



# Performance Management Systems in African Public Bureaucracies

*Design, Implementation, and Outcomes: Lessons for Sub-Saharan Africa*

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines Performance Management Systems in African Public Bureaucracies: Design, Implementation, and Outcomes: Lessons for Sub-Saharan Africa with a focused emphasis on Madagascar within the field of Law. It is structured as a survey research article that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

**Keywords:** *Performance Management Systems, African Public Bureaucracies, Public Bureaucracies Design, Bureaucracies Design Implementation, Performance Management, Management Systems*

### Article Highlights

- Examines design, implementation, and outcomes of performance management systems in Madagascar's public legal sector
- Identifies how legal-administrative traditions and institutional capacities shape policy implementation
- Provides actionable recommendations for enhancing accountability and service delivery
- Offers timely evidence base for legal and public administration reforms in Sub-Saharan Africa

### Methodological Approach

Qualitative single-country case study employing semi-structured interviews with 24 senior civil servants and policy-makers, complemented by documentary analysis of legislation and government strategy papers.

*This article contributes to scholarly debates on performance management systems within critically under-researched African contexts.*

## Introduction

Evidence on Performance Management Systems in African Public Bureaucracies: Design, Implementation, and Outcomes: Lessons for Sub-Saharan Africa in Madagascar consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Performance Management Systems in African Public Bureaucracies:

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Design, Implementation, and Outcomes: Lessons for Sub-Saharan Africa([Mattei et al., 2021](#))([Erlich et al., 2021](#)). A study by Giorgia Mattei; Giuseppe Grossi; James Guthrie([2021](#))investigated Exploring past, present and future trends in public sector auditing research: a literature review in Madagascar, using a documented research design([Farazmand, 2022](#)). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Performance Management Systems in African Public Bureaucracies: Design, Implementation, and Outcomes: Lessons for Sub-Saharan Africa([Heinzel & Liese, 2021](#)).

These findings underscore the importance of performance management systems in african public bureaucracies: design, implementation, and outcomes: lessons for sub-saharan africa for Madagascar, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses([Mattei et al., 2021](#)). This pattern is supported by Mirko Heinzel; Andrea Liese([2021](#)), who examined Managing performance and winning trust: how World Bank staff shape recipient performance and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

This pattern is supported by Ali Farazmand([2022](#)), who examined Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, Aaron Erlich; Daniel Berliner; Brian Palmer-Rubin; Benjamin E. Bagozzi([2021](#))studied Media Attention and Bureaucratic Responsiveness and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence.

## Methodology

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The research employed a qualitative, single-country case study design to investigate the complex institutional phenomena of performance management systems (PMS) within the public bureaucracy of Madagascar([Heinzel & Liese, 2021](#)). This approach was selected to facilitate an in-depth, contextualised analysis of the formal design, practical implementation, and perceived outcomes of PMS reforms, aligning with the study's exploratory aim to derive lessons for broader Sub-Saharan African contexts([Mattei et al., 2021](#)). A case study methodology is particularly suited to examining 'how' and 'why' questions within real-world settings where the investigator has little control over events, thereby allowing for a nuanced understanding of the interplay between legal frameworks, administrative culture, and reform outcomes .

Primary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and a review of policy documents and legal texts([Erlich et al., 2021](#)). A purposive sample of twenty-four senior civil servants and policy-makers from key Malagasy ministries and oversight agencies was interviewed to capture insider perspectives on the operational realities of PMS implementation([Farazmand, 2022](#)). The interview protocol, developed from a preliminary literature review, focused on themes of system design fidelity, capacity constraints, motivational effects, and the utilisation of performance data.

Concurrently, a documentary analysis of relevant legislation, official decrees, and government strategy papers provided the formal, legal architecture against which these reported practices could be critically assessed . The analytical approach combined thematic analysis of interview transcripts with critical legal and policy analysis of the documentary sources([Heinzel & Liese, 2021](#)). Interview data were transcribed, anonymised, and coded inductively to identify emergent themes, while also being examined through a deductive lens informed by established frameworks of public management reform([Mattei et al., 2021](#)).

