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MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE OF HEALTH PROJECTS IN KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA

[1] Ngoya Caroline Nekesa, [2] Dr. Mungai, Anne Marie Wairimu, PhD

Masters in Monitoring and Evaluation at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

Lecturer, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

ABSTRACT

The general objective of the study is to establish the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. Specifically, the study sought to determine the influence of M&E planning on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya, to establish the influence of M&E capacity on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. This study was guided by Theory of Change, and Systems Theory. The study adopted descriptive research design. This study was conducted at the ministry of health. This study was conducted in Kiambu County and only focused on health projects. According to Kiambu County report (2023) the department of health is structured into Tier 5- Inter-county facility (1), Tier 4 -Hospitals (13), Tier 3 -Health Centres (24) and Tier 2 -Dispensaries (70). The study therefore targeted a total of 108 health projects. The unit of observation was 216 respondents comprising of project managers and M&E officers working on the 108 projects. The study's sample size was reached at using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula. The 138 respondents were chosen with the help of stratified random sampling technique. This study relied on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through use of semi structured questionnaires. The study also conducted pilot test to test the validity and the reliability of the data collection instrument. The data collection instrument generated quantitative data. The study used both descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25). Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentages were used in this study. In relation to inferential statistics, the study used correlation analysis. This was used to establish the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. Data was then presented in a tables, bar charts and pie charts. From the pilot test results, the questionnaire met all the validity and reliability requirements and the respondents had a clear understanding of the data collection instrument hence it is good instrument for data collection. The study concludes that M&E planning has a positive and significant influence on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. In addition, the study concludes that M&E capacity has a positive and significant influence on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the management of health projects in Kenya should establish a robust and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system.

Key Words: Monitoring and Evaluation Practices, Performance of Health Projects, M&E Planning, M&E Capacity

Background of the Study

A well-functioning health sector is essential to the social and economic well-being of any country. It not only improves the quality of life by ensuring that people have access to timely and effective medical care but also strengthens the workforce by reducing illness-related absenteeism and increasing productivity (Rumenya & Kisimbi, 2020). A robust health sector supports preventive measures, early disease detection, and effective treatment, which together reduce the overall burden of disease on families and the economy (Niwagaba & Mulyungi, 2020). Additionally, equitable access to healthcare enhances social stability by promoting a sense of inclusion and security among citizens. Ultimately, a healthy population is a foundation for sustainable development, contributing to poverty reduction, economic resilience, and a higher standard of living for all (Auta *et al*, 2024).

Health projects are organized initiatives designed to improve the health and well-being of individuals or communities. These projects can take many forms, from public health campaigns and research studies to community health programs and healthcare delivery initiatives. Their primary goal is to address specific health issues, promote healthy behaviors, and enhance access to healthcare services (Borisch, Amer & Jahaf, 2023). Health projects play a crucial role in addressing the myriad health challenges faced by individuals and communities. One of their primary functions is to identify and target specific health issues, such as infectious diseases, maternal and child health, or mental health disorders (Karouw & Rindengan, 2023). By focusing on these areas, health projects can develop tailored interventions that address the root causes of health problems, ultimately leading to improved health outcomes. This targeted approach ensures that resources are allocated effectively and that the most vulnerable populations receive the attention they need (Kanittha, *et al*, 2020).

Moreover, health projects often serve as a platform for education and awareness. Through community outreach and engagement, these initiatives inform individuals about healthy behaviors, preventive measures, and available health services. Educational components are essential for fostering a culture of health literacy, empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their health (Vaezi, 2020). This empowerment is particularly important in underserved communities where access to information and resources may be limited. Collaboration is another critical aspect of health projects. They often bring together various stakeholders, including government agencies, healthcare providers, non-profit organizations, and community members (Memon, Majid & Mustaffar, 2020). This collaborative approach enhances the capacity to address complex health issues by pooling resources, expertise, and networks. Such partnerships can lead to more comprehensive and sustainable health solutions, as they leverage the strengths of diverse organizations and engage the community in the process. Additionally, health projects contribute to the overall improvement of healthcare systems (Ahumuza & Babirye, 2024). By implementing innovative practices and evaluating their outcomes, these initiatives can identify best practices that can be scaled up or replicated in other settings. They also generate valuable data and insights that inform policy decisions and guide future health programs. In this way, health projects not only address immediate health concerns but also play a long-term role in shaping health policies and systems for the better (Kiss, *et al*, 2020).

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices are essential components of effective program management, providing a structured approach to assess the performance and impact of health projects. M&E planning involves establishing a framework that outlines the objectives, indicators, data collection methods, and timelines for monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes (Workneh & Aga, 2022). This planning ensures that the project's goals are measurable and that stakeholders have a clear understanding of what success looks like. A well-defined M&E plan not only guides the implementation of the project but also facilitates ongoing learning and adaptation, enabling teams to respond to challenges and seize opportunities as they arise (Lawal, 2022).

