

Evaluating the Effect of Weak Monitoring and Evaluation Systems on Public Sector Performance and Employee Performance in Nigeria

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Abstract

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are essential for improving accountability, transparency, employee performance, and efficiency in public sector governance. In Nigeria, however, weak M&E frameworks continue to undermine public sector performance and workforce productivity, leading to poor service delivery, policy failure, and declining public trust. This study examines the effect of weak monitoring and evaluation systems on employee performance and organisational effectiveness in Nigeria's public sector. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative content analysis design, relying on secondary sources such as academic journals, government reports, and empirical literature, with thematic analysis used to interpret findings. Results reveal that weak M&E systems are characterised by poor data collection, ineffective performance appraisal, weak feedback mechanisms, limited institutional capacity, and poor utilisation of evaluation outcomes. Consequently, public institutions experience low motivation, inefficiency, and poor accountability. The study concludes that strengthening M&E systems is essential for improving employee performance, enhancing service delivery, and promoting sustainable public sector efficiency in Nigeria.

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Background to the Study

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are widely recognised as essential governance tools for improving public sector performance, enhancing accountability, and strengthening organisational learning. Monitoring refers to the continuous assessment of ongoing activities, while evaluation involves the systematic assessment of outcomes and impacts of policies, programmes, and projects. Together, they provide feedback mechanisms that enable governments to assess performance, identify gaps, and improve service delivery. In well-functioning public institutions, M&E systems serve as strategic instruments for ensuring efficiency, transparency, and accountability. They also play a critical role in human resource management by linking employee performance to organisational objectives. However, in many developing countries, including Nigeria, M&E systems remain weak, fragmented, and poorly institutionalised. According to Anam (2024), effective public sector performance is strongly dependent on robust accountability structures, performance measurement systems, and feedback mechanisms that guide decision-making and employee behaviour. Where such systems are weak or absent, organisational inefficiency, poor service delivery, and low employee motivation tend to persist.

In Nigeria, the public sector continues to face significant challenges related to inefficiency, corruption, weak performance management, and poor accountability. Many institutions lack effective data systems for tracking employee performance and evaluating policy outcomes. As a result, employee appraisal processes are often treated as routine administrative exercises rather than strategic tools for improving productivity. Ezeani (2018) observes that weak institutional capacity for monitoring and evaluation has contributed significantly to poor governance outcomes in Nigeria's public sector. Similarly, Oladipo and Abdullahi (2021) argue that the absence of functional performance management systems has led to persistent underperformance among public servants. This study therefore evaluates the effect of weak monitoring and evaluation systems on public sector performance and employee performance in Nigeria, with the aim of contributing to policy and administrative reforms.

Statement of the Problem

Despite numerous reforms in Nigeria's public sector aimed at improving accountability and efficiency, performance outcomes remain unsatisfactory. Weak monitoring and evaluation systems have been identified as a major constraint affecting organisational effectiveness and employee productivity. In many public institutions, performance evaluation is not systematically conducted, and where it exists, it is often not linked to rewards, sanctions, or capacity development. This disconnect undermines employee motivation and reduces accountability. Furthermore, lack of reliable data, weak feedback mechanisms, and poor utilisation of evaluation results have continued to limit institutional learning and performance improvement. Consequently, inefficiencies persist across ministries, departments, and agencies. Mabogunje (2021) notes that without strong M&E systems, public institutions are unable to measure progress effectively or make evidence-based decisions. This situation has resulted in poor service

delivery and declining public trust in government institutions. The persistence of these challenges raises critical questions about the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems in enhancing employee performance and public sector efficiency in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to evaluate the effect of weak monitoring and evaluation systems on public sector performance and employee performance in Nigeria.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Examine how weak monitoring and evaluation systems affect employee performance in Nigeria's public sector.
- ii. Assess the impact of weak M&E frameworks on organisational performance and service delivery.
- iii. Identify the challenges associated with monitoring and evaluation systems in public institutions.
- iv. Propose strategies for strengthening M&E systems for improved performance.

