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DETERMINING THE EFFECTS OF PHASED MONITORING AND EVALUATING IN PROJECT PLANNING AND CONTROL: A CASE STUDY OF MILITARY FACILITY CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN ABUJA

Chinweze, Chukwuemeka Onyemaechi; Agbonome, Peter Chukwuemeka

Department of Architecture, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State

Corresponding Author's email address: emychinweze@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is widely recognized as essential to project planning and control, yet its structured application within military infrastructure development remains underexplored in Nigeria. This study examines the effects of phased monitoring and evaluation on project performance, with specific reference to military facility construction projects in Abuja. Adopting a qualitative case study approach supported by documentary analysis, the research draws on Project Life Cycle Theory, Results-Based Management, Control Theory and Stakeholder Theory to analyse how milestone-based oversight influences planning efficiency, cost control, risk management and accountability. Empirical insights from the Nigerian Navy's Project Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (PIMED) at Navy Town, Asokoro demonstrate that integrating structured evaluations at predefined project stages enhances early detection of deviations, strengthens fiscal discipline, and reinforces institutional governance within security-sensitive environments. The findings suggest that phased M&E functions not merely as an administrative compliance mechanism but as a strategic governance instrument that improves the reliability and sustainability of defence infrastructure delivery. The study contributes to existing literature by extending discourse on monitoring and evaluation beyond general public sector infrastructure to the domain of military construction, offering policy-relevant insights for improving project planning and control in Nigeria.

Keywords: Phased monitoring and evaluation; Project planning and control; Military infrastructure; Defence construction governance; Nigerian Navy; Project life cycle management; Abuja construction projects

1. INTRODUCTION

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are central components of contemporary project management because they enable accountability, learning and evidence-based decision making (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Empirical and practitioner literature shows that embedding M&E throughout the project lifecycle rather than treating it as an end-of-project activity reduces the incidence of delays, cost overruns and abandonment (Crawford & Bryce, 2003; World Bank, 2004).

A phased M&E approach, in which monitoring and evaluation activities are integrated at distinct project milestones, strengthens early detection of implementation challenges and supports timely corrective actions (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Crawford and Bryce (2003) further argue that systematic feedback loops at each project stage enhance efficiency and effectiveness. This approach is particularly critical for construction projects, which are capital-intensive and sensitive to risks relating to scope, schedule, and procurement (Ika, Diallo, & Thuillier, 2012).

It is against this backdrop that this study investigates the effects of phased monitoring and evaluation on project planning and control in Nigeria. By focusing on both general construction projects and those within the Nigerian Navy, the study aims to provide practical solutions for reducing abandonment, improving efficiency and enhancing the credibility of infrastructure delivery.

The Nigerian construction industry plays a vital role in national development by providing infrastructure that supports economic growth, governance and security. Despite substantial investments, many projects especially government sponsored ones have faced challenges such as delays, cost overruns, poor-quality output and outright abandonment. These inefficiencies are often traced to inadequate monitoring systems, weak evaluation frameworks and poor project management practices (Oseghale, Abiola-Falemu, & Oseghale, 2015).

Studies further highlight incompetent project management, inaccurate cost estimates and insufficient feasibility studies as recurring causes of project failure (Ayodele & Alabi, 2011; Rugu et al., 2021). The consequences include resource wastage, declining revenue generation, reduced employment opportunities and erosion of public trust in public institutions (Olusegun & Michael, 2011).

Within the military context, construction projects such as barracks, naval bases, hospitals and training facilities demand high levels of accountability and precision. Delays or abandonment in such projects undermine not only financial efficiency but also operational readiness, personnel

welfare and national security. Recognising these challenges, the Nigerian Navy established the Project Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation Directorate (PIMED) to strengthen oversight of capital projects (Nigerian Navy, 2021). While this institutional step reflects awareness of the importance of M&E, inconsistent institutionalization and uneven enforcement of phased approaches continues to limit effective outcomes.

