



Effect of Project Management Practices on the Improvement of Irish Potatoes Value Chain Project: A Case of SDGP Project in Musanze District, Rwanda (2020-2022)

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1. Abstract

This study investigates the impact of project management practices on the improvement of the Irish potatoes value chain project in Musanze District, Rwanda. It focuses on assessing the effects of project planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation on the project's success. Using a census method due to a small target population of 135, which included SDGP staff and local agricultural representatives, the study utilized both primary and secondary data, analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS.

The results indicate that project management practices, particularly planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, have a strong positive correlation with project improvement. However, the study also highlights some areas of concern, such as inadequate detailed planning and beneficiary involvement. With an R-squared value of .862, these practices explain 86.2% of the variations in project improvement.

Conclusively, the study affirms that effective project management significantly enhances the Irish potatoes value chain project in Musanze District. Recommendations include refining the planning process, enhancing beneficiary involvement, improving risk management during implementation, and ensuring effective communication and use of monitoring and evaluation findings to foster better project outcomes.

Key words: project management practices, project improvement, project planning, project

2. Introduction

Project management is integral across sectors, linking its historical roots to project sustainability. It requires understanding an organization's current state and planning paths for progress. Strategic management plans focus on setting priorities, allocating resources effectively, and adjusting agilely to new challenges, ensuring goal achievement and long-term sustainability (Basu, 2017).

In China, donors face government pressure to cut foreign aid, which may end some projects and affect international collaborations. These challenges reveal that past foreign aid benefits are often temporary, diminishing after aid withdrawal, prompting a reassessment of aid effectiveness (Brown, 2015).

Sustainable project management in the U.S. considers environmental, financial, and social factors from project start to ensure all-round sustainability. It focuses on lifecycle management, from planning through to completion, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to sustainability across all project phases (Gilbert, 2015).

In Africa, inadequate infrastructure in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and South Africa hampers development projects. Effective project

management is vital for overcoming these challenges, driving economic growth, and achieving sustainability through structured practices and knowledge in sectors such as construction and energy (Bambarger, 2018; Marisol, 2015).

In Kenya, project management is evolving towards enhancing sustainability and inclusivity in business ventures, focusing on community empowerment and equitable benefits. This involves detailed project planning, execution, and stakeholder engagement to ensure lasting economic impacts and broad-based benefits (Duggal, 2015; Mansuri, 2016; Mulwa, 2017).

The SDGP Project, initiated in July 2019 in Rwanda, aims to enhance the seed and ware potato value chain for better food security. It collaborates with various partners to improve financing, value addition, and commercialization in agriculture, establishing an efficient and informed network for stakeholders (SDGP, 2018).

3. Statement of the Problem

The Sustainable Development Goals Partnership Project (SDGP) was launched in July 2019 to enhance the efficiency of the potato value chain in Rwanda, aiming to complete by June 2024. Its main objective is to improve the seed and ware Irish potato sectors to strengthen Rwanda's food security, focusing on increasing productivity and connecting growers to markets effectively.

The project operates under Rwanda's Strategic Plan for Agriculture Transformation, with the Rwandan Agricultural Board (RAB) as a key player in seed production and agricultural research. The Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources (MINAGRI) supports this initiative by subsidizing fertilizers and helping regulate potato prices to ensure profitability within the supply chain. There is a strategic shift underway to transfer seed multiplication responsibilities from the public to the private sector to enhance sustainability and economic benefits for all stakeholders.

However, the Irish potato value chain faces several challenges, including limited involvement from the private sector, dependency on donor funds, and fluctuations in market prices. These issues complicate the transition of seed multiplication from public to private hands, posing risks to the long-term stability and growth of the sector.

4. Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to investigate the effect of project management practices on the improvement of Irish potatoes value chain project based in Musanze District, Rwanda

The study has the following specific objectives.

- i. To assess the effect of project planning on improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District.
- ii. To determine the effect of project implementation on improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District.
- iii. To establish the effect of project monitoring and evaluation on improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District.

5. Research hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were verified in this study:

- i. **Ho1:** There is no significant effect of project of project planning on improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District.
- ii. **Ho2:** There is no significant effect of project implementation on improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District.
- iii. **Ho3:** There is no significant effect of project monitoring and evaluation on improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District.

