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Balance Scorecard's Financial Focus and its implication on the Implementation of Youth-Based Donor-Funded Projects in Homabay County, Kenya

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Abstract

Youth-based organizations are expected to engage the youth and tap into their energy and synergies while exploiting development opportunities that abound in most rural areas globally and more so in Africa. However, a myriad of challenges, including strategy misfit, poor organizational capacity, weak monitoring and evaluation framework, uncoordinated and ill-focused community participation, have, to some extent, hampered efforts to effectively and strategically implement development projects. Despite different donors having stepped in to support projects among the youths, very low levels of success have been realized. If left unaddressed, this situation would likely become a significant impediment towards the achievement of Kenya's Vision 2030 and the strides towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), considering that the youth constitute a significant pillar of the human capital to drive these aspirations. It remains imperative, therefore, for governments, CBOs and donor agencies to apply appropriate strategic models that would guarantee sustainable project management. The purpose of this research, therefore, was to investigate the influence of Balance Scorecard's (BSC) Financial Focus, as a strategic model, on the implementation of youth-based donor-funded projects in Homabay County, Kenya. The research was anchored on Dynamic Capabilities and Big Push theories. The study adopted a correlational research design with a study population of 471 managers of the registered youth groups implementing various donor-funded projects in Homabay County, Kenya. Data was collected from a *sample of 216 youth group managers spread across the eight Sub-Counties of Homabay County using a self-administered questionnaire; and was analyzed using multiple regression, computed using IBM SPSS version 29. The study found that BSC's financial focus had significant positive influence on the implementation of youth-based donor-funded projects in Homabay County. The findings underscored the significant role that organization's financial focus play in enhancing the successful implementation of donor-funded projects among the youth groups. The study recommended that the youth groups should continuously and consistently work towards improving the building blocks of their financial focus, to improve the success rates while implementing donor-funded projects*

Keywords: *Balance Scorecard, Financial Focus, Youth-Based Organizations, Donor-Funded Projects Scope*

1. Introduction

Traditionally, most organizations have judged their health by how much profits they make. The importance of financial figures notwithstanding, they only give a short-term focus on organizational performance (Lawrie & Cobbold, 2004). However, organizations need to build more sustainable projects over time which requires monitoring the performance of all parts of the organization from both the financial and non-financial performance yardsticks. This concept is best presented using the Balanced Scorecard (BSC) strategic model that focuses on high-level strategy and in-depth measures. The BSC strategy implementation and performance measurement model that Robert Kaplan and David Norton developed (Kaplan & Norton, 1992; Norton & Kaplan, 2000) translates an organization's vision and mission into actual operational actions while viewing organizational performance from four perspectives: the financial perspective, the customer/stakeholder perspective, the internal business processes, and continuous improvement perspectives.

There has been a growing trend among donor aid agencies, including NGOs, to involve youth-based organizations in implementing donor-funded projects in developing countries, especially in Africa (Odera, 2022; OECD, 2024). The Kenyan government has particularly transferred resources near the community through devolved funds, for example, the Youth Enterprise Fund, the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), Local Authority Transfer Fund (LATF), and the Uwezo Funds meant to spur development projects among the local youths (Chitere, 2018). This concept has been replicated by NGOs and other donor agencies operating in Africa.

In response to the challenges posed by the Millennium Development Goals, the key stakeholders in international development set out a new agenda to improve the effectiveness of aid. This agenda, embodied in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD, 2009) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), articulates a series of commitments reflected by the tenets of ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, and mutual accountability. The Inter-American Foundation Survey of North and Latin America revealed that most of the multilateral banks, the United Nations, USAID, and advocacy organizations in the United States and Europe favored a restructuring of aid away from traditional government-to-government approaches toward people-to-people programs (IAF, 2018). This approach has been adopted by various NGOs and other donor organizations who have resorted to implementing various community projects through Youth Based Organizations (YBOs).

