



EFFECTS OF UTILIZATION OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION RESULTS ON PROJECT PERFORMANCE

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Abstract:

Globally, any organization's goal is to be effective, and efficient, attain its objectives and exceed in performance. The need to be successful and have a more remarkable performance has created the need for regular tracking of projects to ensure the project follows the right course for optimal performance. The role of NDMA in Kenya is very crucial in attaining the Kenya vision 2030, the big four agenda, and SDG 2 on ending hunger and achieving food security. Therefore, with this background, the research sought to substantiate the impact of utilization of monitoring, and evaluation results on the performance of drought resilience projects by the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) in Mandera County. This study adopted systems theory and a descriptive research design. The study undertook a census survey where all the 60 members of the project under NDMA were studied. Data from primary and secondary sources were utilized and the researcher employed semi-structured questionnaires to collect data. Reliability and validity of research instruments and study results were attained by pilot testing the research instruments. SPSS statistical package using descriptive statistics was employed to analyze the collected data. Inferential statistics were applied to ascertain the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The findings show that utilization of monitoring and evaluation results significantly influences project performance at $r=.231$ $p<0.005$. Additionally, the findings concur with the theoretical foundation of the study that utilization of M&E results, affects the other aspects of the project thus influencing the performance.

Keywords: monitoring and evaluation, results utilization, project performance

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1. Introduction

Universally, company executives attribute business success to the success of a project. It entails understanding the critical success factors and a plan for achieving the intended goals and objectives. A business's ability to create results from the set objectives and goals is what performance is all about (Brooks, 2006). Project performance is vital in both the public sector and the non-government institutions in highlighting the institution's progress. For the project's performance to be successful, all the system components within the project must be in synchrony. Crawford and Bryce (2015) depict that for a project to be successful, it has to achieve the constraints of a set schedule, budget, achieving the set deliverables, and utilized by the intended users of the project.

Over the years, the performance of projects has been failing, leading to the withdrawal of funding by donors and disappointments on the expected beneficiaries. Projects frequently fail to achieve objectives due to unforeseen occurrences, ever-surging requirements, shifting constraints, and plummeting resource flow (Ogolla & Moronge, 2016). Therefore, this calls for continuous tracking, reviewing, and regulating of the project's progress to revert, correct, and ensure that the goals are achieved. The role of M&E is predominant in navigating the implementation of the project since the continuous review produces results that are key to improving the progress of the project by providing information useful for decision making that can alter the course of the project or enforce the existing course to achieve project performance. Unfortunately, despite the great efforts and resources spent in conducting the monitoring and evaluation, studies show that the stakeholders do not use the results (Bhikoo et al., 2013). This is further supported by Mbuku and Mwangi (2015) who asserts that government agencies have been reported to optimize their gains as individuals regardless of the majority needy. Further other studies by Ajidabe and Ibietan (2016) indicate that government agencies are characterized by corruption, inadequate recruitment, embezzlement of funds, poor selection procedures and practices, inadequate involvement of all stakeholders, and government interference.

According to IFAD (2012), the rate of project failure in Africa was over 50% until 2010. Similarly, a report by the humanitarian organization 2019 indicated that more than 45 million people struggled to find enough food in Africa. FAO further reports that the number of people facing severe food insecurity has more than doubled in the last six months to 2.7 million in Kenya. Therefore, this demands the project's success to mitigate drought impacts since lives are at stake here. This, therefore, demands the organization to adopt and incorporate monitoring and evaluation results that will result in better performance of the project by adopting changes as suggested.

2. Statement of the Problem

Since 1950, the performance of projects has faced dissatisfaction, and the project directors ascribe failure to poor managerial skills, poor project design, organization failure, poor monitoring practices, and poor stakeholder participation. According to IFAD (2015),

Africa has shown high project failure rates above 50% until 2020. For any organization, the goal is the success of its projects. However, different parameters ranging from poor management, corruption, poor communication of information and feedback, insufficient stakeholder participation, poor decision making, and poor planning and implementation, influence projects' success (Musimba, 2014). The beneficiaries of the intended project intensely feel the impact of the project's failure. To achieve the set deliverables, institutions have employed the practice of M & E to monitor and improve the performance of the projects at each stage. Despite the widespread adoption of monitoring practices in developed countries, project performance challenges are rampant, as expressed by major donors, such as the World Bank and the bilateral aid agencies (Khan, 2012). To overcome these challenges, modifications need to be made to the M&E approaches not working correctly or changes in the project itself.