M&E capacity refers to the skills, resources, and systems necessary to effectively conduct monitoring and evaluation activities. Building M&E capacity within organizations and communities ensures that stakeholders are equipped to collect, analyze, and use data to inform decision-making (Gasana & Irechukwu, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya, faces several significant challenges that hinder their effectiveness and sustainability. One of the primary issues is inadequate funding and resource allocation. Health facilities in the region often operate with limited budgets, which restrict their ability to procure essential medical supplies and equipment (Nyabuto & Musembi, 2024). For instance, a report from the Kenya Health Information System indicated that approximately 40% of health facilities in Kiambu County reported stock-outs of essential medicines at various times in 2022. This not only compromises the quality of care provided but also discourages community trust in health services (Banzi & Tumuti, 2024). Another challenge is the shortage of skilled healthcare personnel. Kiambu County, like many regions in Kenya, struggles with a high attrition rate among health workers, exacerbated by factors such as low salaries, difficult working conditions, and a lack of professional development opportunities (Wambua & James, 2019). According to the Kenya Health Workforce Report, there is a shortfall of about 5,000 health workers in the county, which translates to a ratio of only 12 health workers per 10,000 people, far below the World Health Organization's recommended threshold of 23 per 10,000. This shortage leads to increased patient workloads, reduced quality of care, and burnout among existing staff (Waweru & Kimathi, 2022).

Additionally, infrastructural challenges significantly impact health project performance. Many health facilities in Kiambu County are in poor condition, lacking adequate sanitation, reliable electricity, and clean water supply. A survey conducted by the Ministry of Health revealed that over 30% of health facilities in the county had inadequate infrastructure to support basic healthcare delivery (Njiru & Thoronjo, 2024). These deficiencies not only affect service delivery but also pose serious health risks to patients, especially in the context of infectious disease outbreaks. Community engagement is also a critical challenge. Despite efforts to involve local populations in health projects, cultural beliefs and misinformation can lead to low participation rates and resistance to health initiatives (Nyabuto & Musembi, 2024). For example, a survey indicated that only 60% of the population in Kiambu County was aware of available health services, with many still relying on traditional medicine due to distrust in formal healthcare. This disconnect hampers the overall effectiveness of health programs and limits their reach (Banzi & Tumuti, 2024).

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices play a pivotal role in influencing project performance by providing a systematic framework for assessing progress, identifying challenges, and informing decision-making (Wambua & James, 2019). Through regular monitoring, project teams can track the implementation of activities against established benchmarks and timelines. This ongoing oversight allows for the early detection of potential issues, enabling teams to make timely adjustments to strategies and resource allocation (Waweru & Kimathi, 2022). Various studies have been conducted in different parts of the word on monitoring and evaluation practices and project performance. For instance, Nyabuto and Musembi (2024) conducted a study on monitoring and evaluation practices and performance of Kenya urban roads authority construction projects. Banzi and Tumuti (2024) assessed on monitoring and evaluation practices and performance of county funded health construction projects and Wambua and James (2019) researched on the monitoring and evaluation practices and performance of county funded education projects. However, none of these studies focused on M&E planning, M&E capacity on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. To fill the highlighted gaps, the current seeks sought to determine the influence of

monitoring and evaluation practices (M&E planning, M&E capacity) on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to establish the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya

Specific Objectives

i. To determine the influence of M&E planning on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya
ii. To establish the influence of M&E capacity on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) developed by Weiss (1995) is a conceptual framework used primarily in program planning, evaluation, and social change initiatives. It outlines how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. At its core, a ToC articulates the relationship between the activities a program will undertake and the outcomes it aims to achieve. By detailing the pathways through which change occurs, it helps stakeholders understand the assumptions behind the program's strategies and how these strategies lead to the intended impacts (Auta *et al*, 2024). One of the key components of a Theory of Change is the identification of specific goals and outcomes. This involves defining the long-term objectives of the program and the intermediate outcomes that must be achieved along the way. By mapping out these outcomes, stakeholders can create a logical sequence that shows how initial activities lead to short-term outputs, which in turn contribute to broader, long-term impacts. This clarity allows for better planning, as well as a more coherent framework for measuring progress and success (Niwagaba & Mulyungi, 2020). Another important aspect of the ToC is its emphasis on assumptions and contextual factors. It encourages practitioners to articulate the beliefs and conditions that must hold true for the proposed change to occur. This might include social, economic, or political factors that could influence the success of the program. By identifying these assumptions, stakeholders can engage in critical reflection about the feasibility of their strategies and adjust their plans accordingly. This element of the ToC fosters greater transparency and accountability, as it invites scrutiny of the underlying logic of the proposed interventions (Rumenya & Kisimbi, 2020).

