



Research Article

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A Literature Review on Results-Based Management (RBM) in the Not-for-Profit Sector in Zimbabwe during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

In the context of the just-ended COVID-19 global pandemic, it is evident that nations continue battling to make progress towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda while ensuring no one is left behind. Renowned journals have captured the adverse impacts of the pandemic on the social, health, education, and economic systems across nations, including Zimbabwe, highlighting the need for more efficient and effective management practices. Notwithstanding, there remains little or no evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the implementation of widely adopted approaches such as results-based management (RBM). This is despite RBM having been adopted by a majority of governments and non-governmental organizations, including the United Nations, and implemented as a performance management tool towards attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. RBM is a strategic approach that focuses on achieving specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound results to enhance the effectiveness and accountability of organisations. This review explores the implementation of RBM in the not-for-profit sector in Zimbabwe during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It examines the challenges faced by the sector, the opportunities presented by RBM, and the strategies and best practises for successful implementation post-pandemic. The study synthesises and critically analyses relevant literature, providing insights into RBM's potential to improve the performance and impact of not-for-profit organisations in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: Results-based management, COVID-19 pandemic, Not-for-Profit Sector, Impact, and Effectiveness

1. Introduction

As of December 2019, a pneumonia-like illness of unknown origin had been detected in Wuhan, China. By early February 2020, the causative agent had been identified and named severe respiratory

coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV 2) (WHO, 2020). By March 2020, this health condition had spread globally and had almost brought the whole globe to a standstill. In just over a year, there have been more than 122 million confirmed infections and close to three million confirmed deaths globally. Within the same time period, although with concerns of underreporting (Chitungo et al., 2020; Dzinamarira et al., 2020), Africa has reported over three million confirmed cases with over 109,000 deaths (WHO, COVID 19). In Sub-Saharan Africa, COVID-19 has resulted in additional pressure on already strained health systems characterised by poor health outcomes and high mortality rates linked to a triple burden of disease (HIV, tuberculosis, and non-communicable diseases) (Mhango et al., 2020).

In an effort to curb COVID-19 transmission, most African countries imposed movement restrictions such as quarantine (lockdown) (Dzobo et al., 2020). As documented by Mhango et al. (2020), the lockdowns came with unintended consequences, which included widening economic inequalities, mental health problems, and exacerbating poor medical outcomes that were not COVID-19-related. The overwhelmed health systems, the disruption of other health services, and the economic impact of lockdowns in the region have presented complications that have resulted in varying COVID-19 responses in the region. This significant shift calls for investigating its impact on the varied approaches, such as the Results-Based Management (RBM) approach, that have been adopted largely by not-for-profit organizations, including the United Nations (UN). The United Nations system adopted RBM as its management approach in the late 1990s in a bid to enhance coherence, effectiveness, and accountability.

Public and not-for-profit sector organisations around the world are adopting results-oriented approaches to manage their affairs (David, Shin, Pérez, Anderies, & Janssen, 2016). Results-based management (RBM), managing for results, managing for outcomes, performance management, and results management are some of the expressions used to describe this approach to managing. Many organisations and jurisdictions have been working towards RBM for many years, sometimes decades, and considerable experience has been built up on the challenges and lessons learned in implementing RBM (Ansorg, Gissi, & Calado, 2017).

2. Background

The not-for-profit sector in Zimbabwe is crucial to addressing social and economic challenges by providing essential services to vulnerable populations. However, the industry has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to disruptions in service delivery, fundraising, and overall organisational sustainability. In response to these challenges, implementing results-based management (RBM) has emerged as a potential solution to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of not-for-profit organisations. RBM offers a systematic approach to planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating programs, focusing on achieving tangible results. The implementation of RBM by the not-for-profit sector in Zimbabwe, like in many other developing countries, has been a donor prerequisite for funding. Irrespective of the size, the focus area of the non-profit organization's RBM has been implemented with varying fidelity. Not-for-profit organisations funded by bilateral and multilateral agencies such as the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund (GF) are required to work using RBM matrices, templates, and approaches approved a priori by the funding organization. Zimbabwean not-for-profit organisations have limited say in the development and design of the RBM system, as these will be based on global standards utilised in many other countries (PEPFAR, 2022). There is a need for champions to lead the implementation of RBM. Not-for-profit organisations funded by smaller funders have a greater opportunity to negotiate the RBM framework they will use for their projects with their funders.

