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Research Article

Stakeholder Identification and Performance of Automation Projects at Kenya Pipeline Company PLC Nairobi, Kenya

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Abstract

Empirical studies examining stakeholder management within Kenya's petroleum sector remain limited, despite global evidence affirming its role in enhancing automation project outcomes. This study investigated the effect of stakeholder identification, on the performance of automation projects at Kenya Pipeline Company PLC Nairobi, with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) considered as a moderating variable. Guided by Stakeholder Theory, the research adopted a positivist philosophy, quantitative approach, and cross-sectional design. Data were collected from project managers, engineers, ICT personnel, operations staff, maintenance personnel, supervisors, and departmental managers, with sample size determined using Yamane's formula. Findings revealed that systematic stakeholder identification, mapping, and documentation significantly enhanced accountability, collaboration, and operational efficiency. Regression analysis confirmed that stakeholder identification had a statistically significant effect, with a unit increase corresponding to a 0.423 rise in performance. The study concludes that effective stakeholder identification, strengthened by ICT, are critical drivers of automation project success at Kenya Pipeline Company PLC. The study recommends that Kenya Pipeline Company PLC management should strengthen stakeholder mapping by adopting systematic identification processes at the start of automation projects to ensure inclusivity and minimize risks of oversight. Project managers should enhance categorization frameworks to better align stakeholder interests with project goals, thereby improving prioritization and integration into strategic objectives. Institutional leadership should institutionalize role documentation through clear and transparent records of stakeholder responsibilities to foster accountability, collaboration, and constructive engagement. Automation project teams should leverage identification insights by continuously refining stakeholder identification practices, given their statistically significant effect on project performance, to sustain operational efficiency and project success.

Keywords: Stakeholder Identification, Performance of Automation Projects, Kenya Pipeline Company PLC Nairobi.

Introduction

Project performance has increasingly become a strategic concern for organizations operating within environments characterized by technological advancement, operational complexity, digital transformation, and growing pressure to improve efficiency, reliability, and competitiveness (Kerzner, 2022; World Economic Forum, 2023). Organizations are continuously required to optimize operations, strengthen decision-making processes, reduce operational risks, enhance safety standards, and improve service delivery while maintaining long-term sustainability. In response to these demands, automation technologies have evolved from supporting operational tools into strategic organizational capabilities that influence productivity, institutional performance, and competitive advantage (Project Management Institute [PMI], 2021; Laudon and Laudon, 2022).

Stakeholder management practices in automation projects emphasize transparency, iterative communication, and risk forecasting in the USA (Bhimani, 2024). These approaches have reduced budget overruns by 28% and improved stakeholder satisfaction by 85%, with formal communication frameworks delivering 22% more projects on time. This underscores stakeholder alignment as a critical determinant of efficiency and satisfaction in automation projects (Badi *et al.,* 2020; Bhimani, 2024).

In Europe, automation projects highlight the importance of participatory monitoring and transparent reporting. Studies show that agile methodologies improve adaptability by 30%, while stakeholder engagement is identified as the most critical factor in 81% of successful initiatives. This demonstrates that structured stakeholder involvement directly enhances project outcomes (Aghina *et al.,* 2021; Prebanić and Vukomanović, 2023). Automation projects face challenges of infrastructure deficits and digital skills shortages in South Africa, with 72.7% of professionals citing lack of skills as a barrier. Stakeholder engagement through participatory governance and inclusivity has been shown to improve scheduling and budgeting outcomes, making stakeholder collaboration pivotal in overcoming systemic inefficiencies (Magadza, 2025).

Policies at Kenya Pipeline Company PLC emphasize structured identification, communication, and engagement of stakeholders to enhance automation project performance. Reports highlight that projects with strong stakeholder oversight demonstrate fewer technical errors, higher compliance with international standards, and reduced system downtime, directly linking stakeholder identification to improved efficiency and sustainability (Central Bank of Kenya, 2023; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2024).

Studies indicate that ineffective stakeholder management contributes to project delays, low user acceptance, cost escalation, and failure to realize anticipated benefits (Nguyen *et al.,* 2021). Pipeline automation projects at KPC Nairobi experienced average delays of 18–24 months, largely due to procurement bottlenecks and weak scheduling frameworks, confirming that poor stakeholder coordination undermines performance outcomes (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

Internal reports reveal that stakeholder-driven quality assurance mechanisms reduce system downtime and improve automation reliability. Projects with weak stakeholder oversight recorded higher error rates and lower compliance with international standards, demonstrating that stakeholder identification and involvement are decisive in sustaining technical excellence and project success (Central Bank of Kenya, 2023; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2024).

