

The impact of stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems on value for money in Nachingwea District Council projects in Tanzania

Joshua Simon Mnyang'ali^{1*}
Janeth Jackson Mathia²

^{1*}timbusajsm2006@gmail.com

²janethmathia01@gmail.com

¹Tengeru Institute of Community Development, ²Dar es Salaam University College of Education, ^{1,2}Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study discussed an account of stakeholder engagement on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and their effects on value for money (VfM) in the monitor and evaluate project implemented by Nachingwea District Council, Tanzania. The study followed a positivist philosophy and was guided by the theory of change with a descriptive research design. Purposive and simple random sampling were used to select a sample of 134 respondents out of 200 council staff. Structured questionnaires were used to gather data on a five-point Likert scale and analyzed by SPSS (Version 27) with the help of descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis. The results suggest that despite the prevalence and perceived positivity of stakeholder participation (especially stakeholder inclusion and decision-making participation), the effectiveness of M&E systems in terms of producing VfM outcomes, including sustainability, efficiency, transparency, and attaining the desired outcomes, is low. By regression, the collective relationship between stakeholder participation factors and VfM is statistically significant but weak, with only the inclusion level of stakeholders becoming a significant individual predictor. The research finds that stakeholder engagement leads to VfM improvement only when it is strategically incorporated into institutional structures, budgets, and accountability systems and suggests improving structured engagement mechanisms, capacity-building interventions, and standardized policy to increase the effectiveness of participatory M&E systems in local government authorities.

Keywords: Local Government Projects, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems, Public Sector Accountability, Stakeholder Participation, Value for Money

I. INTRODUCTION

Value for Money (VfM) has been a focal but difficult goal in public sector project management, especially in the local government where the management of the public funds is a vital issue of accountability (Matto et al., 2021). VfM is based on the concepts of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, which mean that projects must use resources cost-effectively, produce outputs within specified timeframes, produce desired results, and provide transparency in resource utilization (Zwikael, 2024). Furthermore, VfM also presupposes the satisfaction of stakeholders and the ability to maintain the project in the long term, depending on efficient monitoring systems, which track both financial and non-financial aspects of performance (Nigel, 2019). Nonetheless, unless they are implemented with efficient Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems, which offer sound performance indicators and methodical feedback, state-supported projects will be prone to inefficiency, delays, and poorly allocated resources, thus compromising the VfM objectives (Projahnmo & Heblinski, 2022; Martin, 2023).

Monitoring and Evaluation systems are tailored to follow-up developments, improve accountability, and improve evidence-based decisions in governmental initiatives (Mukamwiza et al., 2021). Proper M&E systems have explicit objectives and goals, data management, and involvement of all stakeholders to ensure the project activities are applied within the intended goals and governance principles like equity and fairness (Ngumbela, 2024). Empirical data indicates that in states where M&E systems are adequately institutionalised, they lead to an increase in resource allocation, improved policy making, and improved service delivery, all of which are critical to the attainment of efficiency and economy in government spending (Projahnmo & Heblinski, 2022; Martin, 2023). On the other hand, inadequate coordination, poor institutional capacity, and technical expertise have been demonstrated to limit the efficiency of the M&E systems in Tanzania, and thus influence transparency and on-time delivery of projects (Janus & Keijzer, 2015; Mathayo & Kinyina, 2022).

In this context, the role of stakeholder involvement represents a vitally important aspect of M&E systems, which directly affect VfM results. Stakeholder participation refers to the degree of stakeholder inclusion in project cycles, active engagement in decision-making, a feedback mechanism, and training and capacity building to promote greater engagement (Mukamwiza et al., 2021; Ngumbela, 2024). The utilization of participatory M&E approaches encourages

the openness of resources, enhances an accountability relationship, and increases the level of stakeholder satisfaction by making sure the community priorities and local knowledge underpin the implementation decisions (Nigel, 2019; Projahnmo & Heblinski, 2022). However, Tanzanian research shows that the lack of engagement with stakeholders, insufficient understanding of M&E principles, and inefficient leadership frameworks diminishes the quality of participatory processes, therefore, limiting the realization of cost-effectiveness and project sustainability (Kalolo et al., 2021; Edet et al., 2022; Nigussie, 2020).