2.1 Objective of the Study

To find out the effect of utilization of monitoring, and evaluation results on the performance of drought resilience projects by the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) in Mandera County.

3. Theoretical Review

Biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy, in 1940, constructed the theory on systems (Wilkinson, 2011). The theory was further expounded by Ross Ashby (Introduction to Cybernetics, 1956). The scholars opine that a system is an interrelation of two or more elements, where each element affects the functioning of the whole. The focus of this theory is on the interactions of all the components of the system and how they relate to each other. This helps to comprehend the functioning, organization, and outcomes of an entity. One way to determine the properties of a system is to observe the interaction and organization of these elements (Maull and Yip, 2009). Advancement of system theory such as the introduction of open and closed input-output analysis by Wassily Leontief in the 1930s is how concepts applicable to project management were developed. The aim of every institution when initiating a project is to have definite outcomes, and the criticality of successful project performance will highly be demanded.

The theory is appropriate in this study since M&E is perceived to be a system encompassing parts such as management, development partners, government policy, employees, and the community who play interactive roles in the success of projects or interventions. If one part does not cooperate, the M&E system fails to achieve its goal in the project's performance. The M&E system is influenced by internal and external variables, affecting the system either positively or negatively. For instance, corrective actions based on the dissemination of information could improve performance or weaken it. A single unit, especially on the use of information for lessons learned, impacts the organization's entire system. Unreliable information will result in incorrect actions, which will affect the performance of the project. This theory will form the basis of the use of M&E results.

4. Literature Review

Simister (2015), in his study on monitoring and evaluation plans, opines modifications need to be made on the M&E approaches not working correctly or changes in the project itself. This can only be achieved through implementing the lessons learned and utilizing the information gathered. The study established that insufficient systematic use of evaluation findings from previous programmes and utilization of results influences the implementation of M&E systems with a positive significance.

According to Ntiniya (2016), M&E results in utilization evaluate the linkage between implementers and decision-makers. Therefore, the study assessed what effect evaluation has on the performance of CDF projects in Kajiado County, and established that M&E findings added to the preservation and knowledge advancement. This, in return, provided a more vigorous foundation for floating funds and shaping policy at the County government of Kajiado. Finally, the researcher concluded that result utilization has a considerable impact on the performance of CDF projects.

Gamba (2016) investigated the factors affecting the utilization of M&E outcomes in the implementation of Malaria Control Programmes (MCP) in Mukono district, Uganda. The study applied a survey design where questionnaires were administered to 120 employees. The researcher found out that 71.4% of the respondent employees opined that the M&E results were hardly employed as a knowledge repository regarding the execution of MCP. The study, however, established that the use of monitoring results influenced the implementation of programs. The study further established M&E findings were rarely employed for decision-making regarding the implementation of MCP.

Wepukhulu (2017) conducted a study on the impact M&E results in utilization have on county governments, the case of Busia County, Kenya. The researcher proved that shortage of M&E proficiency adversely influences utilization of monitoring results and further demonstrated that it is not easy to disassociate M&E expertise and result utilization. Absence of such relation induced project performance. The researcher failed to outline the implications of social factors in facilitating knowledge management derived from M&E results.

Onyango (2017) investigated the effectiveness of M&E systems in Kenyan county government projects. The research recognized that utilizing evaluation findings had a substantial impact on project performance. It was further confirmed that the purpose of the M&E system is to help in decision-making and improve the organization's performance. The study indicated a need for programme and project managers to undertake corrective actions with the evaluation results. The study further highlighted that implementing the lessons learned not only serves the immediate needs of the programme or project but also provides feedback for future policy or projects.

5. Research Methodology

This research employed a descriptive survey design since this design permits the scholar to illustrate, record, assess, and report both existing and existed circumstances (Kothari,

1985). The researcher incorporated quantitative and qualitative methods. The population of interest was 60 members of HSNP, EDE, ADA Consortium, KRDP, and food for asset drought resilience projects managed by the NDMA in Mandera County. The 60 involved the project directors, project managers, field personnel, M&E officers, Support staff and project committee members. Census survey was undertaken in this research where all the 60 members were studied due to the small size of the population under study the census approach was used and this has the advantage of providing complete population coverage.

Table 1.1: Sample Size

| Projects | No. of respondents | Percentage |
|---------------------|--------------------|------------|
| HSNP-Cash transfers | 15 | 25 |
| KRDP | 9 | 15 |
| EDE | 13 | 22 |
| ADA Consortium | 11 | 18 |
| Food for Asset | 12 | 20 |
| Total | 60 | 100 |

Source: Muhsin & Ngugi, 2022.

