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Factors affecting the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system

Tsika Mamosa Eunice¹, Joseph Chikwendu Ezennia^{2*}

¹Management College of Southern Africa, South Africa.

²Department of Social Sciences, University of Zululand, South Africa.

Corresponding author: Joseph Chikwendu Ezennia (Email: EzenniaJ@unizulu.ac.za)

Abstract

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system at a government entity. Staff performance appraisal systems are methods and processes used by organizations to assess the level of performance of staff and to provide them with feedback. It is essential for organizations to take measures to ensure that their staff are continuously at their peak performance. The staff performance appraisal system used within the entity fails to enforce a culture that fosters and encourages productivity via motivation, hence the need to evaluate the factors affecting the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system. The study employed quantitative research approach using random sampling to select 50 employees as participants. Data collected was analysed using SPSS and descriptive statistical to present the data. Findings from the study identified communication, leadership and late performance feedback as the factors affecting the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system. Lack of trust and attitude of manager was also identified as the reasons for the ineffective implementation of staff performance appraisal system. It is therefore recommended that staff should be trained on the values and mission of the organization, as well as its effect on their job performances. Performance feedback should be effective and timely to assist staff improve on their job performances. Managers should be adequately trained to avoid bias and strive to earn the trust of the staff for the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system.

Keywords: Appraisal System, Culture, Feedback, Organization, Performance, Staff.

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1. Introduction

Staff performance appraisal system is mostly regarded as one of the most prominent functions of the human resource management in an organization Idowu [1]. Padhaya, et al. [2] define performance appraisal systems as the methods and processes used by organizations to assess level of performance of the employees and to provide

them with feedback. It is essential for organizations to achieve better coordination of their human resources and put measures in place to ensure that they are used effectively. Phin [3] states that before an organization can attain success, “it must be able to measure how well its employees perform and then use that information to identify and reward high-performing employees and also ensure that employee performance not only meets present standards but also improves over time”.

According to Majid [4] a staff performance appraisal system that is administered properly has a greater advantage to the organization which indirectly relates to each, and every component related to the processes of staff performance appraisal systems. The importance of staff performance appraisal system is being driven by the desire to achieve organizational goals, the nature of the current business environment, and the propensity to remain pertinent in the competitive markets through superior employee performance [5].

Staff performance appraisal process offers a valuable opportunity for organisations to focus on work related activities, goals, identification and correction of existing problems, as well as, inspiring improved future performance, which will in turn improve the whole performance of an organization [2]. To improve performance and organization’s productivity, it is of great importance that employees be given feedback on their performance, as well as guidance on how to attain the next level of results. Hence the need for an effective performance appraisal system.

2. Literature Review

The literature review reflects the staff performance appraisal system, its importance, purpose, different methods, advantages, challenges and the factors affecting the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system.

2.1. Staff Performance Appraisal

Staff performance appraisal can be defined as a process used to improve employee’s work performance by helping them realize and use their full potential in carrying out the organization’s missions as well as providing information to employees and managers for use in making work related decisions [6]. It is one of the ways to review the performance and potential of staff in an organization. Staff performance appraisal is usually carried out annually and this involves the assessment of the performance of the employees by a manager. According to Xavier [7] for organizations to thrive in the present competitive environment, they must ensure that their employees are continuously at their peak performance.

It is the periodic evaluation of an employee’s performance measured against the allotted responsibilities and duties. Atta-Quartey [8] asserts that “staff performance appraisal is an extensively used formal assessment in many organisations to determine employee’s performance in relation to the achievement of organisational goals, and to settle on ways for future improvements”.

Staff performance appraisal is about letting employees know where and what is lacking in their work performance so that they improve in those areas to yield organizational productivity. Additionally, Mwema and Gachunga [9] allude that the importance of staff performance appraisal is to guarantee that the organization system is easily understood by employees, and this process is effectively carried out by the managers. Further, Brefo-Manuh, et al. [10] posit that work standards are included in the process of performance appraisal for the purpose of evaluating the employees real work performance compared to those standards, providing feedback to the employees while putting into consideration their motivation to perform effectively. However, Moradi, et al. [11] argue that if the staff performance appraisal system in an organisation is not accepted and supported by the employees, its effectiveness will be limited. Therefore, to achieve organizational productivity and growth, an effective staff performance appraisal system is crucial.

2.2. Importance of Staff Performance Appraisal System

Staff performance appraisal is necessary for organisational growth in view of the fact that every organization is responsible for the employees improved efficiency in a productive manner, and this can be achieved through proper training and development. Therefore, there must be an existence of a clear link between the performance standard for a particular job and the organization’s goals which should be measured accurately by the staff performance appraisal method Mwema and Gachunga [9]. Brefo-Manuh, et al. [10] assert that the importance of staff performance appraisal is associated with the employee training and development, corporate communication, employee reward and motivation, as well as the general organisational productivity.

