settings, ensuring the authenticity and relevance of the findings. The utilization of a descriptive survey design was advantageous, as it will enable a comprehensive examination of the issue being explored. The study focused on the Kenya Livestock Commercialization Project in the 10 project counties: Baringo, Busia, Bungoma, Elgeyo Marakwet, Kakamega, Marsabit, Nakuru, Samburu, Siaya, and Trans Nzoia. The unit of observation included the Project Management and Coordination Unit (PMCU) staff at the national level and the County Project Management and Coordination Unit (CPMCU) staff. Specifically, the PMCU contributed 16 staff members, while each of the counties had four staff members each. This brought the total target population to 56 individuals directly involved in the implementation and oversight of the Kenya Livestock Commercialization Project. This study did not employ sampling, as the entire population of interest is relatively small and easily accessible. As such, a census approach was used, whereby data was collected from all members of the population. This approach ensured comprehensive coverage and eliminates any potential sampling bias, thereby enhancing the accuracy and reliability of the findings. The research employed questionnaires as the primary data collection tool. Closed-ended questions were used to gather quantitative data, using a five-point Likert scale. The collected data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 26.0), a

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statistical software package. Both descriptive statistics (e.g., frequencies, means, and percentages) and inferential statistics were employed to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the study's findings. To examine the relationships between the dependent and independent variables, a linear regression model was used to link the independent variable to the dependent variable as follows;

$$Y = \beta_0+\beta_1X_1+\varepsilon$$

Where;

Y= Performance of Livestock Commercialization Projects

B_1 = Beta Coefficient

X_1= Project Planning Practice

β_0= is constant

ε= Error term

5. RESULTS

This section presents the findings, discussions interpretations on the project planning and the performance of the livestock commercialization projects. These comprise the descriptive and inferential study results.

5.1 Descriptive Analysis Results

The study sought assess the influence of project planning practice on the performance of livestock commercialization projects. The findings are presented in Tables 1 and 2:

Table 1: Influence of Project Planning Practice on the Performance of Livestock Commercialization Projects

	N	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev
		Percentage (%)						
Project costs were well estimated at the planning stage	49	57.1	30.6	10.2	2	0	4.43	0.764
Project activities are implemented within the planned timelines.	49	40.8	49	4.1	6.1	0	4.24	0.804
Training and induction were done to project team members	49	24.5	16.3	30.6	20.4	8.2	3.29	1.275
The budgeted funds are enough to complete the project	49	28.6	24.5	26.5	16.3	4.1	3.57	1.190

The findings in Table 4.1 indicated that 57.1% of the respondents strongly agreed and 30.6% agreed, giving a combined total of 87.7% in agreement (mean = 4.43; std. dev. = 0.764) that project costs were well estimated at the planning stage. Accurate cost estimation ensures that financial resources are appropriately allocated, which reduces the risk of budget shortfalls and supports efficient project execution. Furthermore, well-estimated costs facilitate better planning for contingencies and enhance stakeholder confidence in the project. Consequently, proper financial planning at the early stage strengthens the overall performance and sustainability of livestock commercialization projects. Additionally, 40.8% of the respondents strongly agreed and 49% agreed, yielding a total of 89.8% (mean = 4.24; std. dev. = 0.804) that project activities are implemented within the planned timelines. Timely implementation of project activities ensures that objectives are met as scheduled, minimizing delays and disruptions. Moreover, adherence to timelines reflects effective coordination and project management, which is essential for maintaining stakeholder trust. This demonstrates that strong schedule management directly enhances the efficiency and success of livestock commercialization projects.

Moreover, 24.5% of the respondents strongly agreed, 16.3% agreed, and 30.6% had differing opinions (mean = 3.29; std. dev. = 1.275) that training and induction were done for project team members. Providing proper training equips team members with the necessary skills and knowledge, which enhances their performance and ability to execute tasks efficiently. Additionally, adequate induction promotes understanding of project goals and procedures, reducing errors and improving coordination. This suggests that investing in human resource capacity is crucial for the smooth implementation and success of livestock commercialization projects. Similarly, 28.6% of the respondents strongly

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agreed, 24.5% agreed, and 26.5% were indifferent (mean = 3.57; std. dev. = 1.190) that the budgeted funds are enough to complete the project. Sufficient funding ensures that all planned activities can be carried out without interruption, which contributes to timely project completion and overall success. Furthermore, adequate financial resources allow the project to address unforeseen challenges and maintain quality standards. This indicates that ensuring proper budgeting is critical for sustaining performance and achieving the intended outcomes of livestock commercialization projects.