The Theory of Change (ToC) is built on several assumptions that shape its application and effectiveness. One fundamental assumption is that change is a linear and sequential process, where specific activities lead to predetermined outcomes. This perspective can oversimplify the complexities of real-world contexts, where multiple factors can influence the dynamics of change, leading to unforeseen consequences (Mbiti & Kiruja, 2020). Additionally, the ToC assumes that stakeholders will interpret and engage with the pathways to change in a uniform manner. However, differing perspectives and motivations among stakeholders can complicate the implementation of the theory, potentially leading to conflicts or misalignment in understanding the intended outcomes (Olima & Mungai, 2024).

Critiques of the Theory of Change often center around its perceived rigidity and the challenges of accurately capturing the complexity of social systems. Critics argue that the linear model may not adequately account for the adaptive and iterative nature of social change, where feedback loops and evolving contexts can significantly alter the trajectory of a program. This rigidity can result in frameworks that are too prescriptive, limiting the flexibility necessary to respond to new information or changing circumstances. Furthermore, the emphasis on

predefined outcomes can create pressure to meet specific targets, potentially overshadowing the process and the importance of qualitative aspects of change that are harder to measure (Niwagaba & Mulyungi, 2020). Another critique focuses on the assumption that stakeholders will have a shared understanding and agreement on the outcomes and pathways outlined in the ToC. In practice, diverse stakeholder groups may have conflicting priorities, values, and interpretations of success. This can lead to challenges in building consensus and may result in tensions during implementation. Additionally, the process of developing a ToC can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, potentially diverting attention from action and implementation, especially in contexts where rapid responses are needed (Rumenya & Kisimbi, 2020). This theory is relevant in determining the influence of M&E planning on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Systems Theory

Systems Theory developed by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in the 1940s is an interdisciplinary framework that examines the relationships and interactions among the components of complex systems, emphasizing how these parts function together as a whole. Originating from various fields, including biology, engineering, and sociology, Systems Theory seeks to understand not just individual elements but also the dynamics that arise from their interconnections. It posits that systems can be found in various contexts—ranging from ecological and social systems to organizational and technological frameworks—and that these systems operate under specific principles that govern their behavior and evolution (Nwobodo *et al*, 2022). One of the core tenets of Systems Theory is the concept of holism, which asserts that the properties of a system cannot be fully understood by merely analyzing its individual components. Instead, it is crucial to consider the interactions and relationships that bind these elements together. This perspective is particularly relevant in complex systems where emergent properties—characteristics that arise from the collective functioning of the system—cannot be predicted by studying the components in isolation (Nurullah, 2020).

Another important aspect of Systems Theory is the focus on feedback loops, which are the processes through which outputs of a system can influence its inputs. Feedback can be either positive, reinforcing growth or change, or negative, stabilizing the system by counteracting deviations from a desired state. Understanding these feedback mechanisms is essential for analyzing how systems adapt to changes, respond to disturbances, and maintain equilibrium. For instance, in organizational settings, feedback loops can help managers assess the impact of their decisions and adjust strategies to align with evolving goals (Kithinji, 2020). Systems Theory also emphasizes the importance of boundaries, which define the limits of a system and distinguish it from its environment. These boundaries can be physical, conceptual, or operational, and they play a crucial role in determining how a system interacts with external influences. Identifying and understanding these boundaries helps in analyzing how systems are influenced by external factors, such as regulatory changes, technological advancements, or societal shifts. This perspective is particularly useful in fields like public health, where understanding the interactions between healthcare systems and social determinants is essential for improving health outcomes (Ayinkamiye & Gitahi, 2020).

Systems Theory operates on several foundational assumptions that shape its application across various disciplines. One primary assumption is that systems can be understood as wholes, emphasizing the importance of the interconnections between components rather than just their individual characteristics. This holistic perspective suggests that the behavior of a system is not merely the sum of its parts, but rather a result of complex interactions. Another key assumption is the notion of stability and equilibrium, where systems tend to seek balance through feedback mechanisms. This implies that systems are self-regulating and can adapt to changes while maintaining their core functions (Kithinji, 2020).

However, Systems Theory has faced critiques regarding its applicability and limitations. One critique is that the theory can sometimes oversimplify complex realities by focusing too heavily

on interrelations and neglecting the unique characteristics of individual components. In doing so, it may obscure critical nuances that are essential for understanding specific elements within a system. Additionally, the emphasis on equilibrium can be misleading; many real-world systems are dynamic and subject to constant change, with instability and unpredictability often being the norm rather than the exception (Nwobodo *et al*, 2022). Critics argue that this focus on stability may lead to inadequate responses to crises or disruptions, as systems are not always capable of self-correcting. Another significant critique is related to the challenge of defining system boundaries. While establishing boundaries is crucial for understanding a system's interactions with its environment, determining where one system ends and another begins can be problematic. This ambiguity can lead to issues in analysis and decision-making, particularly in complex scenarios where systems overlap or influence each other. For instance, in ecological studies, defining the boundary of an ecosystem can be contentious and can impact conservation efforts and policy formulation (Nurullah, 2020). This theory is relevant in establishing the influence of M&E capacity on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya.