6. Literature Review

Effect of Project Planning on Improvement: Project planning significantly influences project outcomes across various sectors. Studies like Mwanza et al. (2020) in Kenya and Kadiho et al. (2021) in Rwanda highlight the positive impact of structured planning on building and community project performances, emphasizing the importance of effective stakeholder management and strategic planning practices. Further research by Masengesho et al. (2022) supports these findings, showing a strong correlation between detailed planning in areas such as human resources and financial management and the success of dairy projects in Rwanda.

Effect of Project Implementation on Improvement: Implementation methodologies directly affect project outcomes, as illustrated by studies in the software development and agricultural sectors. Williams (2022) notes that Agile and Scrum methodologies outperform Waterfall in software development due to their flexibility and iterative nature. Similarly, Mukamugenga and Nkechi (2022) found that well-defined project scopes and robust monitoring systems are crucial for achieving high performance in farm projects, suggesting that precise and inclusive project design and effective team management enhance project success.

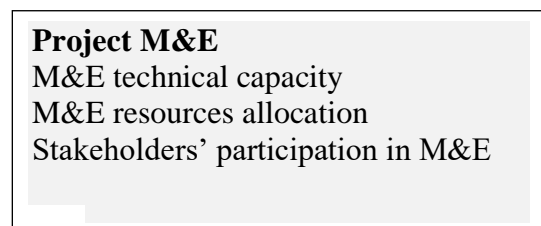
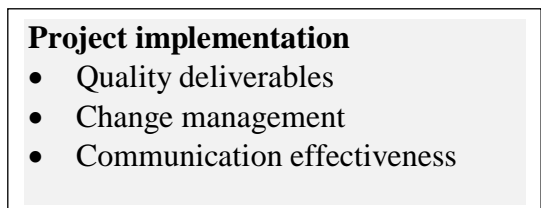
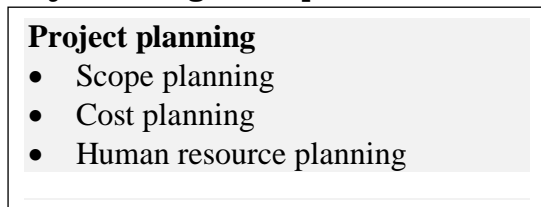
Effect of Project Monitoring and Evaluation on Improvement: Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are pivotal for improving project efficiency and effectiveness. Research across various sectors, including development projects in Uganda and healthcare projects, indicates that strong M&E practices lead to better project outcomes, as they help in identifying and correcting deviations promptly. Studies by Harriet (2021) and Garcia (2021) underline the need for integrating comprehensive M&E practices into project management to achieve higher project success rates and sustainability.

7. Conceptual Framework

In the study, the conceptual framework captured project management practices and their effect on performance of agriculture-based projects among the project organizations in Musanze. It presents how independent variables which include: Project planning, project implementation, project monitoring and evaluation and project communication are related to a dependent variable -agricultural project performance. Environmental project enablers are used as a moderating variable to moderate the effect between project management practices and agricultural project performance.

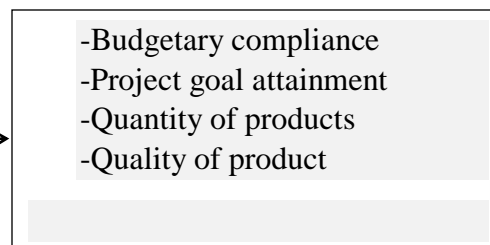
Independent variables

Project management practices



Dependent variables

Project improvement



Source: researcher conceptualization (2023)

8. Research Methodology

A descriptive research design was employed to investigate the research problem, supplemented by a mixed methods approach to achieve a comprehensive analysis. This approach combined quantitative methods, such as descriptive statistics, with qualitative methods, including interviews and thematic analysis, to effectively address the research question. The study's population of 135 consisted of SDGP staff, representatives from Potato Collection Centers, district staff, agronomists, and cooperative officers. Given the small population size, the researcher opted for a census inquiry method, collecting data from every individual or unit within the target population, thereby eliminating the need for sampling techniques.

9. Findings

The mean values were then interpreted within specific ranges: from 1.0 to 1.80 as very low, 1.90 to 2.60 as low mean, 2.70 to 3.40 as neutral, 3.50 to 4.20 as high mean, and 4.30 to 5.0 as "very high mean. To determine the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the data, the standard deviation was considered. If the standard deviation was less than or equal to 0.5, the data was classified as heterogeneous. Conversely, if the standard deviation exceeded 0.5, the data was categorized as homogeneous.