International best practices demonstrate that phased M&E significantly improves project delivery by embedding accountability and corrective mechanisms at different stages of the project lifecycle (Kusek & Rist, 2004; Crawford & Bryce, 2003). In Nigeria, however, M&E practices remain inconsistent and are often limited to end-of-project reporting rather than continuous oversight. Against this backdrop, this study explores phased M&E as a strategy to strengthen project planning and control in Abuja's military facility construction projects, thereby contributing to improved infrastructure delivery and enhanced national security outcomes.

Despite substantial investments, construction projects in Nigeria including critical ones such as military facilities continue to suffer from delays, cost overruns and abandonment due to poor planning, weak implementation and ineffective M&E systems. Studies such as Ayodele and Alabi (2011) and Rugu et al. (2021) highlight incompetent project management, inaccurate cost estimates and lack of feasibility studies as recurring causes. The consequences include resource wastage, reduced employment, declining revenue generation and erosion of public trust (Olusegun & Michael, 2011).

Weak monitoring and evaluation, particularly the absence of structured phased M&E compounds these challenges by limiting early risk detection and corrective measures (Amade et al., 2015; Adagba, Hassan & Umar, 2023). While institutions like the Nigerian Navy's Project Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (PIMED) demonstrate recognition of M&E's importance, the lack of phased approaches still threatens project delivery. It is against this backdrop that this research investigates the effects of phased monitoring and evaluation in project planning and control, with the aim of providing practical solutions to mitigate abandonment and enhance successful project delivery.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on selected theories that explain the dynamics of monitoring, evaluation, planning, and control within construction projects. These theories provide a foundation for understanding how phased M&E can influence the success of military facility projects in Abuja.

Project Life Cycle Theory: The Project Life Cycle Theory emphasizes that projects pass through distinct phases initiation, planning, execution, monitoring, and closure each requiring different management approaches (PMI, 2017). By embedding monitoring and evaluation into each phase, project managers can ensure that problems are detected early and corrective measures applied promptly, thereby reducing the risk of cost overruns and delays.

Results-Based Management Theory: Results-Based Management (RBM) theory focuses on achieving outcomes rather than simply tracking inputs and activities. It emphasizes setting clear objectives, measuring progress through indicators and ensuring accountability for results (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Phased M&E aligns with RBM by ensuring that evaluation is not limited to the end of a project but is integrated across the life cycle to track both outputs and outcomes.

Control Theory: Control theory as applied in project management, stresses the importance of feedback mechanisms to maintain projects on course (Ouchi, 1979). It posits that deviations from planned objectives can be corrected if timely and reliable feedback is available. Contemporary project governance research affirms that structured control mechanisms and milestone-based reviews significantly enhance project success and organizational performance (Mir & Pinnington, 2014, Zwikael & Smyrk, 2015). In the context of military construction, phased M&E acts as a feedback loop, providing data that supports decision-making and corrective action.

Stakeholder Theory: Stakeholder theory highlights the importance of considering the interests and influence of various stakeholders in project management (Freeman, 1984). Recent project management literature demonstrates that proactive stakeholder engagement across project phases significantly influences delivery outcomes and risk mitigation (Mok, Shen, & Yang, 2015; Aaltonen & Kujala, 2016). In military facility projects, stakeholders include government agencies,

contractors, military authorities, and end-users (personnel). Phased M&E ensures that stakeholder needs and expectations are continuously assessed and addressed throughout the project cycle.

Together, these theories provide a robust framework for analysing the effects of phased M&E on project planning and control. They underscore the importance of structured oversight, accountability, and continuous feedback in ensuring the successful delivery of strategic infrastructure.

2.2 Global Perspectives on Phased Monitoring and Evaluation

Globally, phased M&E has been recognized as a cornerstone of effective project management and control. Crawford and Bryce (2003) argue that embedding evaluation throughout the project cycle enhances accountability, facilitates continuous learning and ensures that lessons are incorporated into ongoing implementation. In the same vein, Baccarini (1999) underscores that phased reviews during project execution reduce the likelihood of failure by enabling corrective interventions at critical junctures. This structured approach not only improves oversight but also strengthens the adaptive capacity of project teams in responding to emerging risks.

