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MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCE OF HEALTH PROJECTS IN ISIOLO COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Monitoring and evaluation, which is an integral part of the project cycle, has been used globally as a tool in project management. This management tool provides continuous feedback on the implementation of the project or the programme while identifying the successes and potential problems that help in decision making for the project or programme managers. The general objective was to examine the effect of monitoring and evaluation practice on performance of health projects in Isiolo County, Kenya. The specific objectives were to determine effect of monitoring and evaluation planning, effect of stakeholder engagement, effect of monitoring and evaluation staff training, and effect of monitoring and evaluation information systems on performance of health projects in Isiolo County, Kenya. The study was guided by four theories: social contract theory, stakeholder theory, human capital theory, and systems theory. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target was 61 county staff from the Department of Health and census technique was used in sampling all the target staff like M&E officers, project officers, project managers, ICT Officers, Chief Officers, Directors, health records officers and finance officers. Data was collected using questionnaires that was tested for validity and reliability. Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Findings showed that a moderate significant correlation between M&E planning and health projects performance (r=0.578, p=0.000), a strong significant relationship between stakeholder engagement and health projects performance (r=0.761, p=0.000, a moderate significant relationship between staff training and health projects performance (r=0.346, p=0.000), and a strong significant relationship between adoption of information systems and health projects performance (r=0.700, p=0.000). The study recommends that; the county government executive should ensure that there is adequate budgetary allocation for monitoring and evaluation practice, project stakeholders should be involved in key areas like data collection, data dissemination, and decision making, the county governments' staff in charge of development projects should identify the training needs of the monitoring and evaluation staff and the county government should strive to adopt information systems that will enhance effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation activities

INTRODUCTION

Monitoring assesses the different stages of the result levels of a project or a programme; the inputs utilized in the implementation of the project, the activities or processes that lead to the progress of the project's immediate results and the impact of the intervention on the target beneficiaries. Monitoring projects is critical for stakeholders to understand the project, reduce the risk of failure, encourage methodical and professional management, and analyze project progress (Biwott, Egesah, & Ngeywo, 2017).

Evaluation is the process of objectively determining the significance, success, efficiency, longevity, coherence and impact of the project or programme with a focus on the performance in achieving the set objectives. It focuses on what the project intends to attain, checking the progress of what was realized and the impact of the project (Kissi, Agyekum, Baiden, & Tannor, 2019). Monitoring and evaluation is becoming a significant tool for public sector change and service delivery (Hlatshwayo & Govender (2015). With varying degrees of success, monitoring and evaluation projects are used as barometers of democracy, equality, and equity, with the potential to convert government offices and the public sector into a functional, participative, and representative system (UNDP, 2013). The World Bank has launched several projects to help developing nations enhance their monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity and skills, which are critical for improving public sector transformation and service delivery.

In Kenya, the first attempt to put in place a comprehensive M&E System came with the district focus for rural development dating back to 1982. Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was later developed in 2000. During this period, the focus of M&E was mainly on National level programmes especially those funded by development partners. The Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation (ERS), brought on board the need for a full-fledged national M&E system and its institutionalisation (Monitoring and Evaluation Department, 2019). M&E is instrumental in both levels of government with through policy implementation (National M&E policy and individual county M&E policies) on public development projects and programs by state and non-state actors. M&E process begins from the planning stage through the Vision 2030 plan and the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP) with output and outcome indicators are set and the costs of these project activities are defined. M&E reporting at both levels is guided through the National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (NIMES) and the County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (CIMES) to the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (MED) at the State Department of Planning at different set frequency for each report (The National Treasury and Planning & Council of Governors, 2019).

