Role of Monitoring & Evaluation (M & E) Approach in Good Governance Practices in Local Government Sector of Sri Lanka Special Reference to Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte MC

N. Gamage[1*], L. Karunarathne[2], and A. Indumini [3]

[1,3] *University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, 10250, Sri Lanka*
nimraveesha@gmail.com
aindumini@sjp.ac.lk

[2] *Central Queensland University, Sydney, 400 Kent Street,2000, Australia*

lakshi.karunarathne@cqu.edu.au

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to explore the role of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) in fostering good governance within the local government sector of Sri Lanka, specifically focusing on the Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council. This study investigates how M&E influences accountability, management decisions, and organizational learning, drawing insights from both qualitative and quantitative data. The research employed a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data was collected from a sample size of 63 respondents through structured questionnaires utilizing a Likert-scale. Qualitative data was gathered via semi-structured interviews with 5 top management staff members, selected through purposive sampling. Correlation analysis was applied to the quantitative data, while descriptive analysis was conducted for the qualitative analysis. Key findings demonstrate the significant impact of M&E on enhancing accountability, managerial decision-making, and organizational learning, thereby promoting good governance. The study identified that M&E practices, although present, vary in their implementation across different departments, necessitating standardized approaches and technological advancements. Additionally, the research highlighted the positive correlation between M&E practices and good governance, with significant relationships observed between M&E accountability, management

* N. Gamage – University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, 10250, Sri Lanka.

E-mail address: nimraveesha@gmail.com

decisions, organizational learning, and governance outcomes. The implications of this research suggest that for improved governance, local government institutions should invest in standardized M&E practices, technological upgrades, and strategic accountability standards. Addressing learning gaps and implementation challenges through adaptable strategies and collaborative knowledge-sharing is essential for continual improvement. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to understand the evolution of M&E practices and their long-term impact on governance. Comparative analyses across different regions and countries can provide further insights into optimal practices and contextual variations. This study contributes to scholarly knowledge and provides practical recommendations for policymakers, practitioners, and officials in the local government sector.

Keywords **- Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E), Good Governance, Accountability, Management Decisions, Organizational Learning, Local Government.**

1. INTRODUCTION

This research delves into the vital role of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) in fostering Good Governance within Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council, exploring the transformative impact of modernizing local governance amidst technological, political, and sociological shifts. Emphasizing the critical link between effective local government structures and societal development, it addresses the necessity to revamp outdated institutional practices hindering democratic and socio-economic advancement in many Third World nations (Gamlath, 2017).

According to OECD, good governance serves to achieve objectives rather than an end itself. Establishing accountable frameworks and institutions is pivotal for fostering equitable, participative societies and ensuring the security and success of nations (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2018). Sound public governance aids in transitioning from isolated policymaking to integrated strategies, aligning short- and long-term interests for sustainable development (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 2019).

There are eight key traits of good governance. It adheres to the rule of law, participative, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, and efficient. It ensures that corruption is kept to a minimum, minorities' opinions are taken into consideration, and the opinions of those who are the most disadvantaged members of society are considered during the process ofmaking decisions. Additionally,

it responds to the requirements of society, both now and in futuregenerations (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2009). According to Lobe Ndoumbe Director OSGE, (2014), "good governance is probably one of the vital aspects of alleviating poverty and encouraging prosperity." National governance, as defined broadly by the United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs., (2016), is "the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels." Consequently, according to United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs., (2016), good governance entails "the rule of law, effective institutions, transparency and accountability in managing of government affairs, a commitment to the rights of humans, and theinvolvement of everybody in society in decisions which influence their everyday lives." International organizations including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have also investigated the issue of good governance, examining the issues of transparency and accountability (United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs., 2016).

The initial point for interaction between an individual and a government agency is frequently localgovernment. As a result, the argument that local government is the one closest to the people (Thornhill, 2008). Therefore, given the current urbanization tendencies, it is essential to give special consideration to the local government system and its supporting administrative structures. The expectations of a non-racial society, completely split by the apartheid policy of the previous administration, required the newly elected democratic government to overhaul the local government structure (Thornhill, 2008). The local level of government was given the duty of ensuring that everyone had access to essential services, and MCs, UCs & PSs were charged with fulfilling this duty (Nelson, 2016).