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is an assumed model that aids in the identification of study concepts as well as their interactions with one another (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019). In this study the independent variables include; M&E planning, M&E capacity, while the dependent variable is performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya

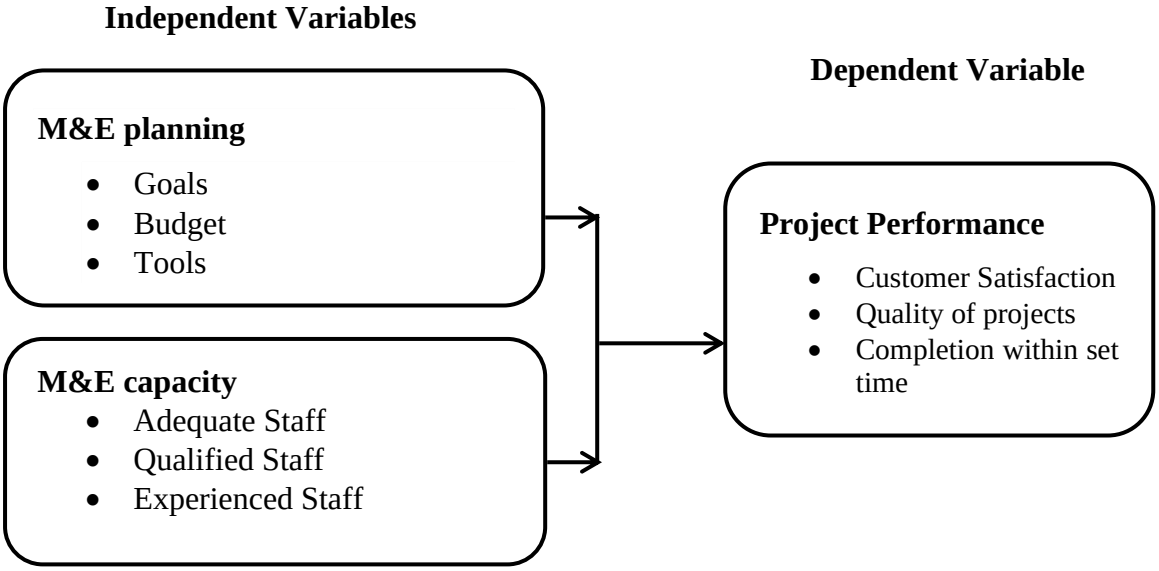

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual Framework

M&E Planning

M&E planning, or Monitoring and Evaluation planning, is a systematic process used to establish a framework for assessing the performance and impact of projects or programs (Auta *et al,* 2024). It involves defining clear objectives, indicators, and methods for data collection and analysis to track progress and outcomes. Goals are the overarching aims or desired outcomes that a project or program seeks to achieve. They provide a clear direction and serve as a foundation for planning, implementation, and evaluation (Niwagaba & Mulyungi, 2020). Well-defined goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART), enabling stakeholders to understand the intended impact and align their efforts accordingly. Establishing clear goals helps prioritize activities, allocate resources effectively, and motivate team members and participants by creating a shared vision. Additionally, goals serve as benchmarks for assessing progress and success, guiding the monitoring and evaluation process to ensure that efforts remain focused on achieving meaningful results (Rumenya & Kisimbi, 2020).

A budget is a critical component of project planning that outlines the financial resources required to achieve the defined goals. It includes estimates of all costs associated with project activities, such as personnel, materials, travel, and operational expenses. A well-structured budget ensures that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively, allowing organizations to manage financial risks and make informed decisions about spending (Mbiti & Kiruja, 2020). Additionally, a budget provides accountability and transparency to stakeholders, demonstrating responsible stewardship of funds. Regular monitoring of the budget throughout the project lifecycle helps identify potential variances and allows for timely adjustments to keep the project on track financially (Olima & Mungai, 2024).

Tools in the context of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) refer to the methodologies, frameworks, and technologies used to collect, analyze, and interpret data related to project performance and outcomes. These can include surveys, interviews, focus groups, data management software, and statistical analysis programs (Niwagaba & Mulyungi, 2020). Selecting the right tools is essential for capturing accurate and relevant information that aligns with the goals and objectives of the project. Effective use of M&E tools enhances the ability to track progress, assess impact, and facilitate learning among stakeholders (Rumenya & Kisimbi, 2020). By integrating appropriate tools into the M&E framework, organizations can strengthen their evaluation processes, improve data quality, and ultimately enhance decision-making and program effectiveness.