In Kenya, Kiboi, Kimono, and Iravo (2018) discovered that there was a lack of information and data exchange among stakeholders, as well as poor healthcare service provision. Ndonga (2016) showed that the Ministry of Health has the appropriate roles and duties to assess its performance in accordance with monitoring and evaluation programs. Furthermore, despite differences over elements such as enough money, resources, information communication technology, infrastructure, and innovations, the Ministry of Health has the essential capacity to conduct monitoring and assessment. Communities that oversee the monitoring and evaluation of their development initiatives are more committed to the projects (Kiprotich & Njoroge, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Health projects have an impact on the economy since better health improves labour productivity as it reduces production losses caused by worker illness and allows the utilization of national resources that would otherwise become inaccessible because of ill health. Therefore, more emphasis needs to be put of health projects to ensure that the public has access to health services.

The Kenya government is committed to increasing the quality and accessibility of healthcare to the citizenry in line with the constitution and Vision 2030. The government has allocated huge financial resources to the health sector in pursuit of this goal. In 2020, Kenya allocated KES 234 billion (US$2,743 million) on health which is equal t to 7% of the GDP. In the 2021/2022 budget, the health sector has been allocated Kshs. 121.09 billion (Ministry of finance, 2022). In the financial year 2020/2021, the county government of Isiolo allocated Ksh 1,362,803,518 which was the lion's share of the county budget (Isiolo Health CEC, 2021)

Despite all the efforts from the central, county governments and various development partners, the finds are not adequate and majority of projects in the public health sector face challenges in their life cycle and in most cases, they are not successfully implemented. A high number of the projects have either stalled or are of poor quality hence unable to sustain employment opportunities offered by the projects (World Bank, 2020). Statistics show that 63% of health projects in Kenya fail shortly after implementation (OECD, 2020). Health projects in Isiolo County have been facing frequent delays that happen during project implementation whereby 60% of the health projects experience cost and schedule overruns (Abdi, 2018). Due to devolvement of health services, hospital projects in Isiolo County have been experiencing various hurdles resulting from ineffective participatory monitoring and evaluation institutions, poor resources and project management (Abdullahi, 2018).

The results of a Kiplangat (2021) study on the impact of M&E systems on the performance of non-governmental maternal health projects in Nairobi County showed that M&E plans, staff training, the nature of M&E information systems, and stakeholder participation in M&E all influence project performance. Gatimu, Gakuu, and Ndiritu (2021) study of the association between monitoring and evaluation methods and county maternal health program performance in Kenya revealed a high link between county maternity health program performance and combined monitoring and evaluation procedures. In Isiolo County, there is study limitation on health project monitoring, assessment, and performance. This study examined the impact of monitoring and evaluation procedures on the success of health projects in Isiolo County to fill the research gap.

Objectives of the Study

i. To assess effect of monitoring and evaluation staff training on performance of health projects in Isiolo County, Kenya.
ii. To establish effect of monitoring and evaluation information systems on performance of health projects in Isiolo County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Stakeholder Theory

Milton Friedman put forward a theory in 1984 that organizations are ultimately beholden to just one stakeholder, their shareholders and called it the stakeholder theory. This theory advocates and entity must acknowledge every party that may be affected by the organizations' decisions so as to reduce any harm towards the stakeholders (Friedman, 2004). Governments should think beyond financial performance, according to Jones (2008), because they have a responsibility to community and the citizens whose interests are affected by their involvement. He goes on to argue forcefully that monitoring and evaluation should extend beyond typical stakeholders to include customers, suppliers, employees, and the surrounding community. Stakeholder participation in project and program monitoring and evaluation can promote transparency,