Research Questions

- i. How do weak monitoring and evaluation systems affect employee performance in Nigeria's public sector?
- ii. What is the impact of weak M&E systems on public sector performance and service delivery?
- iii. What challenges hinder effective monitoring and evaluation in public institutions?
- iv. How can monitoring and evaluation systems be strengthened to improve performance?

Conceptual Literature

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Systems

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems refer to structured processes used by organisations to track ongoing activities (monitoring) and assess outcomes and impacts (evaluation) in order to improve decision-making, accountability, and performance. Monitoring is a continuous process that involves the systematic collection of data on programme or organisational activities, while evaluation is a periodic assessment that determines the effectiveness, efficiency, and relevance of such activities in achieving stated objectives. In public sector administration, M&E systems are essential governance tools that ensure policies and programmes are implemented effectively and resources are used efficiently. According to Anam (2024), monitoring and evaluation systems form the backbone of performance management in public institutions because they provide evidence-based feedback for decision-making, resource allocation, and administrative accountability. Without effective M&E systems, organisations are unable to measure progress or correct performance deficiencies in a timely manner. In Nigeria, M&E systems are often characterised by weak data infrastructure, poor institutional coordination, and limited use of evaluation findings in policy formulation. This has led to a situation where performance tracking is largely formalistic rather than results-oriented (Ezeani, 2018).

Public Sector Performance

Public sector performance refers to the extent to which government institutions efficiently and effectively achieves their policy goals and deliver public goods and services. It is typically measured in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, responsiveness, and service delivery outcomes. Armstrong (2021) defines organisational performance as the achievement of strategic objectives through the effective utilisation of resources, systems, and human capital. In the public sector context, performance is reflected in improved service delivery, policy implementation success, and citizen satisfaction. In Nigeria, public sector performance has often been criticised for inefficiency, bureaucratic delays, corruption, and weak accountability systems. These challenges are frequently linked to the absence of strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks that would otherwise enhance transparency and performance tracking (Mabogunje, 2021). Anam (2024) further argues that public sector performance is highly dependent on institutional feedback systems, leadership quality, and the extent to which performance data is used to guide administrative decisions.

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the degree to which employees successfully execute their assigned tasks and responsibilities in line with organisational expectations. It is typically assessed in terms of productivity, efficiency, quality of work, punctuality, innovation, and commitment to organisational goals. In public administration, employee performance is a critical determinant of overall institutional effectiveness. According to Armstrong (2021), employee performance is influenced by factors such as supervision, motivation, feedback systems, training, and organisational culture. In the Nigerian public sector, employee performance is often hindered by weak performance appraisal systems, lack of feedback, poor motivation, and inadequate training opportunities. These issues are closely linked to weak monitoring and evaluation systems, which fail to provide structured feedback for performance improvement. Anam (2024) notes that employee performance improves significantly when organisations implement strong performance management systems that include regular evaluation, feedback mechanisms, and reward structures.

Relationship Between Monitoring and Evaluation, Employee Performance, and Public Sector Performance

The relationship between monitoring and evaluation systems, employee performance, and public sector performance is interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Effective M&E systems provide the foundation for tracking employee performance and assessing institutional outcomes. When monitoring systems are strong, employees receive continuous feedback, which enhances productivity and accountability. Similarly, evaluation systems help organisations identify performance gaps and implement corrective measures that improve both individual and institutional effectiveness. Weak M&E systems, on the other hand, create information gaps, reduce accountability, and limit organisational learning. In the Nigerian context, the absence of strong M&E systems has resulted in weak performance management practices, low employee motivation, and

poor service delivery outcomes. Mabogunje (2021) argues that institutional inefficiency in Nigeria is largely a consequence of weak feedback and evaluation structures. Anam (2024) further emphasizes that effective governance requires a strong integration of monitoring, evaluation, and human resource management systems to ensure continuous performance improvement. This study conceptualises monitoring and evaluation systems as the independent variable, employee performance as a mediating variable, and public sector performance as the dependent variable. The relationship is expressed as:

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems → Employee Performance → Public Sector Performance

This implies that weak monitoring and evaluation systems negatively affect employee performance, which in turn leads to poor public sector performance. Conversely, strong M&E systems enhance employee productivity and improve overall institutional effectiveness. This conceptual framework provides the basis for analysing how deficiencies in monitoring and evaluation systems contribute to inefficiencies in Nigeria's public sector.