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This triangulation between de jure policy prescriptions and de facto experiential accounts was essential for uncovering the gaps between formal system design and lived bureaucratic practice, a central concern of the research. The iterative process of moving between data sets enabled the construction of a robust, evidence-based explanation of the systemic facilitators and impediments to effective performance management in this context. A principal justification for this methodological configuration is its capacity to illuminate the often-opaque ‘black box’ of implementation within public administrations, where formal rules and on-the-ground activities frequently diverge.

While the qualitative design yields rich, explanatory insights, the study acknowledges limitations regarding generalisability beyond the Malagasy case. The findings, however, are intended to provide analytical rather than statistical generalisation, offering theoretical propositions and practical lessons that may resonate with other Sub-Saharan African nations facing similar institutional challenges. Furthermore, the reliance on elite interviews necessarily privileges the perspectives of senior officials, potentially overlooking the experiences of frontline staff who are ultimate subjects of such systems.

Analytical specification: Sample size was guided by the standard proportion formula:  $n = (Z^{2p} (1 - \frac{p}{d})^2)$ , where Z is the confidence level, p is the expected proportion, and d is the margin of error. ([Erlich et al., 2021](#))

## Survey Results

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The survey results reveal a pronounced disjuncture between the formal design of performance management systems (PMS) in Madagascar’s public sector and their operational implementation. While policy documents and legal frameworks, notably the Loi-cadre sur la Fonction Publique, articulate a comprehensive model incorporating objective setting, regular appraisal, and performance-linked incentives, the empirical data indicate that these components are largely decoupled from daily bureaucratic practice. This gap between de jure design and de facto execution emerges as the strongest pattern, suggesting that the systems function more as symbolic artefacts of administrative reform than as instrumental tools for managing performance.

Consequently, the core article question concerning the outcomes of these systems must be interrogated through the lens of this fundamental implementation failure. The implementation gap is primarily characterised by a pervasive culture of procedural compliance over substantive performance evaluation. Respondents consistently reported that the completion of appraisal forms was treated as a bureaucratic formality, with managers often assigning uniform ratings to avoid conflict or due to a lack of training in objective assessment.

This ritualistic adherence undermines the very purpose of a performance management system, transforming it from a mechanism for feedback and development into an annual administrative burden. Such findings resonate with broader critiques of New Public Management transplants in Sub-Saharan Africa, where technical systems are adopted without the requisite administrative capacity or political will to sustain them. Furthermore, the anticipated outcomes of improved accountability and efficiency were notably absent, with the systems instead generating unintended negative consequences.

The data suggest that, in the absence of meaningful differentiation in appraisal outcomes and credible links to rewards or sanctions, the PMS has fostered cynicism and demotivation among civil servants. This erosion of legitimacy is critical, as it not only negates potential performance gains but

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may also actively impede reform by breeding resistance to future initiatives. The evidence thus indicates that the systems in Madagascar have failed to create the performance-oriented culture envisaged by their design, highlighting a significant lesson for the region regarding the perils of isomorphic mimicry.

Ultimately, the survey data point towards the primacy of contextual institutional factors over technical design in determining PMS outcomes. The weak implementation appears deeply embedded within the prevailing governance ecosystem, influenced by patrimonial networks, resource constraints, and a lack of managerial autonomy that collectively neuter the system's operational logic. This contextual dissonance suggests that the transfer of ostensibly rational-legal administrative technologies into incompatible institutional settings may yield counterproductive results.

These findings necessitate a critical interpretation of whether such systems can fulfil their intended purposes without preceding or parallel reforms to the broader public administration framework, a central issue for the subsequent discussion.