A semi-structured questionnaire was adopted in this study. It comprised both open-ended and closed-ended questions. To pretest and validate the questionnaires, the researcher carried out a pilot study. The questionnaire was tested using staff working on a similar drought resilience project who matches the respondents in other counties where NDMA has a presence. The collected data through the questionnaire was edited, cyphered, and logged into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), which aided in analyzing the data. Open-ended questions generate qualitative data and were indexed in themes based on the research objectives and presented in narrative form. The quantitative data were analyzed and presented by employing frequency distribution tables, mean, percentages, and standard deviation. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used in testing the level of significance of the variables on the dependent variable at 95% level of significance. Inferential statistics were applied to establish the relationships among the study variables, and the following regression model was used.

6. Results and Discussion

Out of the 60 questionnaires of the members of the projects sampled, only 45 of them were filled and returned, making it to a response rate of 75% which William (2017) depicts as an excellent rate to work with. The study sought to establish the level of the agreement relating to statements on the influence of service quality on customer loyalty.

On inquiring how often the M&E results are utilized, the majority of the respondents indicated rarely represented by 66%, 28% of the respondents indicated occasionally while 14% indicated frequently.

Table 1.2: Utilization of M&E Results

| Time | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|-----------|---------|
| Frequently | 4 | 8 |
| Occasionally | 10 | 23 |
| Rarely | 31 | 69 |
| Total | 45 | 100 |

Source: Muhsin & Ngugi, 2022.

The study sought to establish whether there are criteria used in the utilization of M&E results. The findings depict that majority of the respondents shown by 96% indicated yes while 4% of the respondents indicated no. The respondents indicated a criterion is adopted to determine the relevance of the results being used in the project. If the results are detrimental to the function and operations of the project then they are used. Another criterion adopted is the level of priority of the results, if the results of the M&E indicate onsets of high risks, then the results are utilized immediately to mitigate the risk. The respondents further indicated that the availability of resources for the project will determine if the results will be adopted. The resources are most scarce so increasing the scope or altering the existing thus a consideration. Additionally, the respondents indicated that the decision to utilize M&E results is solely dependent on the management. This means that the use or vice versa is based on the approval of the management.

Table 1.3: Statements Regarding Utilization of Results

| Utilization of results | Strongly disapprove | Disapprove | Moderate | Approve | Highly approve | Mean | Standard deviation |
|--|---------------------|------------|----------|---------|----------------|-------|--------------------|
| Our M&E system identifies the information needs of stakeholders. | 0 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 30 | 4.511 | 0.785 |
| Our project avoids risk due to using M&E results. | 7 | 8 | 20 | 7 | 3 | 2.800 | 0.261 |
| The management helps in sharing the results of the M&E. | 14 | 11 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 2.511 | 0.078 |
| We make decisions on time-based on the findings of M&E. | 10 | 16 | 12 | 4 | 3 | 2.422 | 0.143 |
| Public opinion on M&E results affects the utility of reports. | 1 | 2 | 15 | 10 | 17 | 3.889 | 0.430 |
| Completeness of M&E reports is critical. | 1 | 1 | 9 | 19 | 15 | 4.022 | 0.467 |

Source: Muhsin & Ngugi, 2022.

Table 1.3 above shows the respondents' opinion on the parameters of the utilization of M&E results and the influence on project performance. The findings show the respondents highly approved that Our M&E system identifies the information needs of stakeholders shown by a mean of 4.511. The respondents further approved that the

Completeness of M&E reports is critical shown by a mean of 4.022 and public opinion on M&E results affects the utility of reports shown by a mean of 3.889. the respondents were neutral on whether our project avoids risk due to using M&E results shown by a mean of 2.80 and that the management helps in sharing the results of the M&E additional shown by 2.511. The respondents further disapproved that we make decisions on time based on the findings of M&E shown by a mean of 2. 422. These findings concur with Simister (2015) who depicts that insufficient systematic use of evaluation findings from previous programmes and utilization of results influences the implementation of M&E systems with a positive significance.