Despite the impressive statistics of youth involvement in implementing various donor-funded projects, some surveys have shown declining trends in project success across Africa. A recent McKinsey-Devex survey suggests that 64% of donor-funded projects fail, while the World Bank has invested more than US$16 billion in more than 90 projects in Africa over the past 20 years (World Bank, 2023), its project failure rate is over 50% in Africa, which is greater than the 40% failure rate observed in other poor regions of the world and shows that African projects are lagging. Studies by The Associated Press (2007), Ika (2012), and Owonikoko (2021) reveal that only half of Africa projects initiated by the World Bank succeed. This failure remains a familiar trend among many other agencies and donor countries.

Several problems have been cited as responsible for the enormous failure rate for various projects across Africa, notably termed as notorious and critical implementation problems. In Kenya, project implementation among youth-based organizations has faced a plethora of project management problems, among them financial problems, structural/contextual problems, institutional/ sustainability problems, and managerial/organizational problems. There is consensus among researchers that most of the problems associated with this rapid underperformance of various projects are linked to a strategic misfit in the implementation of donor-funded projects (2GC, 2020).

Homabay County has over 400 registered CBOs, FBOs and YBOs. However, very few of these registered groups live up to maturity, and little success has been documented about the projects implemented by these groups. Up to 30% of these groups have become inactive (Directorate of Social Services, 2024). This inactivity is primarily attributed to a weak strategic model that encompasses the attributes of organizational capacity, focused leadership, coordinated monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and stakeholder involvement in project implementation (ILO, 2023). This study, therefore, seeks to establish the influence of the Balanced Scorecard’s financial focus on the implementation of donor-funded projects among youth groups in Homabay County.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the continued flow of foreign aid and the commendable statistics indicating significant benefits of foreign aid in developing countries, especially in Sub-Sahara Africa, has any significant development taken place? In almost all of Sub-Saharan Africa, there is an alarming degree of under-development, indebtedness, high unemployment, absolute poverty, and poor economic performance; with the average per capita income in the region falling steadily despite the high aid flows.(Eichenauer & Reinsberg, 2017). Initiatives such as Youth Enterprise Fund and Uwezo Fund, among others, have been implemented by the Kenyan government to economically empower the Kenyan youth, however, little has been documented on successful projects and their eventual impact on youth empowerment. Kenya remains largely an underdeveloped Nation with youth unemployment soaring and most counties lacking basic infrastructure and suffering numerous social problems. The application of BSC remains one of the world's top strategy implementation and management tools since its introduction in the early 1990s, where it has been widely used in business, industry, government and non-profit organizations across the globe with over 70% of the organizations registering positive growth in their performances. In Kenya, the application of BSC strategic model in project implementation has been adopted by different organizations with specific focus on the individual tenets of the BSC model. However, little progress has been made in reducing the mishaps in project implementation among the youth groups in Kenya, which have been attributed to poor strategic-fit. Notably, in Homabay County the rate of successful project implementation has been limited to less than 40% despite the growing donor support. These scenarios have therefore prompted the researcher to investigate the influence of balanced scorecard's financial focus on the implementation of donor-funded projects among youth groups in Homabay County. A number of studies exposed a research gap in their lack of focus on organization's financial health. Notably, Falcón et al. (2020), while investigating the causal linkages in the balanced scorecard: an Indian perspective, held that in order to match the unceasing dynamism in the business environment and technology, it is imperative that organizational employees have to continuously learn to have the requisite retooling and skill-set that enhance proper adaptability. The increased organizational investment on continuous improvement opportunities was also exposed the importance of organizational learning and growth to key sector performance (Association for Talent Development, 2023). A study by Kobusingye, Mung'atu, and Mulyungi (2017) gave much credence to the importance of stakeholder involvement in successful implementation of any development project; without which projects were bound to fail entirely. Bolisani and Bratianu (2017) noted that ill-defined and un-streamlined business processes were a major bottleneck to strategy implementation that actually resulted into inconsistencies across various business functions. Even though these studies underscored the importance of investing in employee capacity building, enhancing internal business processes and stakeholder involvement, they did not, however, give credence to other critical investments on organizational financial health. This study will address this gap.