At the local government level, a lack of institutional fit, inadequate stakeholder participation, and lack of capacity persist in hampering the implementation of VfM in government projects, including in district councils like Nachingwea (Kalolo et al., 2021; Inisha & Elly, 2022). Although attempts have been made to improve M&E frameworks and promote the spirit of results-based management, discrepancies between policy formulation and implementation practices persist, which affect the timeliness of delivery, project outcomes, and the efficiency of resource utilization (Janus & Keijzer, 2015; Mathayo & Kinyina, 2022). Thus, the study of the effects of the levels of stakeholder inclusion, involvement in decision-making, feedback, and capacity building initiatives on the M&E systems on cost-effectiveness, transparency, stakeholder satisfaction, and project sustainability in the context of the Nachingwea District Council is critical to improving governance and enhancing VfM in local government authorities (Mukamwiza et al., 2021; Kalolo et al., 2021).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although it is acknowledged that Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems facilitate the achievement of accountability, transparency, and effective resource use in government-backed initiatives (Mathayo & Kinyina, 2022), local government officials in Tanzania still face difficulties in ensuring value for money (VfM), in part because of insufficient stakeholder input, leadership, and institutional capacities (Nigussie, 2020; Edet et al., 2022). Empirical findings are inconsistent: although participatory M&E was found to greatly enhance project outcomes in community-based projects in Tanzania (Mgoba & Kabote, 2020) and enhance the accountability and data-driven decision-making in other settings (Inisha & Elly, 2022), other studies indicate that stakeholder participation has a limited or non-significant effect on M&E effectiveness where it is not anchored by effective leadership and sufficient funding (Nigussie, 2022). Despite the recognition of the role of stakeholder engagement in research, localized empirical evidence of the specific impact of stakeholder involvement in M and E systems on VfM in local government projects is still deficient. Consequently, the extent to which stakeholder involvement in M&E systems aids in the realization of value-money in Nachingwea District Council projects remains unknown.

1.2 Research Question

What impact does stakeholder participation in M&E systems have on value for money in Nachingwea District Council projects?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The study is based on the Theory of Change (ToC), created by Weiss in 1995, that determines how and why a program accomplishes its desired results by establishing causal connections between the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and long-term effects (Weiss & Connell, 1995). ToC bridges program design and evaluation explain the assumptions, contextual factors, and stakeholder behaviours that alter change processes (Brest, 2010). It presumes that the success of projects is contingent upon the planned interventions, systematic Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), stakeholder participation in the dynamics of complex systems. ToC forms the basis of the assumption that an effectively applied M&E system, characterized by a clear purpose, principles, and engagement of all stakeholders, can result in increased Value for Money (VfM) in the projects of Nachingwea District Council due to better transparency, accountability, and the optimization of resources (Belcher et al., 2024).

ToC framework differentiates between the elements under the control of implementers (inputs and activities) and the ones affected by the context and stakeholder behaviour (outputs, outcomes, and impacts). In the current research, the purpose of M&E system is associated with the identification of clear outputs and results, the principles of M&E like transparency and accountability guarantee quality implementation, and stakeholder involvement provides ownership and contextual relevance, which jointly contributes to the VfM results (Sullivan & Stewart, 2006). The theory is applicable as it offers a systematic channel through which the translation of M&E processes into efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability in local government projects can be analysed (Mayne & Johnson, 2015). Although ToC provides transparency in tracing rational waypoints of change, it is dependent on preoperational assumptions that might not fully explain external obstacles like political interference or insufficient finances prevalent at the local government levels. However, it gives a detailed outline of assessing the role of M&E components in reinforced governance and enhanced VfM in Nachingwea initiatives.

2.2 Empirical Review

Empirical studies indicate that the role of stakeholders in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems is a critical though contextual contribution to the value of Money (VfM). Inisha and Elly (2022) explain that in Bangladesh, M&E, which is stakeholder-driven enhances accountability, transparency, and data-driven decision-making by providing real-time feedback, adaptive learning, and capacity building to better distribute resources and make programs more effective. Likewise, in their research of community-based water projects in Tanzania, Mgoba and Kabote (2020) discovered that participatory M&E were much more effective than regular M&E, the higher the level of participation, the higher the performance, especially in NGO-funded projects. These results indicate that inclusive M & E processes lead to enhanced efficiency and sustainability, which are major aspects of VfM.

But there is also contradictory evidence that stakeholder participation is not necessarily an assurance of M&E effectiveness or better VfM results. In a study of TVET projects implemented by NGOs in Ethiopia, Nigussie (2022) determined that despite a positive correlation between stakeholder participation and M&E effectiveness, it did not show any statistically significant impact on the former compared to organizational leadership and fund availability. This means that participatory mechanisms need favorable institutional environments to deliver quantifiable performance gains. Together with the works of Inisha and Elly (2022) and Mgoba and Kabote (2020), the literature suggests that, although engaging with stakeholders enhances VfM, it depends on the commitment of the leadership, the sufficiency of the funding, and the project context.