M&E Capacity

M&E capacity refers to the ability of individuals, organizations, and systems to effectively implement monitoring and evaluation processes. This includes skills in data collection, analysis, and interpretation, as well as knowledge of M&E methodologies and frameworks (Nwobodo *et al*, 2022). Having adequate staff refers to ensuring that an organization has the right number of personnel to meet its operational needs and project goals. This means not only filling positions but also ensuring that staffing levels are appropriate to handle the workload, manage tasks effectively, and maintain high-quality outputs (Nurullah, 2020). Adequate staffing is crucial for preventing burnout, ensuring timely project delivery, and facilitating collaboration among team members. By assessing the demands of various projects and allocating human resources accordingly, organizations can enhance productivity, improve team dynamics, and ultimately achieve their objectives more efficiently. Regular evaluations of staff adequacy can help organizations adapt to changing circumstances and project requirements (Kithinji, 2020).

Qualified staff possess the necessary education, skills, and certifications required to perform their roles effectively. This includes not only technical expertise relevant to specific job functions but also competencies in areas such as project management, communication, and problem-solving. Employing qualified staff is essential for ensuring that an organization can deliver high-quality services and meet its strategic goals (Kithinji, 2020). Additionally, having qualified personnel enhances credibility with stakeholders and beneficiaries, fostering trust and engagement. Organizations can further enhance their workforce by investing in ongoing training and professional development, ensuring that staff remain up-to-date with industry standards and best practices, ultimately leading to improved performance and outcomes (Ayinkamiye & Gitahi, 2020).

Experienced staff brings valuable knowledge and insights gained from their previous work and projects. Their familiarity with various challenges, processes, and strategies enables them to navigate complexities effectively and make informed decisions (Kithinji, 2020). Experienced team members can mentor less experienced colleagues, fostering a culture of learning and capacity building within the organization. This collective experience can significantly enhance project implementation, problem-solving, and innovation. Furthermore, having experienced staff can improve stakeholder confidence and satisfaction, as they are more likely to trust the judgment and capabilities of a seasoned team (Nwobodo *et al*, 2022). Organizations that

prioritize the recruitment and retention of experienced personnel are better positioned to achieve their goals and sustain long-term success.

Empirical Review

M&E Planning and Project Performance

Auta *et al* (2024) assessed the impact of project planning, monitoring and evaluation on the Sustainability of the Millennium Village Project in Pampaida, Ikara Local Government Area of Kaduna State Nigeria. The study applied the mixed method research technique –qualitative leading and corroborated by quantitative. We selected 368 people from the community as respondents from the 28 settlements of Pampaida to provide us with the data through structured questionnaires, interviews, focused group discussions and systematic observations. The study found that project planning, monitoring and evaluation were significant factors that positively affect the sustainability of MVP projects. The study concluded that sustainability of the Millennium Village project in Pampaida, Kaduna State, Nigeria, is contingent upon a multifaceted interplay of effective project planning that ensures resources are allocated judiciously, while rigorous monitoring and evaluation offer adaptability and quality assurance.

Niwagaba and Mulyungi (2020) researched on the influence of monitoring and evaluation planning on project performance in Rwanda: a case of selected non-governmental organizations in Gasabo district. Descriptive survey design was used; the targeted population of the study was 72 NGOs based in Gasabo district, Kigali. From each NGO two respondents (M&E Specialist & Finance Manager) was picked purposively hence the total target population was 144 respondents. A sample size of 106 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula. The study used both primary and secondary data where questionnaires were used for data collection. Findings indicated that all participating institutions were privy to the M&E plans developed by AVU. The respondents gave plausible reasons why they thought M&E planning influences project performance in reference to the projects under study. Spearman correlation showed a positive significant correlation coefficient M&E planning and project performance. The study concluded that without an M&E plan it would be very difficult to conduct any meaningful project monitoring and evaluation tasks, as there would be no organized way of doing that, no identified key performance data to collect, no schedule to collect data, no delegated responsibilities and no agreed upon method of data analysis.

Rumenya and Kisimbi (2020) assessed the influence of monitoring and evaluation systems on performance of projects in nongovernmental organizations: a case of education projects in Mombasa County, Kenya. A descriptive research design was used in this study and structured questionnaires were used to collect the study data. The study population constituted of project officers, managers, and monitoring and evaluation staff in the twenty-two registered non-governmental organizations operating in Education sector in Mombasa County. The study established that the performance of projects in education sector significantly and positively correlated with organizational structures for M&E human resource capacity for M&E. The study concludes that organizational structures for monitoring and evaluation have a positive significant influence over the performance of projects in education sector.