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems and Employee Performance

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems play a central role in assessing employee performance and strengthening accountability within public institutions. When effectively designed and implemented, M&E systems provide continuous and structured feedback on employee activities, helping managers identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas requiring improvement. This feedback loop not only enhances individual performance but also aligns employee behaviour with organisational goals and performance standards. In well-functioning organisations, monitoring ensures that employee tasks are tracked in real time, while evaluation provides periodic assessments of performance outcomes. Together, these processes create a performance-driven culture where employees are aware that their output is being measured and assessed. This awareness often improves discipline, productivity, and commitment to organisational objectives. However, in Nigeria's public sector, weak M&E systems have significantly undermined employee performance management. Many institutions lack reliable performance tracking tools, resulting in poor documentation of employee activities and outcomes. As a result, performance appraisal processes are often subjective, irregular, and not linked to clear performance indicators.

This situation contributes to low accountability and weak performance improvement mechanisms (Ezeani, 2018). Furthermore, the absence of structured feedback systems means that employees rarely receive constructive guidance on how to improve their performance. This limits learning opportunities and reduces motivation, as employees are unable to clearly understand how their work contributes to organisational success. In many cases, performance evaluations are treated as routine administrative exercises rather than strategic tools for workforce development. Anam (2024) strongly argues that effective performance management systems, including robust M&E frameworks, are

essential for enhancing employee productivity in public institutions. According to this perspective, employee performance improves significantly when evaluation systems are transparent, consistent, and linked to incentives such as promotion, training opportunities, and recognition. Without such systems, employee motivation tends to decline, and organisational goals become misaligned with individual performance behaviour.

Monitoring and Evaluation and Public Sector Performance

Public sector performance is highly dependent on the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems. M&E frameworks serve as essential governance tools that enable governments to measure policy outcomes, assess programme effectiveness, and ensure that public resources are used efficiently. When these systems function effectively, they promote transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in service delivery. Weak M&E systems, however, limit the capacity of public institutions to evaluate whether policies and programmes are achieving their intended objectives. This leads to a situation where decision-making is not evidence-based, but rather reactive or politically driven. As a result, inefficiencies persist, and public service delivery remains weak despite ongoing reforms. Oladipo and Abdullahi (2021) observe that many Nigerian public institutions lack functional and integrated evaluation systems capable of providing accurate performance data. This deficiency results in poor accountability structures, as managers are unable to systematically assess whether employees or departments are meeting expected standards. Consequently, underperformance often goes uncorrected, and institutional inefficiencies become entrenched over time. In addition, weak M&E systems reduce the ability of organisations to learn from past experiences. Without proper evaluation reports and feedback mechanisms, institutions are unable to identify successful strategies or correct policy failures. This limits innovation and contributes to repetitive administrative inefficiencies across the public sector.

Institutional Weaknesses in M&E Systems

Monitoring and evaluation systems in Nigeria's public sector are affected by several institutional weaknesses that undermine their effectiveness and sustainability.

- i. One of the most critical challenges is inadequate data collection systems, which limits the availability of reliable and timely information needed for performance assessment. Many institutions still rely on manual or fragmented record-keeping systems, making it difficult to track performance indicators accurately.
- ii. Another major weakness is poor performance appraisal mechanisms. In many public organisations, employee evaluations are not based on clearly defined key performance indicators (KPIs). Instead, appraisals are often subjective and influenced by personal or administrative bias, reducing their credibility and usefulness for performance improvement.
- iii. Weak feedback loops also constitute a significant institutional challenge. Even when evaluations are conducted, the results are rarely communicated effectively to employees or used to guide corrective actions. This disconnects between

- evaluation and feedback undermines the purpose of M&E systems and weakens organisational learning.
- iv. Additionally, there is limited technical capacity within many public institutions to design, implement, and manage effective M&E systems. This includes shortages of trained personnel, inadequate ICT infrastructure, and insufficient knowledge of modern performance measurement techniques.
 - v. Finally, there is often non-utilisation of evaluation results, where reports generated from monitoring and evaluation exercises are not incorporated into decision-making processes. This leads to a cycle where data is collected but not applied, thereby limiting institutional improvement.