In advanced economies such as the United States and the United Kingdom, phased M&E has been institutionalized within public sector construction projects as part of broader governance reforms. These frameworks ensure that infrastructure delivery consistently meets cost, time, and quality benchmarks (OECD, 2010). The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO, 2013), for instance, highlights phased evaluations as a key mechanism for mitigating risks in large-scale defence and infrastructure projects, where financial and operational stakes are particularly high. Similarly, the UK's Office of Government Commerce (OGC, 2007) promotes "gateway reviews," a phased evaluation model that assesses progress at defined stages of public construction projects to prevent escalation of risks and costs.

These global perspectives reinforce the idea that phased M&E is not merely a compliance requirement but a strategic management mechanism. By embedding accountability, strengthening decision-making, and ensuring sustainability in complex projects, phased M&E has become an indispensable tool for governments and organizations seeking to optimize infrastructure delivery and safeguard public investment.

2.3 Nigerian Context

In Nigeria, the application of M&E in construction projects has been inconsistent and often fragmented. Empirical evidence shows that many publicly funded projects suffer from delays, cost overruns and abandonment largely due to inadequate monitoring systems and weak evaluation frameworks (Oseghale, Abiola-Falemu, & Oseghale, 2015). Adebayo (2014) further observes that poor stakeholder engagement and the absence of structured evaluation processes remain critical drivers of project underperformance, particularly in large-scale public works.

Emerging studies, however, demonstrate the value of phased M&E in the Nigerian context. Okereke and Diala (2020) found that when integrated into procurement and implementation cycles, phased reviews enhance transparency, strengthen accountability, and improve project delivery. Yet, they note that many government agencies continue to adopt an end-of-project evaluation approach, which limits the timeliness and usefulness of feedback for corrective decision-making.

In Abuja, the challenge is even more pronounced. As the nation's capital and administrative hub, the city has witnessed significant infrastructure development, but many projects have been undermined by inefficiencies. Nwachukwu and Emoh (2011) argue that the absence of systematic evaluation frameworks in Abuja has contributed to widespread cost escalations and delivery shortfalls. These weaknesses become particularly critical in military facility construction, where strict adherence to timelines, budgets, and quality standards is essential due to the strategic implications for national security and operational readiness.

2.4 Military Infrastructure Context

Military facility construction projects differ from civilian projects in their scale, sensitivity and operational requirements. According to Aliu and Aigbavboa (2019), military infrastructure demands higher levels of accountability because delays or failures can undermine national security and personnel welfare. The classified nature of many military projects also restricts transparency, creating additional challenges for effective oversight.

International literature underscores that phased monitoring and evaluation (M&E) can mitigate these risks by embedding continuous review mechanisms into project lifecycles (GAO, 2013). In Nigeria, the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces have adopted structured monitoring practices, with directorates such as the Nigerian Navy's Project Implementation, Monitoring, and

Evaluation Directorate (PIMED) and the Nigerian Air Force Project Implementation and Monitoring Team (PIMT) serving as institutional mechanisms to strengthen oversight. These organs have contributed to improvements in accountability, particularly by ensuring that projects align with operational requirements and by instituting more formal reporting channels for project progress.

2.5 Identified Gap

Existing literature on construction project performance in Nigeria has extensively examined causes of delays, cost overruns, and abandonment, particularly within public sector infrastructure (Adebayo, 2014; Nwachukwu & Emoh, 2011). Several studies have also demonstrated the general importance of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in improving accountability and transparency in public project delivery (Okereke & Diala, 2020). However, the majority of these studies focus broadly on public infrastructure and rarely differentiate between conventional civilian projects and security-sensitive military facility construction.