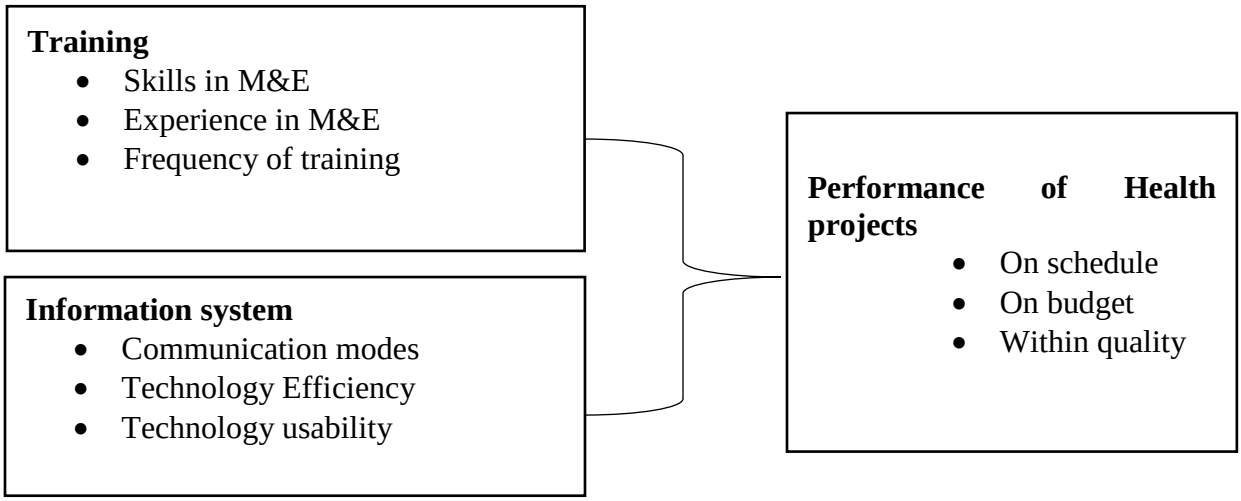
accountability, project and program sustainability, and community stakeholder attitudes toward programs (Sulemana, 2018). This points towards positive affirmation association between stakeholder association in project implementation and M&E. The theory therefore relates stakeholder engagement in M&E and how it may affect performance of projects. This theory is associated with the variable of stakeholder engagement.

Human Capital Theory

The term human capital (HC) was developed by (Schultz, 1961). HC focuses on the knowhow and capabilities of the staff working in an organization. According to (Howard , Richard, & Fermin, 2013), defined HC as the 'staff, their productivity, and their potential in the organization'. Staff potential is essential since it shows that they may develop their abilities and skills over time. Human capital is directly valuable in the production process since it helps to deal with ever changing environment which the staff must adopt. Monitoring and evaluation is a dynamic process that requires those who practice it to have the necessary and ever-changing set of skills.

The notion assumes that training is targeted toward the organization through change management to increase the organization's production levels, therefore recouping the training expenditure. Any entity that pays attention to employee capacity development is likely to improve their knowledge of their obligations, roles, and responsibilities, hence improving M&E functional operations. This is important for employees to know the results to report on and what is required to enable proper monitoring and reporting that translates into the quality of project desired. This theory is associate with the variable of staff training.

Conceptual Framework



Staff Training

Human capital, with the appropriate training and experience, is critical for achieving M&E goals. In order to sustain and retain stable M&E personnel, effective M&E human resource capability in terms of quantity and quality is essential (World Bank, 2011). Technical expertise is a fundamental component of M&E that improves project performance since it is essential in enabling the M&E process to be carried out by providing the necessary knowledge and expertise. The organization's technical capacity for carrying out evaluations, the value and involvement of its staff in making decisions, and their incentive to influence resolutions, all of these factors can have a significant impact on how the evaluation's lessons are made, communicated, and

perceived (Vanessa & Gala, 2011). Project staff should be assigned to jobs that are appropriate for their skills, and if these skills are lacking, training for the required skills should be established. There is a requirement for constant and extensive onsite assistance for projects utilizing field personnel who are referred out to carry out project operations on their own (Ramesh, 2002).