9.1 Effect of project planning on improvement of SDGP in Musanze District

The first objective of the study assessed the effect of project planning on improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District.

Table 1: Model Summary: Project planning and improvement of SDGP project

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.887 ^a	.787	.786	.249

- a.** Predictor (s): (Constant), Project planning
b. Dependent variable: Improvement of SDGP project

Source: Research findings, 2023

Table 1 provides observations into the effect of project planning on the improvement of the SDGP project. The coefficient of correlation (R) is 0.887. This indicates that there is strong and positive relationship between project planning and improvement of SDGP project. The R-squared

value (R Square) is 0.787. This implies that approximately 78.7% of the variations in the improvement of the SDGP project is attributed to project planning practices. However, 21.3% of the variations in project improvement are explained by other factors not accounted for in this model.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance: Project planning and improvement of SDGP project

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	30.588	1	30.588	492.434	.000 ^a
	Residual	8.261	133	.062		
	Total	38.849	134			

- a. Predictor (s):** (Constant), Project planning
b. Dependent variable: Improvement of SDGP project

Source: Research findings, 2023

Table 2 presents the analysis of variance (ANOVA) results regarding how project planning influences the improvement of the SDGP project in Musanze District. The calculated F-statistic (30.588) is greater than the F statistics in the table ($F_{(1, 133)}=3.92$). The associated significance level (Sig.), which is very low at $.000 < 0.05$, represents the probability of obtaining the observed F-statistic

by random chance alone. It indicates that the effect of project planning on the improvement of the SDGP project in Musanze District is highly significant. This corroborates with Dufitumukiza's (2022) study findings which amplify the critical role of project planning in ensuring the long-term viability of educational initiatives.

Table 3: Coefficients on the effect of project planning on improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.216	.176		1.223	.223
	Project planning	.940	.042	.887	22.191	.000

- a.** Dependent variable: Improvement of SDGP project

Source: Research findings, 2023

Table 3 shows that the constant term in this regression model is represented by a value of 0.216. This constant term reflects the estimated value of the project improvement when the project planning is equal to zero. For the project planning, the unstandardized coefficient (B) is .940. As the level of project planning increases by one unit, the SDGP project's improvement is estimated to increase by approximately .940 units. This positive coefficient implies that greater emphasis on project planning is associated with higher levels of project improvement. The sig value $.000 < 0.05$ indicates that there is significant

effect of project planning on the improvement of the SDGP project in Musanze District. The findings align with Mansuri's (2016) study, which emphasized that effective planning has the potential to improve the project outcomes.

9.2 Effect of project implementation on improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District

The second objective of the study determined the effect of project implementation on improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District.

Table 4: Model Summary: Project implementation and improvement of SDGP project

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
2	.820 ^a	.673	.671	.309

a. **Predictor(s):** (Constant), project implementation

Source: Research findings, 2023

Table 4 shows that the R value of .820. This indicates that there was a positive and strong relationship between project implementation and SDGP project improvement in Musanze District. The R-squared value is 0.673. This implies that around 67.3% of the variations in the improvement of SDGP project is linked to how the

project is executed. However, 32.7% of the variations in the improvement of SDGP project is attributed to other factors not accounted for in this model. This aligns with Williams' (2022) study which showed that the choice of project implementation methodology significantly influences project improvement.

Table 5: Analysis of Variance: Project implementation and improvement of SDGP project

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	26.151	1	26.151	273.885	.000 ^a
1	Residual	12.699	133	.095		
	Total	38.849	134			

a. **Predictor(s):** (Constant), project implementation
 b. **Dependent variable:** Improvement of SDGP project

Source: Research findings, 2023

The ANOVA results in Table 5 show a significant calculated F-value= 273.885 which is greater than the F-value in the F-table (3.92) and a very low p-value (Sig.) of $.000 < 0.05$. This emphasizes the significant effect of project implementation on enhancing the improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District. This ANOVA result further

indicates the strong positive role of well-structured implementation, in driving successful project improvements. This is consistent with Smith (2020) whose research showed a strong correlation between successful project implementation strategies and positive project improvement results. The prominent F-value and low Sig. underline the strong and moderate

relationship between implementation practices and positive project outcomes.