The fundamental basis of democracy and progress in any given nation is the local government. The worldwide trend in local government has drastically changed and local institutional systems all over the globe have practically embraced the concepts of good governance. Sri Lanka's local government structure needs to be modified to adhere to the global "good governance" movement. The democratic political culture of a given society as an entire is shaped and defined substantiallyby

the universal nature of local governance. The overarching goal of local government is to implement good governance principles in order to preserve the Millennium Development Goals. The democratic nation of Sri Lanka has long maintained its own distinct local government structure. Improving democratic procedures through the adoption of global trends and providing prompt, high-quality services for the entirety of the population's social welfare were two of the primary goals of this local government system. However, it is discovered that the majority of local government organizations in Sri Lanka do not apply good governance concepts to their institutional procedures concerning services (Gamlath, 2015).

The IMF and World Bank supported reforms that were implemented in the 1970s and 1980s with the goal of enhancing the public sector's performance and efficiency, but these reforms were neverput into reality and ultimately served as a breeding ground for nepotism, corruption, and rent- seeking (Samaratunge & Pillay, 2011) (De Alwis, 2013).

According to Zall et al., (2004), over the years, the requirement to institutionalize M&E with the management of the public sector put more pressure on governments as well as organizations surrounding around the globe to be more receptive to requires for good governance, accountability, and transparency, greater development effectiveness, and delivery of tangible outcomes from stakeholders both inside and outside the organization.

Stufflebeam et al., (2000) said M&E has undergone stages of evolution and he described seven development periods. He said “the first period prior to 1900, was called age of reform; the secondfrom 1900 until 1930 was called the age of efficiency; the third from 1930 to 1945 was called the Tylerian age; the fourth from 1946 to about 1957 was called the age of innocence; the fifth, from 1958 to 1972, the age of development; the sixth, from 1973 to 1983, the age of professionalization;and seventh, from 1983 to 2000, the age of expansion and integration” (Stufflebeam et al., 2000). It must be emphasized that other evaluation methodologies have arisen during this period, especially since the 1930s. Objectives-oriented, adversary-oriented, management-oriented, expertise-oriented, customer-oriented, and participant-oriented are the five types into which Fitzpatrick et al., (2011) divided the various methodologies.

Around four thousand years ago, evaluation was employed in China to evaluate government programs. However,

it wasn't until the post-war era that evaluation became an independent area of practice for professionals. The defining of objectives for the program and the development of a framework of indicators of achievement has received emphasis in nations like Brazil (May et al., 2000). The local realm of government is governed by a constitutional and legislative framework that attempts to promote good governance and monitor and evaluate programs and procedures to achieve efficient and effective service delivery (Nelson, 2016). M&E are essential for evaluating the success of government service delivery, considering both intended and unintended consequences. Program evaluation has become more common in countries that are both developed and developing due to pressure from individuals and civil parties (Auriacombe, 2018; F. Cloete, 2018; Sithomola, 2018).

Others, like Colombia, have integrated this via a program of meticulous evaluations of impact. Others, notably Australia, the US, and the UK, have emphasized the use of a wider range of M&E methods and tools, which include performance indicators, fast assessments, impact assessments, as well as auditing (Mackay, 2006).

While some nations have a disjointed and incoherent array of distinct departmental systems for monitoring, certain nations have been successful in developing a whole-of-government monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system (Mackay, 2006). Naidoo, (2011) asserts that M&E entered Africa quite recently and that it mostly developed because of studies of the method being used in other nations. M&E has mainly entered Africa via donor programs, and it has been associated with the importation of northern-based concepts and practices.

Monitoring is the “continuous assessment of the activities, social processes, realities and performance during the life of the program or project to improve the organization’s effectiveness and efficiency in realizing goals” (Bengnwi, 2004, p.45). A “constant cycle of data collection and analysis, where information is used to bolster and sustain successful strategies during the subsequent stage of informed decision-making” is a further characteristic of M&E (Bengnwi, 2004, P.45). According to Donna & Pauline, (2009) “evaluation is a systematic application of social reproduces, methods to assess the strengths and weaknesses of social interventions, including programs, policies, personnel, products and organization” (p.170). Evaluation explains as a "involving the measurement and analysis of all factors that may contribute to a policy's success or failure, along with the careful design of

research to isolate the policy variable from other factors" (Innes & Booher, 1999).

The Sri Lankan government has always acknowledged the crucial role that M&E plays. One of the first nations to create an e-PMS, or electronic project monitoring system, to monitor projects being carried out across all ministries was Sri Lanka (Agrawal et al., 2017). A key component of that setup was a home-made electronic system. It was created in the former Ministry of Plan Implementation to monitor the outcomes of all development projects and programs, as well as both the monetary and physical advancement of adoption. The system may produce project information by sector, government, and donor. The current system has now been superseded by a new Integrated National Development Information System by the Department of Project Management and Monitoring (DPMM), which has the responsibility for M&E (Agrawal et al., 2017).