2.3. Purpose of Performance Appraisal

Gopinath [6] claims that the basic purpose of performance appraisal is to prepare useful feedback to employees so that they can develop their performance. Invariably, Xavier [7] argues that the major aim of performance appraisal is to enable organizations maintain an inventory of the number and quality of all managers, and to identify and meet their training needs and aspirations. Brefo-Manuh, et al. [10] believe that performance appraisal system is an essential source of human capital development as well as a system that provides channels for making essential decisions, such as employee training and development, promotion, demotions, layoffs, and so on. They also maintain that “performance appraisal can be the most powerful tool a manager uses to enhance a subordinate’s productivity” [10]. Nonetheless, Ibrahim, et al. [12] added that performance appraisal is a crucial decision-making tool which is often used by an employer to assess and develop

employee performance in organizations. Therefore, for staff performance appraisal systems to be effective and efficient, it is of great importance that both profit-making and non-profit making organizations must communicate in clear terms what specific tasks employees should embark on, as this will influence the staff performance appraisal systems [10].

2.4. Methods of Staff Performance Appraisal

It is important that members of an organization know exactly what is expected of them, and the yardsticks by which their performance and results will be measured. Although there are some tested tools used to evaluate the performance of staff, it is difficult to follow because organisations' cultures are different, which make some organisations to formulate their own system based on their own circumstance [7]. There are several methods and techniques used to measure performance and appraisal in organisations. According to Xavier [7] the methods are used based on the degree of precision of the employees, different kinds of workers and the sources of traits or qualities. When clear and reasonable performance appraisal metrics, standards and practices are used to develop goals and provide relevant feedback, it can be useful both for the employee being evaluated and for the organization Mwema and Gachunga [9]. Idowu [1] highlights that, "during the staff performance appraisal process, the evaluators measure the staff's performance and offer a performance number, the performance number further leads to the development of level performance number which the management use as a platform to determine rewards as part of the motivation process".

However, Gopinath [6] mentioned that personal/self-appraisal, 360-degree appraisal, competence assessment, objective setting and performance related to pay are the most suitable methods for staff performance appraisal. These methods are discussed below:

2.5. Advantages of Staff Performance Appraisal System

Staff performance appraisal system is an investment for organizations towards productivity. The system promotes culture of continuous improvement and develops regular reflection, feedback, and performance enhancement across the organization. The advantages of staff performance appraisal system according to Khanom [13] are;

- **Motivation:** Staff performance appraisal system serves as a motivational tool because through the performance evaluation process, the strengths of the staff are evaluated to determine if the targets square measure is achieved. The system boosts employees' performance and let them realise their strengths and areas for improvement, which motivates to better productivity, quality and efficiency. When the employees are aware that
- their performance is being noticed and their development is supported, it can boost morale and increase job satisfaction.
- **Promotion:** Staff performance appraisal system helps the managers or supervisors to draw the promotion programs that support succession plan. This leads to identifying high potential and economical staff who can be mentored for leadership and other higher roles or positions. The appraisal system also provides data on decision for transfers, salary adjustments, demotion and terminations of worthy employees.
- **Employees Development:** The well-organized procedure of staff performance appraisal system aids the supervisors to border programs and coaching policies. It helps to identify the strong and challenge points of the employees so that appropriate measures will be followed towards providing what is needed for the employees' development. It additionally helps in framing future training and development programs on foreseeable skill gaps and informs positive decision about employee development programs and training investments. However, the organization is expected to create career development opportunities where the appraisal system highlights the growth paths and help employees set career goals.
- **Selection Validation:** According to the author Khanom [13] performance appraisal system "helps the supervisors to inform importance of the choice procedure and the validity. The supervisors return to understand the validity and thereby the strengths and weaknesses of the choice procedure. Future changes in choice strategies will be created during this regard". Further, appraisal system ensures that employee goals are aligned with the organizational objectives, which are in line with the organization's mission and strategic stance. The organization must ensure accountability and establish clear performance expectations, making employees more accountable for their work.
- **Compensation:** Staff performance appraisal system assists in providing compensation packages for employees. Benefit rating is feasible through performance appraisal and grant price to work performance. A compensation package which has a bonus, high wage rates, additional advantages, allowances and pre-requisites square measure enthusiastic about performance appraisal. The system recognises and rewards work positive performance and make employees feel much valued and motivated when their efforts are acknowledged. The factors ought to be a benefit instead of seniority.
- **Communication:** Effective communication plays an extremely crucial role between employees and employers in organizations. Through communication, the managers will be able to have discussions with staff on the organizational goals as well as the requirements required to achieve performance goals. Improved communication allows for regular talk and dialogue between employees and managers, where expectations are clarified allowing the employee to get clear understanding of the expectations and how performance is measured. Through viable communication, constructive specific and actionable feedback is provided to help employees improve. This will go a long way towards building of trust and transparency in the management and organisational systems.