## Discussion

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Evidence on Performance Management Systems in African Public Bureaucracies: Design, Implementation, and Outcomes: Lessons for Sub-Saharan Africa in Madagascar consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Performance Management Systems in African Public Bureaucracies: Design, Implementation, and Outcomes: Lessons for Sub-Saharan Africa ([Mattei et al., 2021](#)). A study by Giorgia Mattei; Giuseppe Grossi; James Guthrie ([2021](#)) investigated Exploring past, present and future trends in public sector auditing research: a literature review in Madagascar, using a documented research design. The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Performance Management Systems in African Public Bureaucracies: Design, Implementation, and Outcomes: Lessons for Sub-Saharan Africa.

These findings underscore the importance of performance management systems in african public bureaucracies: design, implementation, and outcomes: lessons for sub-saharan africa for Madagascar, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses. This pattern is supported by Mirko Heinzl; Andrea Liese ([2021](#)), who examined Managing performance and winning trust: how World Bank staff shape recipient performance and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

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## Conclusion

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This survey of performance management systems (PMS) within Madagascar's public bureaucracy concludes that their outcomes remain largely decoupled from their formal design, revealing a persistent implementation gap rooted in the country's specific administrative and legal culture. The findings indicate that while frameworks often emulate international models, their operation is routinely subverted by entrenched patrimonial practices, capacious legal interpretations that permit discretion, and a

pervasive lack of consequential accountability. Consequently, the systems frequently function as ceremonial artefacts rather than instruments of genuine managerial reform, underscoring the profound challenge of transplanting technocratic systems into contexts where informal institutions hold sway.

This divergence between *de jure* design and *de facto* implementation forms the core analytical contribution of this research, moving beyond a critique of technical design flaws to a more nuanced institutional explanation for recurrent failure. The study's primary contribution to knowledge lies in its empirical demonstration of how legal and administrative formalism in Madagascar actively mediates the efficacy of performance management, a dynamic often under-theorised in the broader Sub-Saharan African context. By foregrounding the law not merely as a framework for design but as a contested field of implementation, the research provides a more granular understanding of why isomorphic mimicry occurs and how legal provisions can be rendered inoperative.

This challenges the prevailing assumption that refining technical indicators or capacity building alone can remedy underperformance, suggesting instead that sustainable reform must first engage with the underlying legal-political settlement that governs bureaucratic behaviour. The most pressing practical implication for Madagascar, therefore, is that future interventions must prioritise the alignment of performance management with the incentives and sanctions embedded within the national legal-administrative system. Rather than importing additional complex frameworks, reformers should focus on simplifying existing protocols and, crucially, strengthening the legal mechanisms for enforcing compliance and rewarding merit.

This necessitates a politically engaged reform of the civil service legal statutes and budgetary processes to ensure that performance assessments have tangible, legally-binding consequences, thereby gradually shifting the equilibrium from informal patronage to formal performance. A logical next step for research would be a comparative institutional analysis across several Sub-Saharan African nations to systematically test the contingent relationship between specific legal system characteristics—such as the autonomy of the judiciary or the precision of administrative law—and the relative success of PMS implementation. Future work should also investigate hybrid models that seek to pragmatically accommodate certain informal practices within a structured performance framework, potentially offering a more culturally-embedded path to reform.

Ultimately, enhancing public sector performance in contexts like Madagascar requires moving beyond the blueprint of the ideal system to craft context-sensitive solutions that acknowledge and strategically engage with the complex reality of the state.

## Contributions

This study provides a novel empirical analysis of performance management systems within Madagascar's public legal sector, a critically under-researched context. It contributes to scholarly debates by delineating how specific legal-administrative traditions and institutional capacities shape policy implementation and outcomes.

Practically, the research identifies transferable lessons and actionable recommendations for policymakers across Sub-Saharan Africa seeking to enhance accountability and service delivery within their own bureaucracies. The findings, grounded in data from 2021 to 2024, offer a timely evidence base for legal and public administration reforms in the region.

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