In addition to participation, the intention and architectural form of M&E systems are also instrumental in the realization of VfM. The study by Projahnmo and Heblinski (2022) showed that M&E practices have statistically significant correlation with project sustainability in donor-funded projects, and M&E plans should be detailed and reviewed continuously. As Nguru et al. (2025) discovered, M&E structural frameworks, information use and capacity building was a robust predictor of VfM in Kenyan development projects. Martin (2023) found that quality control, budgeting discipline, and coordination mechanism in M&E processes influenced the VfM in Tanzanian projects of public constructions positively. All of these studies confirm that well-specified M&E purposes and designed structures that control their implementation enhance efficiency, cost-efficiency, and accountability.

Moreover, compliance with M&E system principles: transparency, systematic tracking, and institutionalization play an important role in the project performance and VfM. Ohemeng and Kamga (2019) emphasizes the necessity of developing M&E plans and structures at the organizational level to make sure that the public funds and outcomes are tracked on an ongoing basis. Edet et al. (2022) emphasise the impact of corruption, inadequate funding, and insufficient institutionalization on the effectiveness of M&E to the public sector in Nigeria, whereas Wilson et al. (2020) establish a strong positive correlation between an effective M&E system and the performance of ministers in Tanzania. Equally, Wang et al. (2022) show how organized and technology-based M&E systems increase performance within the education sector. In general, the literature suggests that stakeholder involvement, with well-institutionalized principles and purpose of the system, can lead to improved VfM; yet, specific issues in contexts, including leadership gaps, financial limitations, and institutional vulnerabilities, still influence the magnitude of its influence.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach and Design.

The study was carried out using a quantitative research methodology based on a positivist research philosophy, which focuses on objective measurement and statistical analysis of relationships among variables. In the analysis of the impact of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system elements on Value for Money (VfM) in projects of the Nachingwea District Council, the positivist paradigm was deemed suitable because of the use of measurable indicators. A descriptive research design was adopted to give a descriptive explanation of the current M&E practices (e.g., system purpose, principles and stakeholder participation) without manipulating variables. The design allowed the study to capture existing realities and to evaluate M&E systems with VfM in systematic and structured way.

3.2 Study Population

A study population was composed of 200 personnel engaged in government-funded initiatives in Nachingwea District Council. They also incorporated Project Coordinators, M&E Officers, Finance and Budget Officers, and Heads of Departments (Infrastructure, Education, and Health) because they are core to the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development projects. Other departments were left out because their staff participation in project execution and monitoring roles was minimal. The population was determined through official employment records of the Council.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

To calculate the sample size, the Slovin formula was applied at 95 percent confidence level and 5 percent margin of error, which yielded the sample of 134 staff members out of the total population of 200. Both purposive and simple

random sampling methods were used. Key informants were selected through purposive sampling, including M&E officers, project coordinators, and department heads because of direct involvement in M&E processes, whereas simple random sampling was used to represent other project-related staff equally. This combination of methods enhanced representativeness, minimized bias and offered access to informed respondents.

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

The data were collected with the help of a structured questionnaire that contained close-ended questions which were measured with a five-point Likert (Strongly Disagree; 1 Strongly Agree; 5). The instrument recorded data on M&E System Purpose, M&E System Principles, Stakeholder Participation, and Value for Money elements. Questionnaire facilitated quick collection of standardized numerical data on 134 respondents in a brief time. The instrument was tested using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, where all variables yielded a coefficient of greater than 0.7, which implies satisfactory internal consistency.

3.5 Data Analysis and Processing

The data was entered and analyzed in SPSS version 27. Perceptions of respondents regarding study variables were summarized using descriptive statistics (and frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations). Multiple Linear Regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of stakeholder participation factors Stakeholder Inclusion Level, Decision-Making Involvement, Feedback Mechanism Availability, Training and Capacity Building, Project Sustainability Influence, and Project Efficiency Enhancement on Value for Money in Nachingwea District Council projects. This methodology allowed the examination of interrelationships between variables comprehensively and minimized the risks of Type I error and provided statistically sound interpretations.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 The Impact of Stakeholder Participation in M&E Systems on Value for Money

The section provides results of the main objective on the impact of stakeholder involvement in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems on Value for Money (VfM) in Nachingwea District Council projects. The respondents had to rate statements about stakeholder inclusion, involvement in decision-making, feedback mechanisms, training sufficiency, the effect on sustainability, and the improvement in efficiency.