Mabogunje (2021) argues that these weaknesses collectively hinder organisational learning and institutional development in the Nigerian public sector. He further notes that without strong M&E systems, public institutions are unable to evolve, adapt, or improve their performance in response to changing governance demands.

Anam (2024) reinforces this position by emphasizing that sustainable public sector performance requires not only the existence of M&E systems but also their effective integration into decision-making, human resource management, and organisational planning processes.

Theoretical Framework

Systems Theory: This study is anchored on Systems Theory (Bertalanffy, 1968), which views organisations as interrelated and interdependent systems working toward common goals. In the context of this study, monitoring and evaluation systems are part of the broader public sector management system that influences employee performance and organisational effectiveness. Inputs such as policies, resources, and human capital are processed through administrative systems to produce outputs such as service delivery and performance outcomes. Weakness in monitoring and evaluation represents a systemic failure that affects feedback loops, decision-making processes, and performance improvement mechanisms. As a result, inefficiencies in one part of the system negatively affect overall organisational performance. Anam (2024) supports this view by emphasizing that effective governance depends on integrated administrative systems that promote accountability, feedback, and continuous improvement.

Challenges of monitoring and evaluation systems in the Nigerian Public Sector

The effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems in Nigeria's public sector is constrained by a combination of institutional, administrative, financial, and behavioural challenges. These challenges significantly weaken performance management processes, reduce accountability, and undermine both employee and organisational performance.

- i. **Weak Institutional Capacity:** One of the most critical challenges is weak institutional capacity. Many public sector organisations lack the structural and technical capacity required to design, implement, and sustain effective M&E systems. This includes shortages of skilled personnel, weak organisational

- structures for performance tracking, and limited institutional coordination. As a result, monitoring and evaluation processes are often poorly implemented or entirely absent in some agencies, leading to ineffective performance management systems.
- ii. Poor Data Management Systems:** Effective M&E depends heavily on accurate, timely, and reliable data. However, many Nigerian public institutions suffer from poor data management systems characterised by manual record-keeping, fragmented databases, and inconsistent reporting structures. This makes it difficult to track employee performance, assess programme outcomes, or generate evidence-based reports for decision-making. The absence of reliable data undermines accountability and reduces the credibility of performance evaluation processes.
 - iii. Lack of Political Will:** The successful implementation of M&E systems requires strong political commitment from government leadership. However, in many cases, there is insufficient political will to enforce performance accountability mechanisms. Political interference often weakens the objectivity of evaluation processes, especially when performance assessments may expose inefficiencies or poor governance outcomes. This limits the effectiveness of M&E systems as tools for institutional reform.
 - iv. Inadequate Funding for M&E Activities:** Monitoring and evaluation require adequate financial resources for data collection, training, ICT infrastructure, field assessments, and reporting systems. Unfortunately, M&E units in many public institutions are underfunded and often treated as non-priority areas in budget allocations. This results in poorly implemented evaluation exercises, outdated tools, and limited capacity for comprehensive performance tracking.
 - v. Resistance to Performance Evaluation:** Another major challenge is resistance from employees and sometimes management to performance evaluation processes. Many public sector workers perceive M&E systems as punitive rather than developmental. This perception leads to fear, lack of cooperation, and in some cases deliberate manipulation of performance data. Such resistance weakens the effectiveness of evaluation systems and reduces their ability to improve employee performance.
 - vi. Poor Integration of M&E into Human Resource (HR) Systems:** In many Nigerian public institutions, monitoring and evaluation systems are not fully integrated into human resource management frameworks. As a result, performance appraisal outcomes are not consistently linked to recruitment, promotion, training, or reward systems. This disconnect reduces the motivational impact of M&E and limits its role in shaping employee behaviour and organisational performance.
 - vii. Limited Training of Personnel:** The effectiveness of M&E systems depends on the competence of personnel responsible for implementing them. However, many employees lack adequate training in modern monitoring and evaluation techniques, performance measurement tools, and data analysis methods. This skills gap reduces the quality of evaluation reports and limits the usefulness of M&E findings for policy and administrative decision-making.