Table 6: Regression Coefficients: Project implementation and improvement of SDGP project

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
2	(Constant)	.065	.245	.266	.791
	Project implementation	.983	.059	.820	16.549

- a. **Predictor(s):** (Constant), project implementation
- b. **Dependent variable:** Improvement of SDGP project

Source: Research findings, 2023

Table 6 shows that the unstandardized coefficient for Project implementation (.983). This indicates that a unit change in the project implementation will result in 0.983 unit change in improvement of the project. The associated significance value (Sig.) of .000 which is less than 0.05 shows strong statistical importance, indicating the

significant effect of project implementation on improving the SDGP project in Musanze District. This aligns with the ideas presented by Duggal (2015), emphasizing the essential role of effective implementation methods in achieving positive project outcomes.

9.3 Effect of project monitoring and evaluation on improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District.

The third objective of the study established the effect of project monitoring and evaluation on improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District.

Table 7: Model Summary: Project monitoring and evaluation and improvement of SDGP project

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.911 ^a	.829	.828	.223

- a. Predictor(s): (Constant), project M&E

Source: Research findings, 2023

Table 7 shows that the R value stands at 0.911. This indicates that there is a positive and strong relationship between project monitoring and evaluation and the improvement of the SDGP project in Musanze District. The R-squared value, 0.829, implies that approximately 82.9% of the variations in project improvement is attributed to variations in project monitoring and evaluation.

The findings also corroborate the findings by Mutua et al. (2020) who showed a positive and significant relationship between project monitoring practices and project implementation. This indicates that effective monitoring and evaluation processes shape project outcomes. This correspondence indicates their strategic importance in driving project improvement.

Table 8: Analysis of variance: Project M&E and improvement of SDGP project

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	32.222	1	32.222	646.602	.000 ^a
3	Residual	6.628	133	.050		
	Total	38.849	134			

- a. Predictor(s): (Constant), project M&E
b. Dependent Variable: Improvement of SDGP project

Source: Research findings, 2023

The ANOVA findings in Table 8 indicate a notable F-value of 646.602 which is greater than the F-value in the F-table (3.92) and an extremely low p-value (Sig.) of .000<0.05. This highlights the significant effect of project monitoring and evaluation on the improvement of the SDGP

project in Musanze District. This aligns with the viewpoints of Garcia (2021) who demonstrated a direct correlation between rigorous project monitoring and evaluation practices and improved outcomes.

Table 9: Regression Coefficients: Project M&E and improvement of SDGP project

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	.013	.162		.079	.937
1	Project monitoring and evaluation	.985	.039	.911	25.428	.000

- a. **Predictor(s):** (Constant), project M&E
b. **Dependent Variable:** Improvement of SDGP project

Source: Research findings, 2023

The data presented in Table 9 reveals essential insights into the relationship between Project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and the improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District. The unstandardized coefficient value of 0.985 signifies that for every unit of improvement in Project M&E practices, there is a nearly one-unit increase (0.985) in the improvement of the SDGP project. This indicates a strong and positive association, highlighting the critical role of M&E in driving project enhancements. The low significance value (Sig.) of 0.000 is particularly noteworthy. It implies that the relationship between Project M&E and the improvement of the SDGP project is statistically significant. In practical terms, this suggests that effective M&E

practices have a substantial and measurable impact on the project's outcomes.

9.4 Inferential Analysis

The overall objective of this study is to comprehensively investigate the effect of project management practices on the improvement of the Irish Potatoes Value Chain project, situated in Musanze District, Rwanda. To achieve this goal, this section of the research encompasses an analysis of project management practices in correlation with project improvement outcomes through correlation analysis. Furthermore, a multiple regression analysis was employed to delve deeper into the intricate relationships between specific project management variables and the various facets of project enhancement,

thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play within the

context of this agricultural project.

Table 20: Correlation Matrix Results

Variables		Project Planning	Project Implementation	Project M&E	Improvement of SDGP project
Project Planning	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	n	135			
Project Implementation	Pearson Correlation	.834**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
	n	135	135		
Project M&E	Pearson Correlation	.880**	.856**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
	n	135	135	135	
Improvement of SDGP project	Pearson Correlation	.887**	.820**	.911**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	n	135	135	135	135

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

Source: Research findings, 2023

Table 10 shows strong correlations between project planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) with the success of the SDGP project. Planning correlates at 0.887, emphasizing its crucial role in enhancing project outcomes, aligning with Mwanza et al. (2020) who linked good planning to better building project performance. Implementation also shows a strong positive correlation of 0.820, supporting findings

by Smith (2020) and Williams (2022) that effective execution methods like Agile and Scrum lead to more successful outcomes than traditional methods. Finally, M&E has a high correlation of 0.911, indicating its vital role in improving project performance, supported by Harriet (2021) and Mutua et al. (2020) who found that strong M&E practices significantly boost project efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability.