Technical expertise of Government staff tasked with M&E in County Governments play a crucial role in the entire M&E process which eventually affects how governing is done in these Counties. M&E duties taken on by program staff play a role in administration of the projects and programs as well as some technical aspects of program implementation. Continuous training of these staff members should be a priority for these Governments since M&E is an evolving ever dynamic aspect of development. Staff technical knowledge on M&E will influence the planning, data handling, the quality of data and reporting which will subsequently affect decision making by the Governments. This makes staff technical expertise an integral variable in the study.

Information Systems

A project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system covers all the work carried out during or after a project to define, select, collect, analyze and use information. It is where everything comes together, from the initial selection of objectives and indicators through to the final evaluation of a project. A project monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system encompasses the effort done to define, select, collect, analyze, and use information during or after a project. From the initial selection of objectives and indicators up to the final evaluation of a project. An M&E system, also called a programme management system by Babbie and Mouton (2015), is conceptualized as all the structures adopted to ensure successful discharge of M&E within an organization. Nanda (2017) posits that technology presents a new area of interest to practitioners especially with emphasis on real-time feedback and results. Integration of new technology in the M&E process has also proven to be beneficial in achieving cost reduction, increased accuracy, obtaining data rich in quality and for overall better insight into understanding the workings of a project. Data collection in multiple formats has opened different avenues for achieving detailed insights in M&E practice (Nanda, 2017). These may include GPS, GIS and multimedia data among others. Communicating project lessons and results has been improved through mobile technology.

Empirical Review

Staff Training

Sifa, Mutabazi, and Gamariel (2022) studied effect of monitoring and evaluation on performance of projects in the health sector in Rwanda. The study employed a quantitative descriptive survey design. The sample was 76 project team members. Questionnaires were used for data collection. The study concluded that skilled staff for monitoring and evaluation has a significant relationship with project performance health sector. The project managers strive to get competent staff whose skills were consistently improved through in-service training. Shabani, Nyaburiri and Maijo (2020) assessed usefulness of M&E systems on community projects sustainability in Tanzania. The study employed a descriptive survey design. Sample was 80 staff responsible for overseeing sustainability of the health projects. The study concluded that project staff capacity building enhanced sustainability of health projects.

Lesinko (2015) investigated the elements that affect the monitoring and evaluation of CDF projects in Kenya's Narok east sub-county. A descriptive survey research design was used in this study. The target population was 138 people, and 122 people were chosen at random.

Questionnaires were used to collect data. The findings revealed that the amount of M&E training was critical to the success of CDF programs. There was also a strong link between staff training and the success of CDF initiatives. Wachamba (2013) effect of staff training on project implementation in NGOs in Nairobi County. The study population was 8,503. Stratified sampling was used to sample 200 NGOs which had successfully implemented projects. Data were collected using questionnaires. Findings showed that capacity building through training is the M&E practice was a major contributor in improving successful project implementation. Ouma (2016) examined effect of in-service training on performance of NGO funded projects in Nairobi County. Data was collected using questionnaires. The results revealed that training methods contributed significantly to performance of NGO funded projects.

Information System

Magaba (2016) investigated impact of technological changes on the construction industry Nigeria. A sample of 20 staff was selected from 87 staff. Data was collected using questionnaires. Findings showed that ICT adoption greatly improved the delivery of projects in construction industry. Masudi (2015) assessed effect of M&E practice on performance on INGO funded projects in Rwanda. The study used primary data collected using questionnaires. Findings showed strong significant relationship between M&E systems and project performance.

Yasin (2019) studied impact of information technology on project success at CARE International in Somalia. A descriptive survey design was adopted. Technology adoption increased data and information management for the organization, employee operating efficiency, organizational responsibility, and quality project delivery to stakeholders, according to the findings. Mleke and Dida (2020) examined effect of M&E systems on performance of public health projects in Tanzania. Findings revealed that M&E systems helped to handle several challenges in monitoring and evaluation process. The creation of a web-based monitoring and evaluation system for ministry of health initiatives offered fast and accurate information, resulting in improved project outcomes.