1.2 Objective of the study

The objective of the research was to determine the influence of BSC's financial focus on the implementation of youth-based donor-funded projects in Homabay County.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of the Study

This study has adopted the Big Push Theory (1943). The big push theory is a concept in development economics or welfare economics that emphasizes that underdeveloped countries require large amounts of investments to embark on the path of economic development. The theory supports the notion that a large inflow of aggregate aid in social and productive sectors will result in growth across all sectors of society and push the economy into a better equilibrium allowing a take-off into sustained growth (Abuzeid, 2009). This theory was formulated by Paul Rosenstein-Rodan in 1943, however, further improvements to it were later made by Shleifer, Robert, and Murphy in 1989 (Kevin, 1989). This theory borrows largely from the Jeffrey Sachs' school of thought and is based on the theory of a "poverty trap" which in essence has fed into several policy initiatives that have shaped the direction of development aid assistance. United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were some of the policy initiatives that borrowed from the big push theory in advocating for a high concentration of aid to specific geographical areas to spur economic growth or alleviate social pandemics. Review of Empirical Literature

A review of empirical literature including the influence of concepts and models of strategy implementation, various perspectives of balanced scorecard application and project implementation have been discussed under this section.

2.2 BSC's Financial Focus and the Implementation of Youth-Based Donor-Funded Projects

Financial Focus is the ability of an organization to grow a formidable depth in a financial capacity that allows for adequate financial resourcing and utilization. Harris, McCaffer, and Edum-Fotwe (2013) held that an organization's financial capacity is the variety of resources it has in place to manage the progress of project implementation, including cash at hand, bank credit and overdrafts, credit purchases, invoiced amounts and work-in-progress, money at hand, bank credit, overdraft, credit purchases, and work-in-progress and invoiced amount. Growing a dominant depth in financial capacity, therefore, requires concerted efforts of the project management team to determine the correct composition and funding opportunities throughout the project life.

The success of any donor-funded project is majorly determined by the wealth of resources in their financial capabilities, human workforce, and physical infrastructure of the organization. Abdul et al. (2019) argued that project success wouldn't be delivered without sufficient assets—monetary support to manage them. Scholars have also supported the idea that an organization's financial capability is key to the successful implementation of any project. Other researchers have established that the success and sustainability of any NGO-funded project depend on a well-developed institutional base, a strong programmatic approach, and sufficient funds to carry out the scheduled programs (Winnie, 2018). One of the biggest challenges that most organizations face globally is their inability to mobilize sufficient financial assets to implement various projects. Most times, their project needs far surpass their financial capacity to adequately carry out project activities and deliver their organizational core mandate. Kingdom et al. (2019) recommended that for organizations to successfully implement sustainable projects, they must put necessary mechanisms in place to generate sufficient income and minimize their operational and maintenance costs.

Various organizations, both profit, and non-profit organizations, usually source their funds from several financing avenues, including internal financing—which is stakeholders' contributions; external funding—that may comprise donations, subsidies, loans, grants, among others; and retained earnings from capital investment (Olando & Kimuyu, 2019). Other scholars have recommended crowd funding as another source of project financing. Andrea et al. (2019) found out that 14% of entrepreneurs in North America raised project funding through crowd funding, while 2% of entrepreneurs did the same in Asia, Oceania, and Africa. This method uses the internet and social networks as an intermediary between project owners and donors to mobilize finances for various projects.

An organization's financial focus is an amalgam of strategic financial control measures that ensures prudent utilization of project finances to complete specific projects within the approved budgets (Ronette & Tania, 2010). This focus normally involves the process of resource planning, cost estimating, cost budgeting, cost control, accountable and transparent financial expenditure as a means of maximizing profits or shareholder value and stakeholder satisfaction (Project Management Institute, 2017). For every organization, effective financial control allows the project management team to forestall unnecessary cost overlaps; foresee potential money problems from which the team can foster possible cost-saving plans through a detailed and well-thought-out project budget (Stier & Sandström, 2009). Therefore, organizations have to ensure that project costs are controlled at source and designed into the project instead of eventual inspection after project implementation. As part of an organization's financial focus, this process includes monitoring cost performance and judicious management of any project changes with direct bearing on project cost.