On the other hand, Zimbabwe's experience with results-based management systems, like that of many other African countries, has exposed more negative than positive results. Although the Results-Based Management Systems initiation is considered valid for improving performance in the public sector, it is also a vital tool for programme and project management in government and its associated not-for-profit implementing partners (Dandira et al., 2020; Mutambatuwisi et al., 2016). This review

aims to examine the implementation of RBM in the not-for-profit sector in Zimbabwe during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, assessing its challenges, opportunities, and potential impacts on practice.

3. Methodology

Google Scholar search engine was used to search for relevant literature, employing Boolean operators to narrow or broaden the search using different key words such as Results-based management, COVID-19, Not-for-Profit Sector, Impact, and Effectiveness. The literature review included major research publications from accredited journals and reports published between the years 2020 and 2023. The problem-interest-context (PICO) framework was used to set the eligibility criteria for the review question. This framework defines the problem as implementing Results-Based Management (RBM) in the Not-for-Profit Sector in Zimbabwe during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic. The inclusion and exclusion criteria for documents reviewed and included in this narrative were developed in an iterative process after preliminary searches. Studies were included in the review if they (i) reported the implementation of Results-Based Management (RBM) in the not-for-profit sector (ii) reported on work conducted either before, during or after the COVID-19 pandemic period, and (iii) were conducted in Zimbabwe.

4. Findings

According to Rynes and Bartunek (2017), if attainment of organisational goals is to become a reality, accountability must involve accountability for consequences. These consequences can be outside of managers' control but nonetheless subject to their influence. The COVID-19 pandemic brought a unique dynamic for managers, affecting the attainment of results in not-for-profit organisations in Zimbabwe. The core of RBM is managing to accomplish planned results, which are influenced by a variety of circumstances. Ansong, Gissi, & Calado (2017) argue that if desired results are not achieved, there may be causes other than programme management. Management should be aware of these additional factors and the potential dangers and should be taking action to increase the impact of their own program. Bhattarai (2020) further suggested that proving reasonable accountability for results should include demonstrating that good RBM practises have been used as well as that learning has taken place from the empirical data gathered on prior performance. Accountability should at least include participating in a results-oriented approach (Borodiyenko, Malykhina, Kalenskyi, and Ishchenko, 2020).

4.1 *What changed in programme implementation by not-for-profits in Zimbabwe during the onset of COVID-19?*

During the onset of COVID-19 and the ensuing lockdown periods, larger funders such as the GF and PEPFAR guided how organisations receiving their funds were to implement programmes in the context of COVID-19. These included, among others:

Deferment of programmes until such a time as the risk of COVID has been better reduced, e.g., by vaccination. In Zimbabwe, most sectors were shut during most of the pandemic, limiting the activities nonprofit organisations could undertake. For example, support to assist persons with disabilities was low due to access and operational challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures (Manikai, 2020).

Implementation of innovative approaches that ensured that programmes continued to be implemented through the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE). Many health facilities lack basic consumables, including medicines, sundries, and PPE. Providing PPE would ease COVID-19-related safety concerns among healthcare staff and promote access to care (Nkomo, 2021; Murewanhema & Makurumidze, 2020).

Transition as much as possible data collection and transmission to online platforms, reducing physical contacts. Such changes impact how nonprofit organisation workers reflect on their work, which may affect the implementation of the new RBM guidelines. Staff training in the use of these online platforms was key. Organizations have been required to swiftly set up the appropriate infrastructure for employees to work from home, such as digital assistive technologies, software, physical equipment, and organisational processes, to facilitate the effectiveness of remote working (Kuenzi et al., 2021; Adekoya et al., 2022; Williamson et al., 2020).

Online meetings as a practical and cost-cutting approach to business These reduced person-to-person contact, reduced costs for travel, hotel bookings, and even allowances However, a drawback of using online platforms for meetings is interruptions in connectivity, which are common in Zimbabwe due to power outages. The motivation of participants is reduced as the monetary incentive may be removed. Although online meetings can be made interactive, it is not guaranteed that participants will remain focused. Persons in remote locations have limited choices of internet network providers, and those available may have weaker signals. The benefits of face-to-face interaction are also lost, such as identifying hidden concerns and picking up on important cues and sensory information (Cook & Zschomler, 2020).

Allowing programming budgets to be diverted for the procurement of PPE. This meant the rapid development of clear goals and objectives and measuring progress toward them. There is an inherent lowering of barriers to entry for these goals and objectives, which can lead to declining average quality and duplication of goals and objectives between nonprofits (Hanisch & Rake, 2021)

Enhanced provision of food and medication to vulnerable individuals was especially important during the lockdown period, when extreme hunger was expected to increase in some sectors of society. These activities needed to be conducted in the presence of a rapidly deteriorating economy, and not-for-profit organisations had to contend with shortages of enablers like cash, fuel, and medicines (Kabonga, 2023; Kabonga et al., 2021; Kabonga et al., 2022; ZPP 2021).