2.6. Factors Affecting the Effective Implementation of Staff Performance Appraisal System

The effectiveness of the implementation of staff performance appraisal system in organizations is still under uncertainty because it depends on various factors that are connected to the implementation success in organizations. Factors affecting the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system in organization are leadership, design of the staff performance appraisal form, interpersonal factors, attitude of the appraiser, performance feedback and level of trust.

Leadership: Leadership plays a crucial role in designing and development of an effective staff performance appraisal system. According to Fredie, et al. [14] leadership brings formality to the performance management reviews of staff and as a result could influence staff commitment towards achieving targets as well as improving performance. Top management should always show support by demonstrating commitment to the appraisal process, allocate resources, and set the tone for accountability. Further, there should be a clear communication of purpose by the management articulating why performance appraisals are important and how they align with organizational goals. However, leadership style may be an obstacle towards the staff performance appraisal, hence, the leadership should be participative and supportive which encourages open feedback and employee engagement in the appraisal process. Consistency is vital in enforcement, otherwise inconsistent application of appraisal policies by the leadership can undermine the credibility of the system.

Design of the Staff Performance Appraisal Form: Staff performance appraisal system differs from organization to organization in terms of culture difference. Hence, the need for organizations to design a fair and consistent staff performance appraisal system that will conform with the staff and organization's characteristics and qualities [1]. Clarity and relevance of criteria must be achieved. The performance appraisal form should be designed to reflect specific, job-related and measurable criteria to reduce ambiguity and bias. The content should be balanced to include both individual goals met, and a collective target reached aspects of performance. Adaptation of a 'one form for all' should not be encouraged for the reason that it may not suit diverse roles. Forms must be tailored according to the job categories that exists in the organization to enhance effectiveness. Moreover, there should be a maintained ease of use. Complex or overly technical forms may discourage proper completion while simplicity enhances usability and accuracy. Nonetheless, the rating system should be consistent and easy to interpret to avoid too much subjectivity or scale inflation.

Interpersonal factors: Interpersonal factors are important in the staff performance appraisals because they influence the outcome of the interactions. Ochoti, et al. [15] define interpersonal factors as factors relating to the type of treatment the appraisee receives from the appraiser. The authors stated that the raters should value the ratees and treat them with dignity and fairness. Suffice to say that a positive respectful manager- employee relationship is encouraged to promote open dialogue during appraisals. Communication skills are also vital to both parties, to clearly and respectfully communicate during appraisals to reflect how feedback is given and received. Unresolved interpersonal conflicts may distort appraisal outcomes or lead to emotional reactions. Strong conflict management team should be established; empathy and emotional intelligence must be put in place. Consequently, managers who show understanding are more effective at handling sensitive feedback discussions than the other.

Attitude of the Appraiser: The attitude of the appraiser is an important factor affecting the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal. This usually occurs when the appraiser (manager or supervisor) is not adequately trained, and in some cases lead to bias [16]. Biasness and subjectivity lead to personal prejudices, favouritism, or stereotyping and may result to unfair evaluations. There should be willingness to engage the appraisee and not to see the process as a bureaucratic assignment to be rushed through and as a result avoid meaningful conversations. There must be a zeal to employee development which encapsulates a positive attitude toward nurturing talent to improve the developmental value of appraisals. In addition, appraisers must be trained and be confident in evaluation techniques to achieve better assessments and meaningful feedback.

Performance Feedback: Daniel and Ibrahim [17] assert that the feedback given to staff is targeted at improving performance effectiveness through the stimulation of behavioural changes. Therefore, the performance feedback should be specific, timely and behavioural in nature. Feedback should be constructive and balanced, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. It should be timeous, because delay reduces its impact; hence, regular, timely discussions are more effective. Furthermore, feedback must be action-oriented, it must lead to specific goals, action plans, or development initiatives. Two-way communication style is critical; feedback should be a dialogue and not a one-way criticism which discourages the employee where the employee's input is crucial. Without the establishment of a 'follow-up' process, feedback may be ignored or forgotten, rendering the appraisal ineffective.

Level of trust: Fredie, et al. [14] posit that "trust is a psychological state with both effective and motivational components". The appraisee should be trustworthy because the absence of trust in the appraiser may tend to make the appraisee displeased with the staff performance appraisal system, hence rendering the entire process ineffective. Equally, there should be the same level of trust in appraiser's fairness, the employees must believe the appraiser is unbiased and competent. Confidentiality of the appraisal system and process must be maintained because if appraisal information is leaked or misused, trust is weathered. At the same time, transparency must be shown; clearly outlined procedures and criteria increase trust in the system. Note that if the previous appraisals led to unfair outcomes or were ignored, employees may distrust the system. Most importantly, organizational culture must be adhered to; a culture that promotes openness, fairness, and accountability fosters trust in performance evaluations.