Safari and Kisimbii (2020) examined effect of M&E practice on performance of development projects implemented by county governments in Kenya. Mixed research designs were used in the study. 113 respondents were targeted and Morgan and Krejcie sampling formula was used in sampling 100 respondents. Findings showed that perceived use of ease of M&E systems significantly influenced successful implementation of projects in the county. Ndonga (2016) evaluated the Ministry of Health's readiness to put in place a monitoring and evaluation system.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research design is a set of parameters for gathering and analyzing data with the goal of achieving study objectives (Kothari, 2004). The study employed a descriptive research design. Descriptive study is fretful about discovering who, what, where and how of a wonder which is the worry of this examination (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). It entails gathering data to test a theory or answer questions about a subject under investigation. The research was carried out in Isiolo County. The study targeted 61 officials from the County Government, department of Health who were involved in the implementation of health projects over the five-year period (Public Service Management, 2021). These include, M&E officers, project officers, project managers, ICT Officers, Chief Officers, Directors, health records officers and finance officers.

According to statistics, a sample of more than 30 people is considered a large, normally distributed sample set, which allows for a better knowledge of the population's characteristics and greater capacity for generalizing the results while also reducing the magnitude of sampling

errors. The total population targeted in this study was 61, and the entire population was deemed a study sample, therefore the census technique was used. Instrument reliability is the degree to which a questionnaire consistently measures whatever it is meant to measure (Brann & Hawkins, 2007). The reliability of the instrument was ensured through conducting pilot study prior to conducting the research in the County. Cronbach Alpha Method was used to measure questionnaire reliability where an alpha coefficient of 0.7 was used as the cut-off. Therefore, any item with a value of less than 0.7 alpha coefficient was either removed or changed.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study participants were the officials from the County Government of Isiolo. The sample size was 48 officials out 51 who consented to participate in the study. This represents a 94.1% response rate. Cook, Heath, and Thompson (2014) recommended a return rate of 60% and above is for a social science research is considered good. Therefore, this response rate was adequate for analysis.

Descriptive Analysis of the Variables of the Study

Staff Training on Project Performance

Findings show that; there are some M&E staff with technical knowledge of M&E (m=3.88), and M&E implementation in the County is largely determined by technical skills of staff (m=3.83). The county does not conduct staff capacity needs aimed at ensuring that the most needed skills are gained to manage M&E activities (m=2.27). Trainings are also not held regularly on emerging M&E trends (m=2.19) and project staff are not regularly trained to equip them with necessary skills for M&E (m=1.92). This implies that the county does not emphasize on staff capacity building and project team members are recruited based on their academic qualification. In-service training improves project team competencies on the specific projects that they are working on which may improve overall project performance. Trained and knowledgeable project team members are essential in guaranteeing quality M & E and execution of every on main issues like quality feedback. Findings back up Lesinko (2015) that the amount of M&E training had a significant impact on project performance. Ouma (2016) discovered that staff training methodology was an important factor in project success.

Table 1: Staff Training on Project Performance

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Project staff are regularly trained	1.92	25
M&E implementation in the County is largely determined by technical skills	3.83	5
There are M&E staff with the technical knowledge of M&E	3.88	3
There are regular trainings held for M&E staff on emerging M&E trends	2.19	25
Staff capacity needs assessments are done	2.27	9
Valid N (listwise)		

Information Systems and Project Performance

Findings show that; the county does not have a functioning M&E system (m=2.58), the county does not use the 10 steps of Results Based Management in the operationalization of the system (m=2.52), there are no structures in place in the county to guide the implementation and reporting of M&E within the system in the County (m=2.46), and there is no access to the M&E

system by staff at all levels of Government (m=2.38). This implies that the county government conducts manual monitoring and evaluation practice which cause data manipulation, and some data may also be lost which could make it hard to track the project progress. Findings concur with Ndonga (2016) who found that adoption of monitoring and evaluation systems in the health sector in Kenya is very low.