Mbiti and Kiruja (2020) examined the role of monitoring and evaluation on performance of public organization projects in Kenya: a case of Kenya meat commission. The study adopted a descriptive survey and targeted 427 employees at Kenya Meat Commission Head Office. A sample of 81 respondents of the target population was considered by use of stratified sampling method. Study findings showed that all independent variables significantly and positively influenced performance of Kenya Meat commission projects. The study concluded that the aspects of human resource on monitoring and evaluation contributed a lot to performance of KMC projects such as staff entrusted with monitoring and evaluation had no technical skills, staff working on monitoring and evaluation are not dedicated to the function, roles and

responsibilities of monitoring and evaluation personnel had not been specified at the start of the projects.

Olima and Mungai (2024) conducted a case study on monitoring and evaluation tools and project performance in the ministry of health in Kenya. The study adopted descriptive research design. This study was conducted at the ministry of health. According to MOH(2023) report, ministry of health has a total of 630 employees comprising of 105 top managers, 210 middle level managers and 315 lower level managers. The study revealed that M&E partnership has a positive and significant influence on project performance in the ministry of health in Kenya. In addition, the study concluded that M&E plans have a positive and significant influence on project performance in the ministry of health in Kenya.

M&E Capacity and Project Performance

Nwobodo *et al* (2022) examined on monitoring and evaluation of the capacity of primary health care agencies to manage the primary health care facilities in south eastern Nigeria. A descriptive survey of the five State Primary Health Care Development Agencies (SPHCDA) in Southeast Nigeria. The respondents comprised all management staff of the SPHCDA in each of the five States. A standardized Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT) was used for data collection. Approvals were obtained and preliminary consultations were done. The findings showed that none of the Agencies attained a 50% organizational capacity score indicating poor organizational capacity. The main areas of common underperformance included: resource mobilisation, human resources for health, and service delivery. There is an overall weak organizational capacity of the key management body for PHC service provision in this part of the country. Human and institutional capacity development is crucial to the improvement of services and productivity of the PHC system. The study concluded that it is important to periodically assess, identify issues and plan for capacity improvements in Agencies that manage crucial systems such as the SPHCA.

Nurullah (2020) conducted a study on factors influencing the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation of non-governmental organization at urban region in Zanzibar. The study employed survey design in which a triangulation approach was used and data was collected using both the questionnaire and interview schedule. The population was 300 respondents from 100 NGOs available in the urban region and 160 respondents who were involved in this study. The results showed a positive causal relationship between the financial capacity and effectiveness of M&E. The findings indicate that financial resources measured in terms of fund adequacy, Source of fund and Disbursement process as important determinants in influencing the effectiveness of M&E of NGOs in Zanzibar. The study concluded that financial resources antecedents for the effectiveness of M&E of NGOs in Zanzibar.

Kithinji (2020) conducted a study evaluation Capacity Building and Improvement of Monitoring and Evaluation practice among Non-Governmental Organizations in Central Eastern Counties of Kenya. The study was guided by pragmatism paradigm to conduct a descriptive survey. Stratified random sampling was used to obtain the sample studied. The findings were that organizations in the region are doing a number of unstructured activities to build evaluation capacity which are done in varying degrees, these activities had influence on M&E practice. The study concluded that professional development activities were seen to have higher influence on M&E improved practices followed by activities were designed to build M&E support structures.

Kithinji (2020) studied on evaluation capacity building, monitoring and evaluation activities, organizational change and result utilization in non-profit organizations in Meru counties of Kenya. A descriptive survey design was used in the study. Using stratified random sampling the study obtained a sample of 218 from a population of 504. An interview guide and document review techniques were used to triangulate the results. It was also established that M&E activities have a moderating role on the relationship between ECB activities and M&E results

utilization. The study concluded that the influence of ECB activities on M&E result utilization by employees is not necessarily mediated by organizational evaluation change.

Ayinkamiye and Gitahi (2020) researched on effect of M&E Human Capacity on Project performance: A case of Integrated Nutrition and Wash Activity in Kicukiro District. The study used a descriptive research survey design and a quantitative method. A census method was used on the target population meaning all 65 employees working on Integrated Nutrition and Wash Activity project. The results showed that there was a low positive correlation between M&E Human capacity and the performance of Integrated Nutrition and Wash Activity project. The findings of the current study confirmed that to achieve the set project goals, deliberate effort needs to be put on human related factors and M&E human capacity is key for a strong monitoring and evaluation systems resulting in a successfully project performance. The study concluded that project monitoring and evaluation need to be part of the county integrated development plans.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design. The descriptive research design allows the researcher to gather information, summarize, present and interpret it for purpose of clarification (Karama, Iravo, & Shale, 2019). The target population makes a part of the universal population (Creswell, 2019). The unit of analysis is what is being targeted in the research. This study was conducted in Kiambu County and only focused on health projects. According to Kiambu County report (2023) the department of health is structured into Tier 5- Inter-county facility (1), Tier 4 -Hospitals (13), Tier 3 -Health Centres (24) and Tier 2 -Dispensaries (70). The study therefore targeted a total of 108 health projects. The unit of observation was 216 respondents comprising of project managers and M&E officers working on the 108 projects. The study's sample size was reached at using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula (Russell, 2019). Using this formula a representative sample was obtained. The study's total population is 216. The 138 respondents were chosen with the help of stratified random sampling technique. Stratified random sampling technique was used since the population of interest is not homogeneous and could be sub-divided into groups or strata to obtain a representative sample. This sampling technique divides the population into groups or strata. The strata are reached upon on the basis of the shared traits (Singpurwalla, 2019).