Furthermore, while phased monitoring and evaluation has been discussed conceptually as a best practice in project management literature, limited empirical attention has been given to its structured application within the Nigerian Armed Forces, particularly in relation to defence infrastructure projects in Abuja. Existing research tends to treat M&E as a generalized administrative function rather than examining how milestone-based oversight mechanisms influence planning efficiency, cost control, risk management, and accountability in military contexts.

This gap is significant because military facility projects operate under unique operational, confidentiality and strategic constraints that distinguish them from civilian construction environments. The absence of focused empirical analysis on phased M&E within this context limits understanding of how structured oversight frameworks, such as those operated by the Nigerian Navy's PIMED, contribute to project planning and control.

Accordingly, this study addresses this scholarly gap by examining the effects of phased monitoring and evaluation on military facility construction projects in Abuja, thereby extending M&E discourse beyond general public sector analysis into the domain of defence infrastructure governance.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative case study design supported by documentary and secondary data analysis. The research design was considered appropriate because the objective was to examine how phased M&E influences project planning and control within a real institutional setting, rather than to test statistical relationships.

A purposive case selection strategy was employed. The Navy Town, Asokoro construction projects in Abuja were selected due to the presence of a structured milestone-based monitoring framework administered by the Nigerian Navy's PIMED. The site represents a relevant institutional environment in which phased M&E practices are formally embedded within project oversight procedures. The case was therefore selected on the basis of its analytical relevance rather than representativeness.

Data were derived from multiple sources to enhance credibility and triangulation. These sources included peer-reviewed scholarly literature on Nigerian construction performance, publicly available procurement reviews, government audit reports, defence policy documentation, and institutional records describing monitoring procedures within the Armed Forces. The documentary materials reviewed covered the period between 2010 and 2024, reflecting contemporary project management practices in Nigeria.

Given the classified nature of military infrastructure projects, the study relied on verifiable administrative and procedural information rather than restricted operational data. Emphasis was placed on documented monitoring processes, payment certification procedures, reporting mechanisms and institutional oversight structures.

Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. Documentary evidence and case materials were systematically reviewed and coded according to four performance indicators derived from established project management literature: planning efficiency, cost control, risk management, and accountability. These indicators were selected because they represent widely recognized dimensions of project planning and control within both civilian and defence infrastructure contexts.

To enhance analytical rigor, findings from the Navy Town case were cross-referenced with existing empirical studies on Nigerian construction performance and international best practices in defence infrastructure oversight. This triangulation approach strengthened the reliability of interpretations while maintaining institutional confidentiality. This methodological framework

provides a structured basis for evaluating the effects of phased M&E within a security-sensitive environment while ensuring academic robustness and transparency of analytical procedure.

4. RESULTS

This section presents findings derived from documentary analysis and focused examination of military facility construction projects in Abuja. Particular attention is given to the Navy Town, Asokoro case, where the Nigerian Navy's PIMED operates a structured phased monitoring framework. The Navy Town case serves as an institutional illustration of milestone-based M&E implementation within defence infrastructure delivery. The findings are organized under four thematic areas: planning efficiency, cost control, risk management, and accountability.

4.1 Planning Efficiency

Evidence from military construction projects in Abuja indicates that phased monitoring improves alignment between project execution and approved design specifications. Public sector construction studies in Nigeria have consistently linked project delays to weak oversight mechanisms (Oseghale, Abiola-Falemu, & Oseghale, 2015). However, projects subjected to structured milestone-based evaluations demonstrate improved schedule discipline and reduced design deviations.

The Navy Town, Asokoro case provides institutional evidence of this pattern. The Nigerian Navy's Project Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation Directorate (PIMED) conducts evaluations at predefined milestones before progression to subsequent stages. These evaluations assess conformity with approved drawings, material specifications, and contractual timelines. Officers reported that phased inspections enable early detection of design inconsistencies and procurement bottlenecks, preventing escalation into structural redesign or schedule disruption.

Coordination between PIMED, the Project Department within the Logistics Branch, and the Account and Budget Branch further enhances planning integration. This structured inter-departmental verification ensures that execution realities remain aligned with funding schedules and operational requirements. The result is improved predictability in project sequencing and reduced likelihood of mid-cycle planning distortions.