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2.3 Conceptual Framework

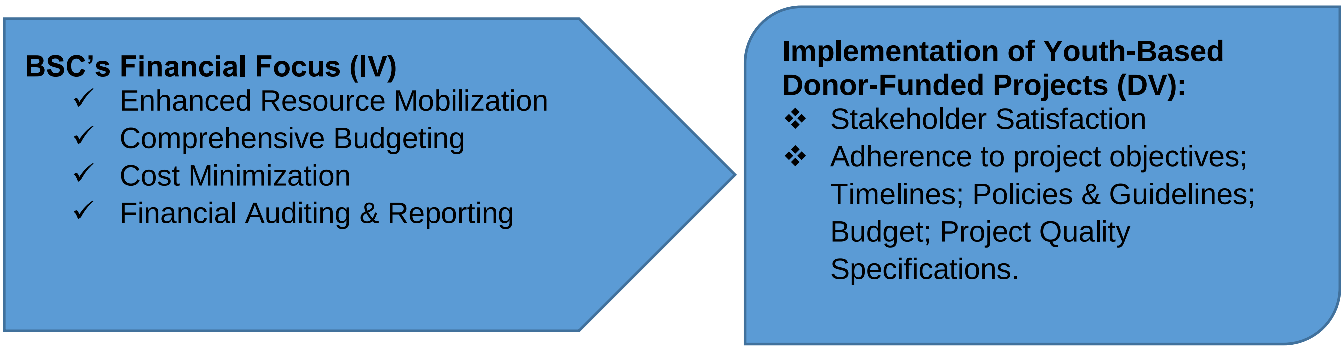

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design, Data Types, Sampling

The objective of the research was to determine the influence of BSC's financial focus on the implementation of youth-based donor-funded projects in Homabay County. The study adopted a correlational research design. Primary data was then collected from a sample size of 216 youth group managers drawn from a population of 471 youth group managers spread across the eight Sub-Counties of Homabay County as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Size

Sub-County	Target Population	Sample Size (Respondents)
Ndhiwa	37	17
Suba South	23	10
Rachuonyo North	96	44
Suba North	89	41
Rangwe	81	37
Rachuonyo South	51	23
Rachuonyo East	47	22
Homabay Town	47	22
Total	**471**	**216**

Source: Homabay County Directorate, Social Services.

3.2 Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Multiple regression analyses was conducted using the Generalized Linear Model (GLM) to analyze the data. The primary data collected with the aid of research questionnaires were converted into machine-readable, numerical format so that they were easily manipulated using IBM SPSS Version 29 computer program to aid in objective data interpretation.

The Null Hypothesis in this study was that financial focus does not significantly influence the implementation of youth-based donor-funded projects in Homabay County. In order to test the existence of a regression relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable the researcher used t-test in regression analysis. The t-test for the existence of a regression relationship among the variables was undertaken to test the null and alternate hypothesis as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing

S/N	Hypothesis	Hypothesis Test	Hypothesis Testing Framework	Regression Model
1	H_01	t-test	H_0: $\beta_1 = 0$ H_a: $\beta_1 \neq 0$ Reject H_0 if p-value<0.05; at α <0.05	$Y = \beta 0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon$

Source: Authour

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Findings on the Indicators of Implementation of Youth-Based Donor Funded Projects

The overall results, summarized in Table 3, indicated that the organization’s ability to implement donor-funded projects in Homabay County is achieved through: enhanced project efficiency and effectiveness; ensuring that all defined project objectives were achieved; adherence to specific project timelines and work schedules; regularly enhancing continued stakeholder satisfaction; ability to identify and meet stakeholder needs while implementing donor-funded projects; availability of sufficient policies, guidelines and procedures to be followed and adhered to while implementing projects; availability of detailed budgets for each project work items to be followed; and the ability to abide by the budgetary provisions.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Implementation of Youth-Based Donor-Funded Projects