The study then used simple random sampling to select respondents from each group. This research used a questionnaire to collect primary data. Structured questions were used to collect primary data from the field. Questionnaires were preferred because they are effective data collection instruments that allow respondents to give much of their opinions pertaining to the research problem (Dempsey, 2019). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2019), a pilot study is an excellent way to determine the feasibility of the study. The subjects participating in the pilot study was not included in the final study to avoid survey fatigue. In this study, 10% of the sample size participated in the pilot study.

The researcher collected questionnaires, coded them, and entered them into the Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26) for analysis. The data was based on the study's objectives and research hypothesis. The descriptive statistical techniques of frequency, mean, and standard deviation was used to analyze the quantitative data acquired. The results were displayed using frequency distribution tables, which keeps track of how many times a score or response appears. Qualitative data collected was analysed using content analysis and presented in prose form. Inferential statistics including regression and correlation analysis was used in the study.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The sample size of this study was 138. The researcher distributed 138 questionnaires to the respondents during data collection process and 118 were fully filled and returned to the

researcher thus making a response rate of 85.5%. Kothari (2019) argues that a response rate which is more than 50% is considered adequate while excellent response rate is usually above 70%. This implies that the response rate in this research is good for making conclusions as well as recommendations.

Descriptive Statistics

M&E Planning and Project Performance

The first specific objective of the study was to determine the influence of M&E planning on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements related to M&E planning and performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. The results were as shown Table 1.

From the results, the respondents agreed that the M&E goals are clearly defined and aligned with the overall project objectives (M=3.824, SD= 0.767). In addition, the respondents agreed that stakeholders are involved in the development of M&E goals (M=3.808, SD= 0.683). Further, the respondents agreed that sufficient budget is allocated for M&E activities in the project plan (M=3.790, SD= 0.765). From the results, the respondents agreed that the budget for M&E is transparent and justifiable based on the project needs (M=3.773, SD= 0.590). In addition, the respondents agreed that appropriate tools and methodologies are selected for data collection and analysis (M=3.731, SD= 0.810). Further, the respondents agreed that the M&E tools used are user-friendly and accessible to all relevant stakeholders (M=3.714, SD= 0.643).

Table 1: M&E Planning and Project Performance

	Mean	**Std. Deviation**
The M&E goals are clearly defined and aligned with the overall project objectives.	3.824	0.767
Stakeholders are involved in the development of M&E goals.	3.808	0.683
Sufficient budget is allocated for M&E activities in the project plan.	3.790	0.765
The budget for M&E is transparent and justifiable based on the project needs.	3.773	0.590
Appropriate tools and methodologies are selected for data collection and analysis.	3.731	0.810
The M&E tools used are user-friendly and accessible to all relevant stakeholders.	3.714	0.643
Aggregate	**3.773**	**0.710**

M&E Capacity and Project Performance

The second specific objective of the study was to establish the influence of M&E capacity on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya.The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements related to M&E capacity and performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. The results were as shown Table 2.

From the results, the respondents agreed that there is enough staff members allocated to effectively implement M&E activities (M=3.905, SD= 0.889). In addition, the respondents agreed that the distribution of M&E staff roles and responsibilities is clear and well-defined (M=3.887, SD= 0.628). Further, the respondents agreed that M&E staffs possess the necessary qualifications to fulfill their roles effectively (M=3.861, SD=0.789). From the results, the respondents agreed that there are opportunities for M&E staff to pursue further education or certification (M=3.827, SD= 0.567). In addition, the respondents agreed that the M&E team includes individuals with prior experience in similar projects (M=3.799, SD= 0.901). Further, the respondents agreed that experienced staff members mentor and support less experienced colleagues in M&E tasks (M=3.761, SD=0.620).