Table 11: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.929 ^a	.862	.859	.202

a. Predictors: (Constant), Project M&E, Project Implementation, Project Planning

Source: Research findings, 2023

The findings in Table 11's Model Summary revealed a powerful effect of project monitoring and evaluation, project planning, project implementation, on the improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District. The significant R value (0.929) indicates a strong and positive relationship between project management practices (project planning, implementation,

monitoring and evaluation) and the improvement of the SDGP project in Musanze District. Furthermore, the R-squared value is 0.862. This indicates these factors collectively explain about 86.2% of the variation in the project improvement. However, the remaining 13.8% of the variations in the project improvement are a result of other factors not included in the model.

Table 12: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	33.504	3	11.168	273.714	.000 ^a
	Residual	5.345	131	.041		
	Total	38.849	134			

a. **Predictors:** (Constant), Project M&E, Project Implementation, Project Planning.

b. **Dependent Variable:** Improvement of SDGP project

Source: Research findings, 2023

The ANOVA results in Table 12 reveal a significant F-value of 273.714 which is greater than the F-value on the F-table (3.92), coupled with a highly significant p-value (Sig.) of $.000 < 0.05$. These findings indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between project management practices (project planning, project implementation and project monitoring and evaluation) and the improvement of SDGP project in Musanze District. The significant F-value and low Sig. indicate that these combined factors significantly contribute to the variance in project improvement scores, reinforcing their crucial role in driving positive project outcomes.

These results align with Jones (2021) perspective, highlighting the importance of integrating these components to enhance project improvement.

9.5 Hypotheses testing results

The hypotheses are assessed based on the rule that if the p-value is less than the significance level (0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected, implying a significant influence. If the p-value is greater than or equal to 0.05, the null hypothesis is not rejected, indicating no significant influence. Table below presents the results.

Table 13: Verifications of the research hypotheses

Hypothesis	Coefficient	P-value	Decision	Interpretations
Ho1	0.386	0.000	Reject HO ₁	Since the p-value is less than the commonly chosen significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho1) was rejected. Therefore, there is a significant effect of project planning on the improvement of the SDGP project in Musanze District.
Ho2	0.053	0.503	Accept HO ₂	Since the p-value is greater than the significance level of 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis (Ho2). Therefore, there is no significant effect of project implementation on the improvement of the SDGP project in Musanze District based on this analysis
Ho3	0.597	0.000	Reject HO ₃	Since the p-value is less than the significance level of 0.05, we can reject the null hypothesis (Ho3). Therefore, there is a significant effect of project monitoring and evaluation on the improvement of the SDGP project in Musanze District.

Source: *Research Findings, 2023*

10. Conclusions

This study explored how project management practices affect the Irish potatoes value chain project in Musanze District, Rwanda. It found that detailed project planning, including clear goals, resource estimation, and risk management, significantly boosts project success. However, areas like detailed timelines and beneficiary involvement need improvement. Effective implementation practices, such as adherence to timelines and proactive problem-solving, are crucial for project advancement, though resource allocation and risk management could be better optimized. Lastly, robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices, including the use of key performance indicators and regular assessments, are essential for informed decision-making and enhancing project outcomes, highlighting the importance of M&E in project optimization and risk mitigation.

11. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to enhance the effectiveness of project management practices and improve the Sustainable Development of the Irish Potatoes Value Chain (SDGP) project in Musanze District:

SDGP should refine its project planning process by establishing a detailed timeline with specific milestones and critical paths, improving resource allocation and project clarity. Additionally, involving beneficiaries in the planning stages will ensure the project aligns with community needs and expectations. Strengthening risk management with a comprehensive plan and regular updates throughout the project lifecycle is also crucial.

The project should adopt regular evaluations to monitor progress and adjust as necessary, maintaining alignment with objectives. Enhancing communication about monitoring and evaluation (M&E) findings will ensure all stakeholders are consistently informed about the

project's status and any issues that arise. It's also important for the project team to actively use M&E data for decision-making and continuous improvement.

Lastly, SDGP should focus on developing the skills of project teams through targeted training in project planning, risk management, and M&E practices. Promoting an open and adaptive project culture that values feedback and encourages continuous learning and innovation will further strengthen the project's effectiveness and sustainability.

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