4.2 Cost Control

Cost overrun remains a persistent challenge in Nigerian public construction projects (Nwachukwu & Emoh, 2011). Empirical evidence suggests that weak monitoring frameworks often delay detection of financial deviations until late project stages. In contrast, projects incorporating phased oversight mechanisms demonstrate stronger budgetary discipline.

Within Navy Town, PIMED links stage payments to verified milestone completion. Before recommending payment, the Directorate conducts structured assessments using standardized compliance checklists. These assessments verify material quality, workmanship standards, and adherence to contractual scope. Where deficiencies are identified, payment approval is withheld pending rectification. This practice reduces the likelihood of unjustified variation claims and premature fund disbursement. Documentary review indicates that such milestone-based certification contributes to improved cost predictability and reduced financial discrepancies. Similar findings are reflected in Nigerian construction research, where scheduled monitoring intervals significantly predict project success (Adebisi & Lawal, 2019).

Comparative procurement reviews within the Ministry of Defence also demonstrate that staged contract reviews provide better variation control than end-of-project audits. The results suggest that embedding cost verification within phased oversight strengthens fiscal discipline in security-sensitive infrastructure delivery.

4.3 Risk Management

Military facility construction carries distinct risks related to security, confidentiality, operational readiness, and procurement sensitivity. Evidence from audit and institutional reports indicates that absence of structured monitoring increases exposure to schedule risk, material compromise, and contractor non-performance.

The Navy Town case demonstrates that phased M&E creates structured intervention points for early risk detection. Through site inspections, progress photography, and periodic reporting, PIMED maintains a documentation trail that facilitates early identification of construction defects, labor shortages, or material inconsistencies. Officers indicated that such staged inspections prevent minor technical issues from escalating into major structural or financial liabilities. Global defence infrastructure studies similarly highlight milestone-based evaluation as an effective risk mitigation tool (GAO, 2013). The Abuja experience reflects comparable institutional application within the

Nigerian Navy, where structured oversight mitigates risks without compromising operational confidentiality.

The findings indicate that phased monitoring functions as a proactive risk containment mechanism rather than a reactive corrective instrument.

4.4 Accountability and Transparency

Available evidence indicates that phased M&E enhances documentation integrity and administrative transparency in military construction projects. Nigerian public sector studies associate project abandonment and mismanagement with weak evaluation systems (Adebayo, 2014). Structured milestone reporting, however, reduces discretionary ambiguity in contract administration.

In Navy Town, PIMED's standardized compliance checklist, written feedback system, and inter-branch coordination creates a formalized accountability framework. Deficiencies identified during inspections are formally communicated to contractors and project officers, with corrective instructions issued before progression to subsequent stages. This documented process strengthens traceability of decisions and financial authorizations. Institutional mechanisms across the Nigerian Armed Forces further reinforce this pattern. The Nigerian Army Directorate of Works and Services and the Nigerian Air Force's PIMT perform comparable supervisory functions. Although operational details remain classified, policy documentation confirms increasing institutionalization of structured monitoring across the services.

The evidence suggests that phased M&E contributes to strengthened internal governance without requiring external disclosure of sensitive operational information. Projects subjected to structured milestone verification exhibit improved adherence to specifications, reduced risk of abandonment, and stronger financial accountability.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that phased monitoring and evaluation (M&E) significantly strengthens project planning and control within military facility construction in Abuja. Evidence from the Navy Town, Asokoro case demonstrates that milestone-based oversight enhances alignment with approved specifications, improves fiscal discipline, mitigates implementation

risks, and reinforces accountability mechanisms. When interpreted through established project management theories, these results confirm that structured monitoring across the project life cycle functions not merely as an administrative routine but as a strategic governance instrument.

From a theoretical perspective, the results affirm the propositions of Project Life Cycle Theory (PMI, 2017), which emphasizes adaptive management across sequential project phases. The structured milestone inspections undertaken by the Nigerian Navy's PIMED illustrate how feedback mechanisms embedded at defined intervals reduce deviation between planned objectives and execution realities. Rather than allowing errors to accumulate until project completion, phased verification creates early correction points, thereby limiting cumulative distortion.