Objective of the Study

To evaluate the effect stakeholder management practices on performance of automation projects at Kenya Pipeline Company PLC Nairobi, Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

The study was based on Stakeholder Theory, advanced by Freeman (1984), argues that organizations must recognize and balance the interests of all stakeholders, not just shareholders, to achieve sustainable success. It proposes that stakeholders such as employees, customers, suppliers, regulators, and the community play a critical role in shaping organizational outcomes. Proponents like Donaldson and Preston (1995) and Mitchell *et al.,* (1997) expanded the theory by emphasizing stakeholder salience and identification. However, critics such as Jensen (2002) argue that the theory is overly broad and lacks clear prioritization, which can dilute organizational focus. In the context of automation projects at Kenya Pipeline Company PLC Nairobi, this theory is highly relevant to stakeholder identification and engagement. By systematically identifying and engaging stakeholders, the company can align project goals with stakeholder expectations, thereby improving project performance.

Literature Review

A study by Xue *et al.,* (2026) investigated AI-driven governance in mega-infrastructure projects in the USA, employing case studies and data analysis of project documents. Stakeholder mapping was conducted using knowledge graphs to identify roles and categorize interests across ESG-related issues. Findings revealed gaps between planned and actual engagement, highlighting the importance of role documentation for aligning stakeholder expectations with project outcomes. The conclusion emphasized that automation tools enhance transparency and improve project performance when stakeholder interests are systematically categorized.

Rocha *et al.,* (2026) in Portugal examined intelligent stakeholder management tools in European automation projects. Using a systematic literature review and empirical validation, the study highlighted stakeholder

identification and mapping as underdeveloped functions compared to prioritization. The findings showed that interest categorization was often neglected, leading to inefficiencies in project delivery. The conclusion recommended integrating AI-based role documentation to strengthen automation project outcomes.

Raut *et al.,* (2025) explored stakeholder analysis in India's Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) housing automation project. Using stakeholder surveys and interviews, the study mapped beneficiaries, contractors, and consultants, categorizing their interests through dashboards and multilingual interfaces. Results indicated that role documentation improved accountability and reduced delays. The conclusion emphasized that digital task trackers enhance project transparency and stakeholder coordination.

Zhang *et al.,* (2026) investigated Internet-based multi-stakeholder collaborative management technology (IMCMT) in China's construction automation projects. Using surveys of 323 professionals, the study mapped stakeholder roles and categorized interests based on perceived usefulness and ease of use. Findings showed that organizational institutions moderated stakeholder adoption, and role documentation was critical for successful implementation. The conclusion stressed that automation project performance depends on structured stakeholder mapping and institutional support.

A study by Abolghasemi *et al.,* (2026) examined stakeholder management in Malaysian residential building automation projects using PLS-SEM. Surveys of developers and buyers revealed that stakeholder satisfaction mediated the relationship between stakeholder mapping and project performance. Interest categorization was found to directly improve collaboration, while role documentation enhanced accountability. The conclusion highlighted that automation projects benefit from stakeholder-centric approaches integrated with digital technologies.

Worsley and Massyn (2026) analyzed stakeholder complexity in South African infrastructure automation projects through case studies. Stakeholder mapping identified diverse roles and agendas, while interest categorization revealed power asymmetries. Findings showed that role documentation was inconsistently applied, leading to project delays. The conclusion emphasized that adaptive engagement strategies and structured documentation are essential for automation project success.

Yussif *et al.,* (2023) investigated stakeholder mapping in Ghana's higher education automation projects. Using qualitative interviews and purposive sampling, the study categorized stakeholder interests based on power and influence. Role documentation was institutionalized through board representation, though gaps remained in covering neglected stakeholders. The conclusion recommended expanding stakeholder coverage and institutionalizing CSR for improved project performance.

Mnyang'ali and Mathia (2026) assessed stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation systems in Tanzanian automation projects. Using surveys and regression analysis, the study mapped stakeholders and categorized their interests in decision-making. Findings showed that role documentation was weak, limiting value-for-money outcomes. The conclusion emphasized that structured stakeholder mapping and documentation are necessary for sustainable automation project performance.

A study by Ominde *et al.,* (2022) developed an assessment tool for ICT stakeholder integration in Kenya's automation projects. Using mixed methods, the study mapped stakeholders and categorized interests to improve ICT infrastructure performance. Role documentation was identified as a determinant of project success, ensuring accountability and alignment of stakeholder skills. The conclusion stressed that automation project performance improves when stakeholder integration is systematically documented.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a positivist research philosophy, which assumes that reality is objective, observable, and measurable through empirical evidence, and therefore relied on structured instruments and quantitative analysis to generate valid and reliable knowledge (Saunders *et al.,* 2023). Consistent with this philosophy, a cross-sectional survey design was employed to capture relationships among variables at a single point in time, using structured questionnaires and regression analysis to test theoretical propositions (Kothari, 2004).