Table 2: Performance of Livestock Commercialization Projects

	N	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev
		Percentage (%)						
Project activities are completed on time.	49	36.7	53.1	10.2	0	0	4.27	0.638
The project adheres to its planned budget.	49	42.9	30.6	22.4	4.1	0	4.12	0.904
Cost overruns are rare and justified.	49	44.9	36.7	10.2	6.1	2	4.16	0.986
The project has achieved its set objectives and targets.	49	34.7	32.7	36.5	6.1	0	3.96	0.935

As illustrated in Table 2, 36.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and 53.1% also agreed, resulting in 89.8% of respondents expressing at least agreement (Mean = 4.27; Std. Dev. = 0.638) that project activities are completed on time. Timely completion of project activities ensures smooth progress and minimizes delays, which indicate effectiveness of livestock commercialization projects. Further, 42.9% of the respondents strongly agreed while 30.6% agreed, giving a total of 73.5% who at least agreed (Mean = 4.12; Std. Dev. = 0.904) that the project adheres to its planned budget. Maintaining adherence to the budget reduces financial risks and allows optimal allocation of resources, which supports the sustainability and efficiency of project operations. Additionally, 44.9% of the respondents strongly agreed and 36.7% agreed, yielding 81.6% who at least agreed (Mean = 4.16; Std. Dev. = 0.986) that cost overruns are rare and justified. Minimizing unplanned expenditures ensures resources are used prudently, which strengthens financial control and contributes to better project performance. Further, 4.7% of the respondents strongly agreed and 32.7% agreed, giving a combined 67.4% who at least agreed (Mean = 3.96; Std. Dev. = 0.935) that the project has achieved its set objectives and targets. Achieving these objectives reflects the project's effectiveness in delivering planned outcomes hence better performance. The findings of this study demonstrate that timely completion of activities, strict adherence to budgets, and controlled cost management directly indicate project performance by ensuring efficiency and minimizing delays. Such practices contribute to higher productivity, optimal use of resources, and the successful achievement of set objectives, which are key indicators of project performance.

5.2 Inferential Analysis Results

Inferential analysis was carried out to draw predictions and insights regarding the relationship between project planning and performance of livestock commercialization projects. The analysis included both Pearson's correlation and regression analysis techniques.

5.2.1 Correlation Analysis Results and Discussion

Correlation analysis was performed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between project planning and performance of livestock commercialization projects. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Analysis Results

		Project Performance
Project Planning	Pearson Correlation	.806**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	49

According to the correlation results, there existed a positive and significant relationship between project planning and the performance of livestock commercialization projects (r = 0.806**, p = 0.000). The positive correlation implies that

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improvements in project planning practice with associated with enhanced project performance. Notably, effective financial resource planning ensures that funds are available when needed, preventing delays and supporting the timely completion of project activities. It can also be implied that adequate human resource planning equips team members with the required skills, improving task execution and efficiency. Moreover, the result mean structured time planning enables logical sequencing of activities and adherence to deadlines, minimizing schedule slippages. Overall, an effective planning enhances budget compliance by anticipating costs and reduces deviations from intended deliverable, strengthening scope achievements and improved performance of livestock commercialization projects.

5.2.2 Regression Analysis Results

Regression analysis was employed to predict performance of livestock commercial projects from the project planning. The results are illustrated in Tables 4, 5, and 6:

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.806[a]	.650	.643	.31420

a. Predictors: (Constant), Planning

The results shows R^2 of 0.650, hence 65% of the variation in project performance is explained by project planning. Therefore, the performance of livestock commercialization projects was influenced by project planning.

Table 5: ANOVA[a]

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	8.625	1	8.625	87.369	.000[b]
Residual	4.640	47	.099		
Total	13.265	48			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Project Planning

The ANOVA results reveal that the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 87.369$, $p = 0.000$) and fit for the data. This confirms that project planning reliably predicts project performance of livestock commercialization projects.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.026	.335		3.062	.004
Project Planning	.799	.085	.806	9.347	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Project Performance

The model was interpreted as: $Y= 1.026 + 0.799X_1 + \varepsilon$. According to the findings, one-unit increase in project planning is associated with a 0.0.799 unit increase in project performance. The results show a t-value of 9.347 with a corresponding p-value of 0.000. This indicates that project planning significantly influence the performance of livestock commercialization projects, demonstrating that improvements in planning practices enhance timely completion, budget adherence, and scope achievement.

6. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that project management practices significantly influence the performance of livestock commercialization projects, with each practice contributing to timely completion, budget adherence, and scope fulfillment. Project planning practice emerged as a critical driver of performance, as structured financial, human resource, and time planning provided the framework for coordinated execution. By ensuring resources were available when needed, equipping team members with necessary skills, and sequencing activities logically, planning reduced delays, enhanced operational efficiency, and strengthened adherence to budgets and project scope. Well-considered planning also improved the project’s ability to manage contingencies and respond to unforeseen challenges, reinforcing stability and predictability in performance.

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7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the State Department of Livestock Development and county livestock departments should strengthen comprehensive planning frameworks for livestock commercialization projects. By carefully sequencing activities, allocating resources effectively, and anticipating potential risks, projects can reduce delays and operational disruptions. Such structured planning will improve efficiency, enable smoother execution, and enhance the predictability of project performance.

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