Table 2: M&E Capacity and Project Performance

	Mean	Std. Deviation
There is enough staff members allocated to effectively implement M&E activities.	3.905	0.889
The distribution of M&E staff roles and responsibilities is clear and well-defined.	3.887	0.628
M&E staffs possess the necessary qualifications to fulfill their roles effectively.	3.861	0.789
There are opportunities for M&E staff to pursue further education or certification.	3.827	0.567
The M&E team includes individuals with prior experience in similar projects.	3.799	0.901
Experienced staff members mentor and support less experienced colleagues in M&E tasks.	3.761	0.620
Aggregate	**3.840**	**0.732**

Project Performance

The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement on various statements related to performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. The results were as shown Table 3.

From the results, the respondents agreed that feedback from customers is regularly collected and analyzed to improve project performance (M=3.900, SD= 0.665). In addition, the respondents agreed that the project meets or exceeds the expectations of its stakeholders (M=3.876, SD= 0.689). Further, the respondents agreed that the project deliverables meet the established quality standards (M=3.854, SD= 0.943). From the results, the respondents agreed that regular quality assessments are conducted throughout the project lifecycle (M=3.826, SD= 0.887). In addition, the respondents agreed that the project is completed within the agreed-upon timeline (M=3.786, SD=0.943). Further, the respondents agreed that delays in project completion are communicated promptly to stakeholders (M=3.743, SD=0. 0.681).

Table 3: Project Performance

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Feedback from customers is regularly collected and analyzed to improve project performance.	3.900	0.665
The project meets or exceeds the expectations of its stakeholders.	3.876	0.689
The project deliverables meet the established quality standards.	3.854	0.943
Regular quality assessments are conducted throughout the project lifecycle.	3.826	0.887
The project is completed within the agreed-upon timeline.	3.786	0.943
Delays in project completion are communicated promptly to stakeholders.	3.743	0.681
Aggregate	**3.831**	**0.801**

Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics such as correlation analysis and regression analysis were used to assess the relationships between the independent variables (M&E planning, M&E capacity) and the dependent variable (performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya).

Correlation Analysis

This research adopted Pearson correlation analysis to determine how the dependent variable (performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya) relates with the independent variables (M&E planning, M&E capacity).

Table 4: Correlation Coefficients

		Project Performance	**M&E Planning**	**M&E Capacity**
Project Performance	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	N	118		
M&E Planning	Pearson Correlation	.837**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003		
	N	118	118	
M&E Capacity	Pearson Correlation	.880**	.089	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.122	
	N	118	118	118

From the results, there was a very strong relationship between M&E planning and performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya (r = 0.837, p value =0.003). The relationship was significant since the p value 0.003 was less than 0.05 (significant level). The findings are in line with the findings of Auta *et al* (2024) who indicated that there is a very strong relationship between M&E planning and project performance.

Moreover, there was a very strong relationship between M&E capacity and performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya (r = 0.880, p value =0.000). The relationship was significant since the p value 0.000 was less than 0.05 (significant level). The findings are in line with the findings of Nurullah (2020) who indicated that there is a very strong relationship between M&E capacity and project performance.

Regression Analysis

Multivariate regression analysis was used to assess the relationship between independent variables (M&E planning, M&E capacity) and the dependent variable (performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya).

Table 5: Regression Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.322	0.085		3.788	0.000
M&E planning	0.381	0.099	0.380	3.848	0.000
M&E capacity	0.377	0.097	0.378	3.887	0.001

The regression model was as follows:

$$\mathbf{Y = 0.322 + 0.381X_1 + 0.377X_2 + \varepsilon}$$

According to the results, M&E planning has a significant effect on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya β_1=0.381, p value= 0.0010). The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.000 was less than the significant level of 0.05. The findings are in line with the findings of Auta *et al* (2024) who indicated that there is a very strong relationship between M&E planning and project performance

The results also revealed that M&E capacity has a significant effect on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya β1=0.377, p value= 0.001). The relationship was considered significant since the p value 0.001 was less than the significant level of 0.05. The findings are

in line with the findings of Nurullah (2020) who indicated that there is a very strong relationship between M&E capacity and project performance

Conclusions

The study concludes that M&E planning has a positive and significant influence on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. Findings revealed that goals, budget and tools influence performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya

In addition, the study concludes that M&E capacity has a positive and significant influence on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya. Findings revealed that adequate staff, qualified staff and experienced staff influence performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya

Recommendations

The study recommends that the management of health projects in Kenya should establish a robust and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system. This system should involve all stakeholders, including local communities, health workers, and project managers, from the planning stage through to implementation and evaluation. In addition, the study recommends that the management of health projects in Kenya should invest in strengthening the M&E capacity of local staff and stakeholders. This can be achieved by providing targeted training programs that enhance skills in data collection, analysis, reporting, and interpretation of M&E findings.

Suggestions for Further Studies

This study was limited to the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on performance of health projects in Kiambu County, Kenya hence the study findings cannot be generalized to project performance in other projects in Kenya. The study therefore suggests further studies on the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices and project performance in other projects in Kenya.

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