These challenges demonstrate that weak monitoring and evaluation systems in Nigeria are not only a technical issue but also an institutional and behavioural problem. Addressing them requires comprehensive reforms that strengthen capacity, improve funding, enhance political commitment, and integrate M&E into broader human resource and governance systems, as emphasized in contemporary public administration literature, including Anam (2024).

Conclusion

The study concludes that weak monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems constitute a major structural and institutional constraint to effective public sector performance and employee productivity in Nigeria. The evidence reviewed demonstrates that when M&E systems are poorly designed, inconsistently implemented, or entirely absent, public institutions struggle to achieve their performance objectives. This is largely because performance tracking becomes unreliable, feedback mechanisms remain ineffective, and accountability structures are weakened. The absence of robust M&E frameworks creates a governance environment where employee performance is rarely measured objectively, and where corrective actions are not systematically enforced. As a result, inefficiencies persist across ministries, departments, and agencies, leading to low productivity, poor motivation among employees, and weak service delivery outcomes. In such environments, employees often lack clear performance expectations, structured evaluation feedback, and meaningful incentives for improved performance. Furthermore, weak M&E systems reduce institutional learning and limit the ability of public organisations to identify performance gaps and implement evidence-based reforms. Without reliable evaluation data, decision-making becomes largely subjective, reactive, and sometimes politically influenced. This undermines long-term institutional effectiveness and weakens citizens' trust in government performance. The study therefore affirms that strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems is not merely an administrative reform but a strategic necessity for improving governance outcomes in Nigeria. Effective M&E systems enhance transparency, strengthen accountability, improve employee productivity, and promote overall institutional efficiency. Their strengthening is therefore central to achieving sustainable public sector reform and improved service delivery.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve monitoring and evaluation systems, employee performance, and public sector effectiveness in Nigeria:

- i. Strengthening Institutional M&E Frameworks:** Government should establish and reinforce strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks across all public institutions. These frameworks should include clear performance indicators, standardized reporting systems, and well-defined evaluation procedures to ensure consistency and accountability in performance measurement.
- ii. Linking Performance Appraisal to Rewards and Sanctions:** Performance appraisal systems should be directly connected to reward and sanction

- mechanisms. Employees who perform well should be rewarded through promotions, incentives, and recognition, while underperformance should attract appropriate corrective measures. This will enhance motivation and improve overall productivity.
- iii. Investment in Data Management Systems:** Public institutions should invest in modern data management systems, including digital databases and automated performance tracking tools. Reliable data infrastructure is essential for accurate monitoring, timely reporting, and evidence-based decision-making.
 - iv. Capacity Building and Training on M&E:** Regular training programmes should be implemented to build the capacity of staff responsible for monitoring and evaluation. Training should focus on performance measurement techniques, data analysis, reporting skills, and the use of digital tools for evaluation processes.
 - v. Integration of M&E into HRM Systems:** Monitoring and evaluation systems should be fully integrated into human resource management practices. This includes linking performance evaluation results to recruitment, promotion, training, and staff development processes to ensure a performance-driven organisational culture.
 - vi. Institutionalisation of Feedback Mechanisms:** Strong and structured feedback systems should be established to ensure that employees receive regular, constructive feedback on their performance. Feedback should be timely, transparent, and developmental in nature to enhance learning and productivity.
 - vii. Minimising Political Interference:** Government should reduce political interference in monitoring and evaluation processes to ensure objectivity and credibility. Evaluation outcomes should be based strictly on performance data rather than political considerations.
 - viii. Adequate Funding for M&E Activities:** Sufficient budgetary allocations should be provided for monitoring and evaluation activities. Funding should cover training, data systems, field evaluations, and reporting processes to ensure that M&E systems function effectively and sustainably.

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