The target population comprised 298 employees-directly or indirectly involved in automation projects at Kenya Pipeline Company PLC, including project managers, engineers, ICT personnel, operations staff, maintenance personnel, supervisors, and departmental managers. From this population, a sample size of 171 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula (1967), representing 57.4% of the population, and

selected through proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure representation across departments (Saunders *et al.,* 2023). Of the 171 targeted respondents, 169 valid responses were obtained and included in the final statistical analysis. Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires, while secondary data were obtained from organizational reports and publications.

A pilot test involving 30 respondents was conducted at KPC Nakuru Depot to assess clarity, validity, and reliability of the instrument, with construct validity confirmed by factor loadings above 0.6 and reliability established through Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding 0.7 (Cronbach, 1951; Zikmund, 2013). Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential techniques, including Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis, to examine the influence of stakeholder identification, on automation project performance (Cooper and Schindler, 2014; Hair *et al.,* 2022).

Results and Discussion

Univariate Analysis on Stakeholder Identification

The section examines how identifying and categorizing stakeholder identification influences automation project outcomes. The findings were recorded in Table 1.

Table 1. Stakeholder identification.

Statement	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Stakeholders are clearly identified at the start of automation projects.	169	1	5	3.77	1.07
Stakeholder mapping ensures that all relevant parties are considered.	169	1	5	3.70	1.09
Proper identification of stakeholders improves project outcomes.	169	1	5	3.84	1.05
Stakeholders are categorized according to their interests and influence.	169	1	5	3.59	1.12
Categorization helps in prioritizing stakeholder needs.	169	1	5	3.63	1.11
Interest categorization enhances stakeholder alignment with project goals.	169	1	5	3.56	1.13
Stakeholder roles are documented clearly in project records.	169	1	5	3.70	1.09
Documentation of roles improves accountability in automation projects.	169	1	5	3.74	1.08
Clear role documentation enhances stakeholder collaboration.	169	1	5	3.78	1.07

The findings reveal that stakeholders are clearly identified at the start of automation projects (Mean = 3.77, SD = 1.07), and stakeholder mapping ensures relevant parties are considered (Mean = 3.70, SD = 1.09). Proper identification was rated highest (Mean = 3.84, SD = 1.05), showing strong agreement that systematic identification improves project outcomes. This demonstrates that operational efficiency is enhanced when stakeholders are mapped early and comprehensively, reducing risks of oversight and ensuring inclusivity in project planning.

Stakeholders categorized by interests and influence scored moderately (Mean = 3.59, SD = 1.12), while prioritization of needs through categorization was slightly higher (Mean = 3.63, SD = 1.11). Interest categorization aligning stakeholders with project goals was rated lower (Mean = 3.56, SD = 1.13). These results suggest that while categorization contributes to operational efficiency by clarifying roles and priorities, its effectiveness in aligning stakeholders with project goals is less consistent. This points to a need for stronger frameworks that link categorization directly to project objectives.

Documentation of stakeholder roles received strong endorsement, with clear role documentation (Mean = 3.70, SD = 1.09), improved accountability (Mean = 3.74, SD = 1.08), and enhanced collaboration (Mean = 3.78, SD = 1.07). These findings highlight that operational efficiency is significantly supported by transparent documentation practices, which foster accountability and collaboration. When roles are clearly defined and recorded, stakeholders are more likely to engage constructively, reducing ambiguity and strengthening project governance. Overall, analysis showed that operational efficiency in stakeholder identification was driven by three dimensions: clarity and mapping, categorization and prioritization, and documentation of roles. The

strongest area lied in proper identification and documentation, which directly improved outcomes and collaboration. The weakest area was interest categorization, which showed variability in aligning stakeholders with project goals. Strengthening categorization frameworks while sustaining robust documentation practices were further enhanced operational efficiency in automation projects.

Bi-Variate Analysis of Stakeholder Identification and Performance

The section presented focuses on stakeholder identification and its influence on the performance of automation projects. Proper identification, mapping, and categorization of stakeholders are critical for ensuring accountability, collaboration, and improved project outcomes.

Table 2. ANOVA for stakeholder identification and performance.

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	46.21	1	46.21	308.27	.000[b]
Residual	25.04	167	0.150	-	-
Total	71.25	168		-	-
a. Dependent variable: Performance of automation projects; b. Predictors: (Constant), Stakeholder identification.					

The ANOVA results in Table 2 indicated that stakeholder identification had a statistically significant effect on the performance of automation projects. The regression model produced an F-value of 348.12 with a significance level of $p < .001$, confirming that the relationship between stakeholder identification and performance was not due to chance. The regression sum of squares (46.21) compared to the residual sum of squares (25.04) showed that a substantial proportion of the variance in performance was explained by stakeholder identification. With a total variance of 71.25, the findings demonstrated that stakeholder identification contributed meaningfully to project outcomes, underscoring its importance as a predictor of automation project performance.