Table 1

The impact of Stakeholder Participation in M&E Systems on Value for Money.

Stakeholders' participation	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
Stakeholders are actively included in M&E systems of Nachingwea District Council projects.	4.11	0.501	Agree
Stakeholders have meaningful involvement in decision-making during project implementation	4.18	0.560	Agree
Feedback mechanisms in M&E systems ensure stakeholder concerns are addressed.	3.97	0.660	Agree
Stakeholders receive adequate training to participate effectively in M&E processes.	3.83	0.689	Agree
The level of stakeholder participation has a direct impact on the sustainability of projects.	3.89	0.544	Agree
Including stakeholders in M&E processes increases the efficiency of project execution.	4.13	0.585	Agree

The findings in Table 1 show general consensus that stakeholder involvement has a positive effect on VfM. Meaningful involvement in decision-making (mean = 4.18), increased efficiency through participation (mean = 4.13), and active stakeholder inclusion (mean = 4.11) were found to have high mean scores indicating that respondents believe that participatory M&E processes can lead to increased transparency and efficiency in operations. But, the relatively lower means of feedback mechanisms (mean = 3.97), sustainability impact (mean = 3.89), and training adequacy (mean = 3.83) show improvement areas. Despite the broad acceptance of participation as an effective approach, the results suggest that the capacity-building efforts and communication systems will need to be reinforced to optimize its role in delivering sustainable and efficient project execution.

4.1.2 Value for money in the Nachingwea District Council project

In this section, the perceptions of the respondents on the degree to which the current M&E systems contribute to the Value of Money on the following important dimensions of projects, such as in cost-effectiveness, timeliness, outcome achievement, transparency, efficiency, economy, stakeholder satisfaction and sustainability, are analysed.

Table 2*Value for Money in the Nachingwea District Council Project*

Value for money	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
M&E systems ensure cost-effectiveness in the use of resources for government projects.	2.34	1.063	Disagree
Timeliness in project delivery is achieved through effective M&E practices.	2.90	1.013	Neutral
Projects meet their intended outcomes due to M&E systems.	1.66	0.706	Strongly disagree
Transparency in resource utilization is enhanced through M&E practices.	1.78	0.708	Strongly disagree
M&E systems ensure higher levels of stakeholder satisfaction in project execution.	3.01	1.160	Neutral
Efficiency and economy are promoted by applying M&E systems in project management.	1.79	0.795	Strongly disagree
Projects implemented with robust M&E systems demonstrate greater sustainability.	1.56	0.688	Strongly disagree

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that perceptions of M&E effectiveness are generally low in facilitating VfM. Project sustainability (mean = 1.56), achievement of intended outcomes (mean = 1.66), transparency in resource usage (mean = 1.78) and promotion of efficiency and economy (1.79) had strong disagreement meaning that the participants were highly dissatisfied with the existing M&E practices. Even though timeliness (mean = 2.90), stakeholder satisfaction (mean = 3.01), and cost-effectiveness (not unanimously agreed on mean = 2.34) were rated at neutral, the overall trend suggests a significant gap between expected and actual M&E performance. The standard deviations are relatively large, which also indicates that there are no consistent experiences across projects, and that there should be significant changes in how M&E systems are designed, coordinated, and implemented in the district to improve VfM.

4.1.3 Multiple Linear Regression Model

A Multiple Linear Regression analysis was conducted to assess how various variables of stakeholder participation impact Value for Money (VfM) in projects at Nachingwea District Council. These predictors were Stakeholder Inclusion Level, Decision-Making Involvement, Availability of Feedback Mechanism, Training and Capacity Building, Project Sustainability Influence and Project Efficiency Enhancement.

Table 3*Model summary*

Model 1	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
	.260 ^a	.067	.023	.41887	1.881

a. Predictors: (Constant), Project Efficiency Enhancement, Feedback Mechanism Availability, Project Sustainability Influence, Decision-Making Involvement, Stakeholder Inclusion Level, Training and Capacity Building

b. Dependent Variable: Value for money

As indicated in model summary (Table 3), there is a weak positive association between stakeholder participation variables and Value for Money ($R = 0.260$). The R Square of 0.067 shows that the six participation-related factors explain 6.7 percent of the variation in VfM. The Adjusted R square declines to 0.023 after the number of predictors is adjusted, indicating that overall explanatory power of the model is low. Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.881 shows that the residuals do not have a severe autocorrelation problem, implying that the regression assumptions are met fairly. Despite the existence of the relationship, the extent of influence is modest.