4.2 Status of Results-Based Management (RBM) in the Not-for-Profit Sector in Zimbabwe before COVID-19:

For not-for-profits to be relevant and to respond to the unfolding COVID-19 epidemic, changes and flexibilities needed to be implemented in their RBM frameworks. Organizations that failed to adapt to the new COVID reality and did not have a robust enough RBM system failed to report to their donors, increasing the risk of not being funded. New goals and objectives had to be quickly adopted that were compliant with the dictates of their funders and were achievable in the times of COVID-19. Measures included, but were not limited to:

Not-for-profits had to communicate with their funders that during nationwide lockdowns and other imperatives, some targets, especially those that required face-to-face engagement, were most likely not going to be met. Only essential services were open during the lockdowns. All forms of gathering and movement of the public were restricted, except those providing essential services. Essential services included hospital services, state security services, emergency services such as fire brigade and ambulance services, water and electricity services, sanitary services, money transfer and exchange services, and service provider communication. Nonprofits that fall outside these scopes were not allowed to continue to operate in person-contact activities during the pandemic and had to find innovative ways to meet their existing goals and objectives (Maulani, Nyadera, & Wandekha, 2020).

Small not-for-profit organizations, especially community ones, had to move from paper-based data collection to electronic platforms to reduce face-to-face contact. Sibanda et al. found that most members of staff felt they would be able to do the following activities: make file requests, access the files in the comfort of their workplaces, anywhere and anytime without visiting physically, and access and use information technologies without any problems. This can make the transition to remote work much easier (Sibanda, Sibanda, & Mupfururi, 2021).

Some funders agreed to programmatic variations to support COVID-19-related interventions. Organizational RBM tools had to change so that additional COVID-specific data could be collected and reported to the funders (Mutanda, 2022; Makombe, 2021).

4.3 Challenges of the Not-for-Profit Sector in Zimbabwe during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the not-for-profit sector in Zimbabwe, imposing various challenges that have threatened the ability of organisations to achieve their objectives. These challenges include: limited financial resources, reduced donor funding, increased demand for services, disruptions in supply chains, and restrictions on movement and gathering. Such challenges have exposed the need for an adaptive and resilient management approach to ensure the continuation and effectiveness of essential programs. Challenges linking to RBM implementation included:

Uncertainty and rapidly changing context: The COVID-19 pandemic created a highly uncertain and rapidly changing environment. Governments, organizations, and agencies had to continuously adapt their plans and strategies to respond to evolving health, social, and economic conditions. This made it difficult to set clear and measurable targets and track progress effectively.

Shifting priorities and resource constraints: The pandemic necessitated a significant reallocation of resources and reprioritization of activities. Many organizations had to divert their attention and resources to emergency response efforts, such as healthcare, testing, and vaccination campaigns. This shift in priorities made it challenging to maintain a focus on longer-term goals and outcomes.

Shift to remote work: Remote work posed challenges in terms of monitoring and evaluating program outcomes and impact. NGOs had to develop new strategies and tools to track and measure results remotely. This required the use of technology for data collection, analysis, and reporting, which could potentially enhance RBM practices in the long term.

Data collection and monitoring limitations: The pandemic disrupted data collection systems and monitoring mechanisms. Lockdowns, travel restrictions, and physical distancing measures made it difficult to collect data through traditional means, including surveys, interviews, and site visits. Remote work arrangements also posed challenges in terms of monitoring and verifying the achieved results.

Lack of baseline data: The pandemic created unique circumstances, making it challenging to establish reliable baseline data for comparison and measurement. In many cases, pre-existing data collection systems were not designed to capture the specific impacts of a global health crisis. This made it difficult to accurately measure the progress made toward desired results.

Collaboration and coordination issues: RBM often requires close collaboration and coordination among multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community groups. The pandemic disrupted traditional modes of collaboration, such as in-person meetings and workshops, making it more challenging to engage stakeholders and ensure their active participation in the RBM process.

Psychological and emotional impact: The COVID-19 crisis had profound psychological and emotional effects on individuals and organizations. Fear, anxiety, and stress among staff members and stakeholders could negatively impact their motivation and ability to engage effectively in RBM processes. Addressing these emotional challenges and ensuring the well-being of individuals became a critical aspect of implementing RBM.