Table 1.4: Statements Regarding to Project Performance

| Performance | Strongly disapprove | Disapprove | Moderate | Approve | Highly approve | Mean | Standard deviation |
|---|---------------------|------------|----------|---------|----------------|-------|--------------------|
| Our stakeholders are happy with the project results | 2 | 5 | 17 | 19 | 2 | 3.311 | 0.402 |
| Our communication strategy is perfect | 8 | 19 | 10 | 5 | 3 | 2.467 | 0.149 |
| Our project delivers on time | 9 | 21 | 11 | 3 | 1 | 2.244 | 0.204 |
| Our projects work within the given budget | 2 | 4 | 10 | 21 | 9 | 3.674 | 0.412 |
| Our project has gained the approval of donors | 2 | 5 | 4 | 15 | 19 | 3.978 | 0.503 |
| The M&E system of our project is effective | 2 | 18 | 15 | 2 | 8 | 2.911 | 0.247 |

Source: Muhsin & Ngugi, 2022.

The study established the level of agreement relating to statements on project performance. The respondents approved that our project has gained the approval of donors shown by a mean of 3.978 and that our projects work within the given budget shown by a mean of 3.674. The respondents were moderate on whether our stakeholders are happy with the project results shown by a mean of 3.311 and the M&E system of our project is effective shown by a mean of 2.911. The respondents further disapproved that our communication strategy is perfect shown by 2.467 and our project delivers on time shown by 2.244.

6.1 Regression Analysis

Table 1.5: Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .808(a) | .653 | .633 | .69440 |

The adjusted R has a value of 0.633, this, therefore, opines that a change in project performance by 63.3% can be attributed to changes in monitoring and evaluation aspects such as stakeholder participation, staff expertise, communication, utilization of results,

and communication at a confidence level interval of 95%. This, therefore, means that monitoring and evaluation aspects influence the performance of projects in NDMA by 0.808 therefore its influence is significant.

Table 1.6: Analysis of Variance

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | Residual | 1.084 | 4 | 0.271 | 3.045 | .021 ^b |
| | Regression | 6.497 | 73 | 0.089 | | |
| | Total | 7.581 | 77 | | | |

The level of significance derived from the analysis was 0.021 which is less than 0.05 thus the findings of the study are sufficient to conclude on the variables under study and also be inferred to other populations. This depicts that the utilization of monitoring and evaluation results influences significantly the project performance of NDMA.

Table 1.7: Coefficients

| Model | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|-------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | Constant | 1.298 | .453 | | 2.865 | .021 |
| | Utilization of M&E results | .231 | .126 | .245 | 3.834 | .001 |

The regression equation is as shown below;

$$Y = 1.298 + 0.231 X_1$$

Retaining Utilization of M&E results continuously to zero; project performance would be at 1.298. Increasing the Utilization of the M&E results aspect with one unit will result to project performance increasing, by 0.231.

7. Conclusion

Utilization of results is essential in identifying the information needs of stakeholders, and the completion and utility of the M&E report. The study concludes that the utilization of M&E results influences the performance of NDMA projects in Mandera County.

7.1 Recommendation

The study recommends that real-time absorption of the M&E results be endorsed by the management of the NDMA, to avoid delays in decision making which might be brought about by deliberations of the M&E findings. The study further recommends that the management of NDMA should play an active role in sharing the results with the stakeholders as most of the information is not available to them.

7.2 Areas of further study

Further research should be carried out to establish the challenges experienced in the utilization of M&E results in projects.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose. We certify that the submission is original work and that it is not currently being reviewed by any other publication.

About the Authors

Amina Abdi Muhsin is an Internal Audit Professional with a keen interest in Project Monitoring and Evaluation. She is a holder of a BSc. in Project Planning and Management and a CPA. Being an Internal Auditor has given her the opportunity to assess the performance of different projects and monitor the project processes. With this background, she has grown an interest to expand her knowledge in the world of Monitoring and Evaluation. She has been able to ensure that her newly acquired knowledge in M&E will enable her to achieve her goals in auditing projects within the organization.

Dr. Lucy Ngugi is a postgraduate and e-learning coordinator at Kenyatta University's Department of Management Science. She has an extensive academic background in statistics from undergraduate to postgraduate level and has a PhD in Business (Management Science), MSc in Statistics, and Bachelor's degree in Education (double mathematics). Her work and education history has provided her with a broad range of statistical analysis skills. She holds exemplary skills in mathematical, statistical, and econometric modelling and has vast experience in research and data analysis gained through consultancy work in training on proposal writing, data collection tools development, data analysis using SPSS and STATA, report writing, and PowerPoint presentation; research and data analysis of various projects; coordination of research work for masters and PhD students; research supervision and examination; monitoring and evaluation of e-learning programmes and research publications.

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