The findings also reinforce principles derived from Control Theory (Ouchi, 1979), particularly the importance of timely feedback in minimizing performance variance. By linking stage payments to verified compliance, the Navy Town framework institutionalizes financial discipline within the construction process. This mechanism addresses a persistent weakness identified in Nigerian construction literature, where cost overruns frequently stem from late detection of deviations (Okoye & Chijioke, 2018; Nwachukwu & Emoh, 2011). The Abuja case suggests that structured milestone verification can significantly reduce such exposure in security-sensitive projects.

Risk management implications are equally significant. Military infrastructure projects operate under heightened sensitivity due to confidentiality, operational readiness requirements, and strategic implications. The study demonstrates that phased M&E creates controlled intervention points that prevent minor technical or procurement issues from escalating into systemic failures. This aligns with international defence oversight experience, where staged evaluation frameworks have been identified as effective risk containment tools (GAO, 2013). Within the Nigerian Navy context, such structured oversight supports operational predictability without compromising classified information.

Beyond technical and financial considerations, the findings highlight institutional strengthening effects. The documentation trails, standardized compliance checklists, and inter-branch coordination observed in the Navy Town case reflect practical application of Results-Based Management principles (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Accountability is reinforced not through external exposure, but through internal procedural discipline. This distinction is critical in military environments where transparency must coexist with security.

Collectively, the results suggest that phased M&E contributes to a transition from reactive, end-of-project auditing toward proactive lifecycle governance. In a national context where public construction abandonment has historically posed challenges (Ayodele & Alabi, 2011), embedding milestone-based monitoring within military facility development offers a pathway toward greater delivery reliability and institutional credibility.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

This study examined the effects of phased monitoring and evaluation (M&E) on project planning and control, with particular reference to military facility construction projects in Abuja. The findings reveal that phased M&E enhances planning efficiency, improves cost control, strengthens risk management, and promotes accountability throughout the project life cycle. Unlike one-time evaluations at project completion, phased M&E provides continuous oversight, ensuring that deviations are detected early and corrective actions are implemented promptly.

The study concludes that phased M&E is not merely a technical procedure but a strategic management tool that contributes to the timely, cost-effective, and secure delivery of sensitive infrastructure. For Abuja's military projects, where delays and failures carry implications for operational readiness and national security, institutionalizing phased M&E is both necessary and urgent.

6.2 Recommendations

The findings suggest that strengthening phased M&E within military facility construction requires institutional, technical, and regulatory reinforcement rather than procedural adjustment alone. First, stakeholder engagement should be formally embedded at each milestone review stage. Structured involvement of contractors, consultants, and military end-users during evaluation phases would enhance transparency, reduce adversarial disputes, and ensure that operational requirements are continuously aligned with construction outputs.

Second, sustained capacity development is necessary to consolidate the gains of phased oversight. Project/Works and Services officers, alongside M&E units within the Nigerian Armed Forces, require periodic professional training in results-based monitoring frameworks, data interpretation,

and performance auditing tools. Strengthening technical expertise would improve the quality of milestone verification and reduce reliance on procedural compliance alone.

Third, technology-enabled monitoring systems should be institutionalized to enhance real-time oversight. The integration of digital dashboards, geospatial tracking tools and structured project management software would facilitate timely reporting, strengthen documentation trails and support evidence-based decision-making without compromising operational confidentiality.

Finally, phased M&E must be reinforced through formal policy instruments within defence procurement and project governance frameworks. Clear regulatory backing, combined with enforceable compliance standards for contractors and supervising officers would transform phased monitoring from a recommended practice into a mandatory governance mechanism.

Collectively, these measures would consolidate phased M&E as a strategic instrument for improving planning efficiency, cost discipline, risk containment, and accountability in military facility construction projects in Abuja.

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