To overcome these challenges, organizations needed to be flexible, adaptive, and innovative in their RBM approaches. This involved adjusting targets and indicators to reflect the changing circumstances, exploring alternative data collection methods, leveraging technology for remote monitoring and evaluation, strengthening collaboration through virtual platforms, and providing support and resources to address the psychological impact of the pandemic on individuals and teams.

4.4 *Lessons learned during the COVID-19 period and how these affected the implementation of results-based management as a strategic approach:*

Results-Based Management offers a strategic framework for organisations to plan, implement, and evaluate their activities with a clear focus on achieving desired outcomes. RBM emphasises the establishment of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound) objectives and indicators, which enable organisations to track progress and measure impact effectively. This approach fosters accountability, transparency, and learning, ensuring resources are utilised efficiently. Some lessons learned during the pandemic and how they can impact RBM implementation:

Flexibility and Adaptability: The pandemic highlighted the importance of being flexible and adaptable in the face of unexpected challenges. RBM implementation should embrace agility, allowing organizations to adjust targets, indicators, and strategies as circumstances change rapidly.

Data-driven Decision Making: The significance of accurate and timely data became evident during the pandemic. RBM implementation should prioritize the collection, analysis, and utilization of data to inform decision-making processes and enable organizations to respond effectively to crises.

Collaboration and Partnerships: The COVID-19 crisis emphasized the value of collaboration and partnerships between organizations across sectors. RBM implementation should encourage collaboration, fostering partnerships to leverage resources, share knowledge, and jointly address complex challenges.

Risk Management: The pandemic highlighted the need for robust risk management strategies. RBM implementation should integrate risk assessment and mitigation into planning processes to identify potential threats and develop contingency plans for effective response.

Resilience and Sustainability: COVID-19 underscored the importance of building resilience and ensuring the long-term sustainability of programs and organizations. RBM implementation should focus on outcomes and impacts that contribute to resilience and sustainability, enabling organizations to withstand future shocks.

Digital Transformation: The pandemic accelerated digital transformation across various sectors. RBM implementation should consider the integration of digital tools and technologies to enhance monitoring, evaluation, and reporting processes, enabling real-time data capture and analysis.

Stakeholder Engagement: The crisis highlighted the significance of engaging stakeholders and communities in decision-making processes. RBM implementation should prioritize stakeholder engagement, involving them in goal-setting, planning, and evaluation to ensure relevance, ownership, and accountability.

Preparedness and Contingency Planning: The pandemic exposed the importance of preparedness and contingency planning for emergencies. RBM implementation should include mechanisms for crisis response, preparedness, and scenario planning to mitigate the impact of future crises on program implementation.

Overall, the lessons learned during COVID-19 emphasize the need for RBM implementation to be adaptable, data-driven, collaborative, risk-aware, resilient, digitally-enabled, stakeholder-engaged, and prepared for emergencies. Incorporating these lessons can enhance the effectiveness and responsiveness of RBM in organizations.

4.5 *Strategies and Best Practices for RBM Implementation in the Not-for-Profit Sector in Zimbabwe*

Successful implementation of RBM requires organisations to adopt specific strategies and best practices. These include fostering a results-based culture, engaging stakeholders in the RBM process, developing robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, ensuring capacity building, and promoting knowledge sharing and learning. Additionally, the integration of RBM into organisational structures and processes is vital for sustained effectiveness and accountability.

4.6 Opportunities for Strengthening RBM Implementation in the Not-for-Profit Sector in the post-COVID-19 period

Implementing RBM in the not-for-profit sector in Zimbabwe presents several opportunities for organisations to enhance their performance and adapt to the changing environment. By aligning programmes with clearly defined objectives and outcomes, organisations can prioritise and optimise resource allocation, improving overall efficiency. RBM also fosters evidence-based decision-making, enabling organisations to monitor and assess programme effectiveness regularly. Furthermore, RBM encourages collaboration and partnerships among organisations, enhancing coordination and synergy in service delivery.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The not-for-profit sector in Zimbabwe is facing unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating innovative management approaches such as Results-Based Management. RBM offers a strategic approach to enhance the effectiveness and accountability of organisations, enabling them to adapt, recover, and thrive during and after crises. Implementing RBM requires a comprehensive and sustained effort involving all stakeholders, emphasising continuous learning and improvement. By embracing RBM, not-for-profit organisations in Zimbabwe can improve their impact, efficiency, and sustainability, ultimately contributing to positive social change.

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