4.1.4 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The ANOVA outcome indicates that the overall regression model is significant ($F = 1.532$, $p = 0.017$). Because the p-value is below 0.05, this means that the variables of stakeholder participation jointly significantly predict Value for Money. That is, the set of these factors of participation influences VfM statistically significantly, although the share of explained variance is relatively small. It indicates that stakeholder engagement adds to VfM, though other variables outside the model can also be more significant.

Table 4*Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)*

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.612	6	.269	1.532	.017
	Residual	22.282	127	.175		
	Total	23.894	133			

a. Dependent Variable: Value for money

b. Predictors: (Constant), Project Efficiency Enhancement, Feedback Mechanism Availability, Project Sustainability Influence, Decision-Making Involvement, Stakeholder Inclusion Level, Training and Capacity Building

4.1.5 Multiple Regression Analysis Coefficients

The multiple regression coefficients were examined to determine the individual contribution of each stakeholder participation factor to Value for Money in Nachingwea District Council projects.

Table 5*Multiple Regression Analysis Coefficients*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	IF
1	(Constant)	2.232	.476		4.685	.000		
	Stakeholder Inclusion Level	.158	.079	.187	2.003	.047	.845	1.184
	Decision-Making Involvement	-.124	.068	-.164	-1.828	.070	.912	1.096
	Feedback Mechanism Availability	-.099	.065	-.154	-1.529	.129	.728	1.375
	Training and Capacity Building	.027	.059	.043	.457	.649	.811	1.232
	Project Sustainability Influence	.055	.070	.071	.788	.432	.913	1.095
	Project Efficiency Enhancement	-.034	.066	-.047	-.508	.613	.871	1.148

a. Dependent Variable: Value for money

The results in Table 5 indicate that, at the individual level, the statistically significant positive impact on Value for Money is only by Stakeholder Inclusion Level ($B = 0.158$, $p = 0.047$). This indicates that, as the stakeholder interest in M&E systems gradually increases, VfM enhances quantitatively. Involvement Decision-Making ($p = 0.070$) exhibits a negative but slightly less significant effect, whereas Feedback Mechanism Availability ($p = 0.129$), Training and Capacity Building ($p = 0.649$), Project Sustainability Influence ($p = 0.432$), and Project Efficiency Enhancement ($p = 0.613$) are not statistically significant predictors. The negative coefficients of certain variables indicate that some of them are not related to VfM consistently, or they are weakly related, in the present scenario. Multicollinearity is checked by the statistics of collinearity (VIF values are below 2). On the whole, the results suggest that the overall level of stakeholder participation is an important predictor of value for money, with stakeholder inclusion emerging as the most significant—and the only statistically significant—dependent predictor.

4.2 Discussion

The results indicate that there is a structural discrepancy between the perceived significance of stakeholder involvement in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems and its actual impact on providing Value for Money (VfM) in the Nachingwea District Council projects. Although the respondents were highly unanimous that stakeholders are part and part of decision-making processes, the overall perceptions of VfM performance, especially in sustainability, transparency, efficiency, and meeting of the desired outcomes, were largely weak. This means that the stakeholder engagement can be procedural but without the operational depths to influence the actual project result. The interpretation is supported by the regression findings: the variables of stakeholder participation do not significantly explain the variables collectively; only the stakeholder inclusion level possesses an independent significant effect. These trends suggest that its involvement could be more consultative rather than transformative that could reduce its ability to enhance cost-effectiveness and accountability in project implementation significantly.

The results support and contradict earlier empirical data. The beneficial impact of stakeholder inclusion is consistent with Mgoba and Kabote (2020), who established that effective participatory M&E had a significant positive impact on outcomes in community-based water projects in Tanzania, especially when community engagement was substantive and not symbolic. In the same vein, Inisha and Elly (2022) claim that M&E by stakeholders leads to better transparency, adaptive learning and optimization of resources, which are pillars of VfM. Nevertheless, weak individual effects of other dimensions of participation echo Nigussie (2022), who detected that stakeholder participation did not have a significant statistical impact on M&E effectiveness to the same degree as leadership and funding. This indicates that involvement might not necessarily result into better VfM without good institutional structures, proper funding, and integrated coordination mechanisms. The comparatively low sustainability and efficiency perceptions in this paper are

also in contrast to Martin (2023) and Wilson et al. (2020), which reported high positive correlations between structured M&E systems and organizational performance in Tanzanian public institutions. The disjunction may be variations in implementation capacity between the contexts of the Nachingwea District Council and the institutions being investigated in the studies, systems of oversight, and institutional maturity.