M&E and good governance work in harmony. M&E involves periodic evaluation of performance,drawing lessons from mistakes, and enhancing outputs, outcomes, and impacts (Agrawal et al., 2017). Good governance participation and responsiveness also tend to raise the demand for M&E.Endorsement of a clear national policy that supports M&E in all its facets, including the growth ofevaluation capability, socially equitable and gender-responsive components, including the sustainability of evaluation, would additionally create a conducive atmosphere for M&E (Agrawal et al., 2017). M&E serves as a "reality check" tool and produces evidence-based lessons to the future. Good governance paves the way for beneficial M&E systems to continue operating and improve (Agrawal et al., 2017).

The complexity of Sri Lanka's multi-tiered governance system has led to crises in administration, fostering corruption and eroding public trust. Low scores on indices measuring corruption and declining faith in the public sector highlight the pressing need for improved governance. Sextortion, a concerning form of corruption, further underscores the systemic issues. The inadequacy of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system exacerbates governance challenges,hindering effective reforms. The research aims to address these deficiencies by investigating the role of M&E in enhancing good governance within Sri Lanka's local government context. Key supplementary inquiries will explore how M&E accountability, decision-making, and organizational learning contribute to fostering good governance.

The objective of this research is to examine the role of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in enhancing good governance within Sri Lanka's local government sector, with a particular focus on the Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council. Specifically, this study seeks to assess how M&E practices influence accountability, inform management decision-making, and promote organizational learning in the context of local governance. It contributes to scholarly knowledge and informs policymakers, practitioners, and officials. This research demonstrates theimportance of Monitoring & Evaluation approach, in order to improve good governance in Sri Lanka's Local Government sector and so far, no research study has been done in this regard in SriLanka. The research seeks to facilitate the adoption of M&E practices, enhance governance aligning with global standards, and advance local governance structures and strategies. The research gap in this study is that, despite the acknowledged importance of M&E in promoting good governance, there is limited empirical evidence on its impact specifically within Sri Lanka's local government sector, particularly in the Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council context.

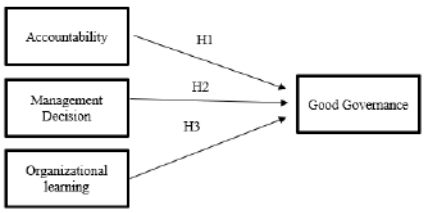
2. METHODOLOGY

The research study focuses on the Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council, using a mixed-methods approach to collect data from both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Quantitative data was collected through Likert-Scale questionnaires from top and middle-level management staff, while qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with top management staff. The study sample includes officials from municipalities who conduct M&E andgood governance operations within their units. The Likert-scale questionnaire was filled with 63 respondents, which was the sample of the research study, among 75 of target population. The sample was selected by adopting a purposive sampling method. Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with selected staff (top management) of Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte MC by conducting face-to-face interviews for about 30-45 minutes. This semi structured interview was done by 5 interviews through purposive sampling method among top level management staff. Quantitative analysis was done by the SPSS application using correlation testing & Qualitative analysis was done by descriptive analysis obtained from interviews and documentary analysis obtained from secondary data.

The research used interviews with professionals and structured surveys, while secondary data was obtained through internet inquiries and municipal records. The approach was consistent with its qualitative objectives, using three research tools: semi-structured interviews, analysis of documents, and secondary data evaluation for significant indicators. Interviews were targeted at obtaining comprehensive opinions and viewpoints from senior municipal officials regarding the application and implementation of M&E and good governance. The secondary data analysis will determine if M&E supports good governance in municipalities. All data was analyzed, evaluated,and combined in accordance with the comparative research technique. The study aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of M&E in promoting good governance in municipalities.

According to the research, good governance is a typical outcome, whereas M&E is an approach to get the typical output. The research focused only on the role of M&E of accountability, decisions made by management, and organizational learning as good governance contributors, even if M&Esolely could not encourage good governance because there are other elements that are crucial to good governance.

Figure 1: Research Model



Source: Adapted from (The OECD Development Assistant Committee (DAC), 2011) (Naidoo, 2011) and modified by (Ojok & Basheka, 2016).

According to Ojok & Basheka, (2016), they measured that the following hypothesis has positive relationship,

H1: M&E Accountability role and good governance has a positive relationship.

H2: M&E Management's decisions and good governance have a positive relationship.

H3: M&E organization learning and good governance has a positive relationship.