Statement:	S. D	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
Availability of specific project timelines, work schedules to be followed and adhered to.	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	16 (7.8)	88 (42.7)	101 (49.0)	4.40	0.654
Ability to complete donor-funded projects within the stipulated time lines.	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	18 (8.7)	92 (44.7)	95 (46.1)	4.36	0.661
Availability of sufficient policies, guidelines and procedures to be followed and adhered to while implementing projects.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	22 (10.7)	91 (44.2)	93 (45.1)	4.34	0.665
Ability to adhere to the stipulated policies, guidelines and procedures that have been developed for project implementation.	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	21 (10.2)	92 (44.7)	91 (44.2)	4.32	0.694
Availability of detailed budgets for each project work items to be followed while implementing projects	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	21 (10.2)	93 (45.1)	90 (43.7)	4.32	0.693
Ability to abide by the budgetary provisions while implementing donor-funded projects.	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	22 (10.7)	93 (45.1)	89 (43.2)	4.31	0.697
Availability of specified quality standards to be followed and adhered to while implementing projects	0 (0.0)	5 (2.4)	19 (9.2)	93 (45.1)	89 (43.2)	4.29	0.734
Ability to adhere to and comply with the quality specifications and demands while implementing donor-funded projects.	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	19 (9.2)	88 (42.7)	98 (47.6)	4.37	0.671
Ability to identify and meet stakeholder needs while implementing donor-funded projects.	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	20 (9.7)	91 (44.2)	94 (45.6)	4.35	0.673
Regularly enhancing continued stakeholder satisfaction.	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	17 (8.3)	90 (43.7)	97 (47.1)	4.37	0.677
Having well-defined project objectives to be achieved while implementing donor-funded projects.	0 (0.0)	2 (1.0)	15 (7.3)	90 (43.7)	99 (48.1)	4.39	0.666
Ensuring that all defined project objectives are achieved in the course of implementing donor-funded projects.	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	16 (7.8)	88 (42.7)	101 (49.0)	4.40	0.654
Enhanced project efficiency and effectiveness	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	12 (5.8)	94 (45.6)	100 (48.5)	4.43	0.602
Overall Mean						**4.36**	**0.538**

Notes: *N* = 206. Scale [Range of Mean's Interpretation]: 1- *Strongly Disagree (S.D)* [1.00 – 1.79], 2 – *Disagree (D)* [1.80 – 2.59], 3 – *Neutral (N)* [2.60 – 3.39], 4 – *Agree (A)* [3.40 – 4.19], 5 – *Strongly Agree (SA)* [4.20 – 5.00].

4.2 Findings on the Indicators of Balance Scorecard's Financial Focus

The overall results showed that the organization's financial focus is enhanced by: regular preparation and utilization of and adherence to comprehensive and realistic budgets; regular monitoring of operational costs to avoid cost-over-runs; having sufficient plans to mobilize resources; effectively implementing and regularly reviewing the organization's resource mobilization plan; putting in place elaborate plans to adhere to procurement rules & ensure value-for-money procurement; undertaking regular financial audits and preparing reliable and timely financial and audit reports; and putting in place mechanisms to implement audit recommendations as presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of Balance Scorecard's Financial Focus

Statement: *The organization…*	S. D	D	N	A	SA	*Mean*	*SD*
Regularly prepares and utilizes comprehensive and realistic budgets to guide its operations	0 (0.0)	7 (3.4)	14 (6.8)	103 (50.0)	82 (39.8)	4.26	0.732
Adheres to its budget throughout the year	1 (0.5)	7 (3.4)	14 (6.8)	108 (52.4)	76 (36.9)	4.22	0.756
Has put in place sufficient mechanism to effectively reduce operational costs	2 (1.0)	6 (2.9)	24 (11.7)	102 (49.5)	72 (35.0)	4.15	0.807
Regularly monitors its operational costs to avoid cost over-runs.	0 (0.0)	6 (2.9)	26 (12.6)	101 (49.0)	73 (35.4)	4.17	0.756
Has in place elaborate plans to adhere to procurement rules and ensure value-for-money procurement.	1 (0.5)	6 (2.9)	27 (13.1)	103 (50.0)	69 (33.5)	4.13	0.782
Has put in place an annual procurement plan and adheres to its implementation to ensure value for money procurement.	1 (0.5)	7 (3.4)	31 (15.0)	94 (45.6)	73 (35.4)	4.12	0.820
Regularly carries out financial audits and prepares reliable and timely financial and audit reports.	1 (0.5)	4 (1.9)	30 (14.6)	100 (48.5)	71 (34.5)	4.15	0.770
Has put in place mechanisms to implement audit recommendations.	1 (0.5)	9 (4.4)	33 (16.0)	101 (49.0)	62 (30.1)	4.04	0.825
Has put in place sufficient plans to mobilize resources from multiple sources	2 (1.0)	12 (5.8)	18 (8.7)	91 (44.2)	83 (40.3)	4.17	0.887
Effectively implements and regularly reviews its resource mobilization plan	1 (0.5)	13 (6.3)	20 (9.7)	95 (46.1)	77 (37.4)	4.14	0.867
Overall Mean						**4.15**	**0.657**