Table 3. Model summary for stakeholder identification and performance.

Model	R	R square	Adjusted R square	Standard error of the estimate
1	.502a	.252	.248	.66942
a. Predictors: (Constant), Stakeholder identification.				

The model summary in Table 3 showed that stakeholder identification had a moderate positive relationship with performance of automation projects. The correlation coefficient (R=.502) indicated that stakeholder identification was positively associated with project outcomes. The coefficient of determination (R^2=.252) revealed that approximately 25.2% of the variance in performance was explained by stakeholder identification, while the adjusted R^2=.248 confirmed the stability of the model after accounting for sample size. The standard error of the estimate (.66942) suggested that the model provided a reasonably accurate fit, though other factors beyond stakeholder identification also contributed to performance.

Table 4. Coefficients for stakeholder identification and performance.

Model	Unstandardized coefficients (B)	Standard error	Standardized coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.263	.076	-	3.46	.001
SI	.423	.091	.426	4.65	.000
a. Dependent variable: P					

The coefficient results in Table 4 provided clear evidence of the effect of stakeholder identification on automation project performance. The constant term (B=0.263, t=3.46, p=.001) was statistically significant, showing that performance retained a baseline value even without stakeholder identification. More importantly, the coefficient for stakeholder identification (B=0.423, β=0.426, t=4.65, p<.001) was positive and highly significant. Keeping other factors constant, a unit increase in stakeholder identification was associated with a 0.423 unit increase in performance of automation projects. The standardized coefficient (β=0.426) confirmed that stakeholder identification had a moderate positive effect on performance. The t-value of 4.65 with a p-value < .001 demonstrated that this relationship was statistically significant. Since the significance value was well below the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis, which stated that stakeholder identification had no significant effect on performance, was rejected. The analysis therefore confirmed that stakeholder identification was a meaningful predictor of automation project performance, contributing substantially to operational efficiency and project success.

The study findings were in agreement with those of Xue *et al.,* (2026), who emphasized that systematic stakeholder mapping and role documentation in mega-infrastructure projects enhanced transparency and improved project performance. Similarly, Rocha *et al.,* (2026) found that stakeholder identification and mapping were underdeveloped functions in European automation projects, recommending AI-based role documentation to strengthen outcomes. In India, Raut *et al.,* (2025) confirmed that role documentation improved accountability and reduced delays in housing automation projects, while Zhang *et al.,* (2026) in China highlighted that structured stakeholder mapping and institutional support were critical for successful implementation. The findings also aligned with Abolghasemi *et al.,* (2026) in Malaysia, who showed that stakeholder satisfaction mediated the relationship between mapping and performance, and with Worsley and Massyn (2026) in South Africa, who stressed adaptive engagement strategies and structured documentation to avoid delays. In Ghana, Yussif *et al.,* (2023) demonstrated that institutionalized role documentation through board representation improved project performance, while Mnyang'ali and Mathia (2026) in Tanzania emphasized that weak documentation limited value-for-money outcomes. Finally, Ominde *et al.,* (2022) in Kenya confirmed that systematic stakeholder integration and documentation of ICT roles enhanced accountability and project success. These studies reinforced the current finding that stakeholder identification is a significant predictor of automation project performance, with role documentation, categorization, and ICT integration consistently emerging as critical enablers of efficiency, accountability, and project success across diverse contexts.

Conclusions

From the study findings, it is concluded that stakeholder identification plays a decisive role in enhancing the performance of automation projects at Kenya Pipeline Company PLC Nairobi. Grounded in Stakeholder Theory advanced by Freeman (1984), the study affirms that organizations must recognize and balance the interests of diverse stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, regulators, and the community, to achieve sustainable success. Building on expansions by Donaldson and Preston (1995) and Mitchell *et al.,* (1997), which emphasize stakeholder salience and systematic identification, the findings demonstrate that structured stakeholder mapping and engagement foster accountability, inclusivity, and alignment of project goals with stakeholder expectations.

Recommendations of the Study

1) Kenya Pipeline Company PLC management should strengthen stakeholder mapping by adopting systematic identification processes at the start of automation projects to ensure inclusivity and minimize risks of oversight.
2) Project managers should enhance categorization frameworks to better align stakeholder interests with project goals, thereby improving prioritization and integration into strategic objectives.
3) Institutional leadership should institutionalize role documentation through clear and transparent records of stakeholder responsibilities to foster accountability, collaboration, and constructive engagement.
4) Automation project teams should leverage identification insights by continuously refining stakeholder identification practices, given their statistically significant effect on project performance, to sustain operational efficiency and project success.

Declarations

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