Hence, based on the above hypothesis of Albusaidi, (2018) and Ojok & Basheka, (2016), in this research also applied those mentioned hypothesis which have positive relationship. This study operationalizes variables to examine M&E's impact on good governance in Sri Lanka's local government. Independent

variables include M&E accountability, management decisions, and organizational learning, while good governance, measured through transparency, effectiveness, and efficiency, serves as the dependent variable. The research aims to elucidate how these M&E facets contribute to fostering better governance practices at the local level.

3. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The research on Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council achieved a full response rate, ensuring comprehensive insights from both top and middle-level management. This engagement is vital for holistic understanding and strategic decision-making within the administrative core.

The demographic profile of respondents from the Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council,including management levels, gender, age, education, and tenure, offers essential insights. This data aids in assessing sample representation, ensuring accuracy and relevance in drawing conclusions for the broader organizational population. The breakdown of respondent management levels in the Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council study reveals a predominant presence of middle management, comprising 81% of participants, alongside 19% from top management. Additionally, the departmental distribution showcases a notable emphasis on Engineering, reflecting a strong focus on infrastructure and development initiatives with 24 individuals. Conversely, the Planning, Finance, and Health departments exhibit lower personnel counts, indicating potential areas for enhanced Monitoring and Evaluation efforts to strengthen governance within these critical sectors, which are fundamental to the council's functions.

The study's participant breakdown by gender showcases a balanced representation, with 48% female and 52% male respondents among the 63 employees interviewed. This gender parity is significant as it offers a well-rounded perspective on governance within the Sri JayewardenepuraKotte Municipal Council. The relatively equal distribution ensures comprehensive insights into governance practices, allowing for a holistic understanding of diverse perspectives. This balance in the respondents' pool contributes to a more inclusive and representative analysis of local governance dynamics and considerations within the council's operations. The age distribution among respondents in the study highlights a diverse range of perspectives, with

significant representation in the 30-45 age bracket indicating active engagement in governance matters. The 46-60 age group, representing 33% of respondents, holds importance due to its productivity and potential for strengthening Monitoring & Evaluation implementation within the Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council.

The educational backgrounds of respondents in the Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council study reveal a spectrum of qualifications, with a majority holding GCE Advanced Level certifications, highlighting foundational knowledge. Diplomas held by 19 participants offerpractical insights, while smaller groups with Degrees and master's present nuanced expertise. This diversity allows for a comprehensive analysis of M&E's role, incorporating varied perspectives from foundational understanding to specialized insights. Similarly, the tenure analysis illustrates a diverse range of experience levels, with a sizable mid-level group (4-6 years), a seasoned segment (7+ years), and a significant influx of newer members (1-3 years), offering a broad range of experiences for evaluating M&E's impact on governance within the council.

3.1 Quantitative Analysis

Sample adequacy analysis is a statistical method that uncovers underlying connections among observed variables, simplifying data by identifying common factors that explain their correlations.The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test assesses whether the sample size is suitable for factor analysis by gauging the shared variance among variables. A higher KMO value, closer to 1, suggests stronger correlations among variables, indicating better suitability for factor analysis. Factor analysis examined variables with KMO values > 0.60, indicating sufficient shared variance for factor interpretation. When items align strongly, indicating a single component per variable, over 50% of factor variance is explained by item variance, affirming factor definition. This underscores factor analysis' utility across datasets.

The normal distribution holds a paramount position in statistics, often serving as a fundamental assumption in various analytical methods. However, when dealing with non-normally distributed data, adjustments become essential. Assessing normality involves both numerical and graphical approaches. The Shapiro-Wilk test, a mathematical tool, examines the normality of a dataset by generating a significant value.

Researchers consider this value to determine whether the data significantly deviate from a normal distribution. If the significance value falls below a predetermined threshold (often 0.05), it indicates a departure from normality, prompting the needfor transformations or alternate statistical approaches to ensure the validity of subsequent analyses.

Normal distribution is crucial in statistics, but non-normally distributed data requires adjustments. The Shapiro Wilk test assesses normality using a significance value. If it falls belowa threshold (often 0.05), it suggests a departure from normality, necessitating transformations or alternative statistical methods. As per the above histograms, the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality is

0.000 and it is greater than 0.05 confident level and it can be concluded that the data set is normallydistributed.

Hypothesis testing

Correlation coefficients in statistical analysis measure the strength and direction of relationships between variables. They range from -1 to +1, with positive coefficients indicating direct relationships, negative coefficients indicating inverse relationships, and zero coefficients indicating no linear relationship.

Hypothesis 01 - M&E Accountability role encourages good governance.