Table 2: Information Systems and Project Performance

	Mean	Std. Deviation
There exists a functioning M&E system in the county	2.58	3
There is an electronic system in place to track projects and programmes	2.33	8
There are structures in place in the county to guide the implementation and reporting of M&E	2.46	10
The County uses the 10 steps of Results Based Management	2.52	9
There is access to the M&E system by staff	2.38	7

Alpha co-efficient

The reliability results show that Cronbach reliability alpha of all the variables met recommended threshold of 0.7 (0.842); monitoring and evaluation planning had an α of 0.725 which is acceptable, stakeholder engagement α=0.874 which is good, staff training α=859 which is good, information systems α=0.864 good, which is acceptable. Therefore, the questionnaire was deemed reliable for data collection.

Table 3: **Alpha co-efficient**

Scale	Number of items	Alpha Coefficient
Staff training	5	0.859
Information system	5	0.864
Health Project Performance	5	0.783

Regression Analysis

Table 4 Model Summary

Model	R	r2	Adjusted r2	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.865	0.748	0.725	.714

Table 5 Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	f	Sig.
1	Regression	65.069	4	16.267	31.926	.001[b]
	Residual	21.910	43	.510		
	Total	86.979	47			

Table 6 Regression of Beta Coefficient and Significance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant/Y Intercept	5.690	.436		13.050	.000
Training	.041	.175	.030	.234	.816
Information systems	.703	.118	.639	2.403	.021

R2 value of 0.748 which shows that 74.8% of variations in health project performance may be explained by M&E planning, stakeholder engagement, M&E staff training, and information systems adoption. Findings further imply that other M&E practice that other this study did not focus on contributes to 25.2% of health project performance in Isiolo County.

Results show that regression model had an F value of 31.92 (p= 0.000). Therefore, the model was considered suitable in explaining changes in project performance caused by M&E staff training, and adoption of M&E information systems.

This implies that considering all variables at a constant zero, performance of county health projects would be at 5.690. The equation further shows with all other factors held constant, that a unit increase in M&E staff training would cause a 0.041 significant increase in performance of county health projects, and a unit increase in adoption of M&E information systems would cause a 0.703 significant increase in performance of county health projects. The t statistics show that adoption of M&E information systems (2.403), and M&E staff capacity building has the least effect on performance of health projects (0.234). This implies that the key M&E practice affecting performance of health projects in Isiolo County are adoption of M&E systems. Findings supports Heravi, Coffey and Trigunarsyah (2015) who indicated that project performance is positively influenced by stakeholder involvement. Stakeholders' involvement is very important in the initial phase of project implementation.

Conclusion

Monitoring and evaluation is a highly specialized profession. Highly competent and qualified personnel are because of intensive in-service training on various monitoring and evaluation functions. Adequately skilled human resource capacity in M&E is an important component of project quality. However, M&E staff training has not been fully embraced in the county government of Isiolo.

The county government have not adopted M&E information system. This is an indication that the county uses conventional techniques of M&E. Information systems would also enhance fast and timely decision making. The teams charged in conducting monitoring and evaluations of Projects should adopt modern information and communications technology in conducting monitoring and evaluations. With a current information system, the county government could collect data, monitor and evaluate projects in real time.

Recommendations of the Study

The county governments' staff in charge of development projects should identify the training needs of the monitoring and evaluation staff and design training programs that would fill in the training gaps. The staff would them be more competent and consequently deliver quality projects. The training could focus on main areas like data quality, data storage, analysis and use, and log frames and work plans, and attitude change towards M&E training. Project managers should hire skilled and experienced project team members to ensure that the right team is employed to lead a process of successful project implementation.

Monitoring and evaluation practice involves working with data and hence the county government should strive to adopt information systems that will enhance effectiveness of the monitoring and evaluation activities. The information systems will also ensure standardization of processes as well as protection and efficiency when handling the data and information.

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