Notes: *N* = 206. Scale [Range of Mean's Interpretation]: 1- *Strongly Disagree (S.D)* [1.00 – 1.79], 2 – *Disagree (D)* [1.80 – 2.59], 3 – *Neutral (N)* [2.60 – 3.39], 4 – *Agree (A)* [3.40 – 4.19], 5 – *Strongly Agree (SA)* [4.20 – 5.00].

4.3 Hypothesis Testing Results.

The relationship between BSC's financial focus and the implementation of youth-based donor-funded projects was examined using standardized slopes (β) as reported in Table 5.

Table 5: Regression Model Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients B	t	P value
1	(Constant)	2.221	0.193		11.534	<0.001
	Financial focus	0.280	0.060	0.341***	4.658	<0.001

Notes: a. Dependent Variable: Implementation of youth-based donor-funded projects. *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$. ***$p < 0.001$, N.s – Not significant

As shown in Table 5, balance scorecard financial focus was a significant predictor (p<0.001<0.05). As such, a significant positive relationship between balance scorecard financial focus and implementation of youth-based donor-funded projects was found (β = 0.341, t = 4.658, $p < 0.001$). The p-value computed ($p < 0.001$) was thus less than the significance level of α=0.05, Consequently, $H0_1$ was rejected. The results indicated that a one standard deviation change on balance scorecard financial focus resulted into 0.341 standard deviations increase in the implementation of youth-based donor-funded projects, holding the influence of other predictors in the model constant. Therefore, the results underlined the positive role played by the balance scorecard financial focus with regard to achieving better implementation performance of youth-based donor-funded projects in Homabay County. This finding was consistent with previous research findings. For instance, Abdul et al. (2019) in his publication on financial citizenship and nation-building in Malaysia, argued that project success wouldn't be delivered without sufficient assets—monetary support to manage them. They found out that an organization's financial capability is key to the successful implementation of any project. Kingdom et al. (2019) also recommended that for organizations to successfully implement sustainable projects, they must put necessary mechanisms in place to generate sufficient income and minimize their operational and maintenance costs. Willitts-King et al. (2018) also found out that most of the social groups that had failed to receive significant donor funding for the past decade due to the heightened tension and terrorist-related activities in Somalia and South Sudan, were in essence adversely affected in terms of project implementation amongst the social groupings in those countries. Organizations, therefore, cannot downplay the important benefits that BSC's financial focus embeds in enhancing the success of whatever interventions they run.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

The study, in establishing the influence of balanced scorecard strategic model application on the implementation of youth-based donor-funded projects in Homabay County, found out that balance scorecard's financial focus is an essential ingredient for the successful implementation of youth-based donor-funded projects in Homabay County. Even though this significant role of financial focus was revealed, the data exposed notable disparities between replies, with many youth groups indicating low involvement in and/or understanding of the concepts of financial focus. This was evident from the quite significant dispersion of responses around the means as demonstrated from the Standard Deviation figures presented against these responses. The robustness of an organization's cash flow streams and the soundness of its financial policies, guidelines and procedures are essential aspects in ensuring financial sustainability for project implementation. In order to enhance the organizations' capacity to mobilize and optimally utilize their financial resources, this study recommends that these organizations should diversify their revenue streams over and above donor funding; continuously and regularly monitor operational costs to avoid cost-over-runs; undertake regular financial audits to monitor their financial performance; develop and action annual procurement plans and adhere to procurement rules and regulations to ensure value-for-money procurement. The findings of this study have emphasized the significant benefits organizations derive from focusing on their financial health as an antidote to organizational failure. It also, therefore, forms part of a policy fulcrum upon which National and County governments can anchor significant financial policy framework and guidelines to guarantee financial expediency and sustainability for youth organizations in Kenya.

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