According to the Person Correlation analysis the sig value is, 0.000 and the value less than (P<0.05), Hence the relationship between M&E Accountability role and good governance is significant. Also, the correlation coefficient is 0.486, shows that there is a weak positive relation with M&E Accountability role and good governance.

Hypothesis 02 - M&E Management's decisions role encourages good governance.

According to the Person Correlation analysis the sig value is, 0.000 and the value less than (P<0.05), Hence the relationship between M&E Management's decisions and good governance isignificant. Also, the correlation coefficient is 0.619, shows that there is a moderate positive relation with M&E Management's decisions and good governance.

Hypothesis 03 - M&E organization learning role encourages good governance.

According to the Person Correlation analysis the sig value is, 0.000 and the value less than (P<0.05), Hence the relationship between M&E organization learning and good governance is significant. Also, the correlation coefficient is 0.557, shows that there is a moderate positive relation with M&E organization learning and good governance.

Table 1. Corelations

		ACC	MD	OL	C	G
ACC	Pearson Correlation	1	.571**	.351**	.344**	**.486****
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0.005	0.006	**0**
	N	63	63	63	63	**63**
MD	Pearson Correlation	.571**	1	.523**	.324**	**.619****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0	0.01	**0**
	N	63	63	63	63	**63**
OL	Pearson Correlation	.351**	.523**	1	0.221	**.557****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.005	0		0.082	**0**
	N	63	63	63	63	**63**
C	Pearson Correlation	.344**	.324**	0.221	1	**.437****
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.006	0.01	0.082		**0**
	N	63	63	63	63	**63**
G	Pearson Correlation	.486**	.619**	.557**	.437**	**1**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0	
	N	63	63	63	63	**63**

3.2 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative study within the Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council presents a nuancedlandscape of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices, Accountability, Management decisions, Organizational learning, and Good Governance practices. It highlights the existence of M&E practices but emphasizes disparities in their implementation across departments, advocating for standardized approaches and technological advancements. Efforts toward M&E Accountability standards are evident, albeit with differing views on their implementation, complemented by positive external validation through the Auditor General's evaluation. Agreement exists on data- driven decision-making influenced by M&E, despite concerns about system growth and political interference. While the impact of M&E on organizational learning is recognized, obstacles like outdated systems hinder its full utilization. Divergent perspectives emerge regarding the extent of implementing good governance practices, revealing variations in responsiveness, accountability, and stakeholder involvement. Challenges encompass budget constraints, workforce shortages, technological inadequacies, and political dynamics, prompting suggested mitigation plans centered on resource optimization, diversifying income sources, and minimizing political influence. Overall, the study advocates for a balanced approach, acknowledging current practices while advocating for innovation and addressing challenges through strategic adjustments and resource optimization.

4. CONCLUSION

The qualitative analysis of respondent demographics provided crucial insights into departmental distributions, age groups, tenure, gender representation, and management levels, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of governance dynamics. Descriptive variable analyses illuminated the significance and distributions of independent variables (Accountability, Management Decision, Organizational Learning) and their impact on the dependent variable (Good Governance), clarifying governance practices' intricate dynamics. Furthermore, strong construct validity, contentvalidity, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients validated the study's reliability and accuracy. Key findings emphasized consensus on M&E existence but disparities in implementation, efforts towards accountability, positive perceptions of M&E impact on decision-making, challenges in organizational learning due to outdated systems, varied views on good governance practices, and identified obstacles and recommended mitigation plans for effective M&E implementation.

The Sri Jayewardenepura Kotte Municipal Council should standardize its M&E practices across all departments, invest in technological advancements to

improve data management and reporting, and strategically implement accountability standards. Address organizational learning gaps by developing training programs for lower-level management. Enhance good governance practices, address financial constraints, and minimize political influence. Develop policies to maintain administrative continuity despite changes in leadership. Create adaptable strategies, encourage collaborative learning and knowledge sharing, and establish a feedback loop for continuous evaluation and improvement. These recommendations aim to create a more efficient, accountable, and adaptive governance framework within the council. Future research should focus on longitudinal research to understand the evolution of Management and Evaluation (M&E) practices and their impact on governance. Comparative analyses of M&E implementation across Sri Lanka and abroad can highlight optimal practices and contextual variations. Impact assessments should examine the consequences of sound governance on public services and community well-being. Future research projects should address resource issues, adopt new technologies, and consistencyto improve governance procedures. Resolving these drawbacks is crucial for a more comprehensive understanding of M&E's influence and efficacy in municipal governance.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors acknowledge the Centre for Real Estate Studies (CRES), Department of Estate Management and Valuation, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka.

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