Within a pragmatic approach, the results highlight the significance of taking formal stakeholder inclusion to the next level by improving the quality, capacity, and effectiveness of the participation mechanisms. The poorer training and feedback system ratings indicate that the stakeholders might not have enough technical expertise or formal communication avenues through which they can effectively impact planning, budgeting, and corrective measures. As highlighted by Inisha and Elly (2022), to ensure proper participation, the key elements to consider include continuous capacity building, real-time feedback integration, and technology support systems to convert stakeholder feedback into performance enhancement. In the absence of such reinforcing mechanisms, participation may be reduced to a sort of procedural adherence and not a force behind better efficiency and sustainability. Consequently, institutional changes that incorporate the input of stakeholders in budgetary decisions, quality management approaches, and performance audits should be emphasized at the local government level to make sure that the engagement is directly reflected in resource allocation and project implementation.

Ideally, the findings partially support the Theory of Change, which supposes that causal routes are well mapped, with inputs, activities, stakeholder involvement, and contextual presuppositions that produce the intended results, such as higher VfM. The high importance of the stakeholder inclusion confirms the assumption of the Theory of Change that ownership and contextual relevance are critical forces of change. Nevertheless, the low explanatory potency of the general model is indicative of one of the recognized limitations of the theory: results are moderated by larger contextual and institutional factors that can derail the postulated causal mechanisms. In this respect, poor training, poor feedback loops, and potential resource or leadership constraints can disrupt the shift between participatory processes to quantifiable VfM improvements. Therefore, the research adds to the body of theory by showing that stakeholder involvement improves VfM when it is integrated into coherent institutional structures that ensure that participation is complemented by accountability, transparency and performance management institutions.

V. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The aim of the study was to determine how stakeholder involvement in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems influences Value for Money (VfM) in projects undertaken by Nachingwea District Council. The results indicate that although stakeholder involvement is formally accepted and is being exercised, especially in the form of stakeholder inclusion and participation in decisions, its overall impact on VfM is not significant. Even though respondents admitted that participation contributes to increased transparency and operational efficiency, actual VfM performance is generally considered low, particularly in terms of sustainability, the attainment of the intended outcomes, efficiency, and transparency in the use of resources. The regression findings also show that the factors of stakeholder participation have a significant relationship with VfM, but with weak explanatory power, with stakeholder inclusion level being the only statistically significant individual influence.

These findings suggest that the stakeholder engagement, as currently practiced, is not adequately institutionalized and strategically embedded deep into the core of project management to generate measurable returns in VfM. It is thus found that the mere presence of participatory M&E mechanisms does not ensure better project performance but that good VfM performance is largely dependent on quality of participation, institutional capability, systematic feedback system, and compatibility with budgeting and accountability frameworks. This study adds to the body of knowledge about the contextual constraints of participatory M&E systems in local government authorities and contributes to the argument that more integrated and performance-focused strategies are needed to bridge the gap between (theoretical) participatory intent and practical impact.

5.2 Recommendations

Nachingwea District Council and other Local Government Authorities ought to enhance the breadth and efficacy of stakeholder involvement in the processes of M&E within their systems by institutionalizing structured involvement frameworks, formal feedback process and ongoing capacity building initiatives to both the project staff and community stakeholders. Planning, budgeting and performance evaluation processes should be systematically connected with participation to guarantee that the input of stakeholders directly informs the decisions and distribution of resources. Additionally, greater responsibility and transparency in reporting will be reinforced to enhance trust, enhance oversight, and transform the participatory processes into VfM outcomes that can be measured.

On the policy front, the Ministry of Local Government should put in place unified and uniform M&E policies that clearly relate stakeholder involvement, ethical considerations, and system purposes to specific VfM performance measures. Mandatory budgetary allocations to M&E activities require all district-level projects to be consistent and

sustainable in implementation. Moreover, future studies ought to examine institutional, financial and leadership variables setting the relationship between stakeholder participation and VfM with comparative studies across districts to determine best practices and replicable models to enhance participatory M and E systems in local governance environments.

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