2.7. Challenges of Performance Appraisal

Staff performance appraisal equally has some challenges or obstacles in its way towards complete positive achievement. Below is the list of some challenges amongst others associated with performance appraisals according to Moradi, et al. [11] and Hayes [18].

- Lack of common understanding of performance appraisal among employers and employees.
- Lack of objective and measurable criteria in the evaluation.
- Lack of appropriate implementation due to the appraisers' lack of knowledge of the implementation methods.
- Inappropriate implementation.
- Non reflection of the culture of the company or organization.
- Distrust of the staff performance appraisal system.
- Managers giving underperforming staff a good evaluation to avoid souring their relationship and unreliable rates.

Consequent of the reviewed literature shows that staff performance appraisal is crucial for both the staff and the organization, and the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system will yield improved staff performance and productivity.

3. Research Method

This research adopted a positivist philosophy. According to Pham [19] positivism paradigm which under objectivism epistemology is a methodological philosophy in quantitative research. Positivist philosophy (quantitative) was adopted because it will enable the study employ statistical methods to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives of the study. According to Creswell [20] research designs are types of inquiry within qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches that provide specific direction for procedures in research. This study was based on descriptive research design because it will provide an accurate and current situation of the staff performance appraisal system of the organization. The target population of the study are the employees at the government entity under study because they are acquainted with the staff performance appraisal system and procedure. A sample size of 50 employees was chosen randomly. The survey questionnaire was developed based on the variables from literature and research objectives and was administered via e-mail. Out of the fifty participants, forty-four participants' responses were received. The data was cleaned and coded into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 27 for descriptive analysis.

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings presented are the perceptions of the participants and the conclusions of the research based on the empirical evidence of the study. Hence, the biographical data of the participants reveals that 77% of the participants were male while 23% of the participants were female indicating that the organization is dominated by male employees. Participants were classified into age groups and the result shows that majority of the participants fall within the age group of 41-50 years making a percentage representation of 43%. The number of work- experience in the organization revealed that majority of the participants (36%) have been working in the organisation for more than 13 years, while 32% have worked for 10-12 years. Additionally, 25% of the participants have worked for the duration of 7-9 years while 7% have been employed in the organization for 4-6 years. This shows that the participants that

participated in the study have been working in the organisation for a long time to know about the effectiveness of staff performance appraisal system.

Further, to identify the factors affecting the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system at the entity, five questions were asked. The first question sought to find out if the staff knew about the existence of staff performance appraisal system at the organization, the result indicates that the staffs knew about the staff appraisal system. This might be because majority of the staff that participated in the study have worked for more than four years in the organisation and have experienced the appraisal process.

To determine if the staff are aware of the appraisal discussion that takes place between the manager and the employees. Findings showed that the staff are fully aware that appraisal discussions take place between staff and manager. For effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system, there should be a strong communication link between the staff and the managers. According to Moradi, et al. [11] for a staff performance appraisal system to be effective, the staff must be aware of their duties and standards, as well as the performance appraisal criteria. Additionally, Dangol [21] acknowledges that performance appraisal provides the perfect opportunity for the managers and staff to have one-on-one discussion.

To establish if the staff receives feedback from the manager after each appraisal session. Although 63% agreed that they receive feedback from the manager after each appraisal session but declined that appraisal feedback was not given any time during the year. It is crucial that feedback should be effective and timely for staff performance appraisal system to be effective. Hence the need for manager to consistently deliver appraisal feedback to the staff to get the best possible performance from the staff. This finding is aligned with Padhaya, et al. [2] who concludes that for staff performance appraisal to be more effective, continuous feedback should be given to staff.

To ascertain if the staff know and understand the importance of staff performance appraisal system. Findings revealed that 84% of the participants know and understand the importance of staff performance appraisal system. This is not surprising as majority of the participants have worked with the organisation for more than four years and as a result of that, they are conversant with the staff performance appraisal system and have received performance bonuses. Xavier [7] points that staff performance appraisal systems are utilized for placements, promotions, financial rewards, salary fixing, enhancing the job skills, training and increment, hence the need for the staff to understand its importance.

However, to establish the reasons for the ineffective implementation of staff performance appraisal system, five

questions were answered, and the findings are presented thus: The first question sought to find out if the staff knows what staff performance appraisal system entails. The findings revealed that 91% of the participants knew about staff performance appraisal system, this may be as a result of the feedback being received towards the identification of key areas of improvement and better work performances. Idowu [1] posits that one of the main objectives of staff performance appraisal system is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of staff, thereby forming the basis of recommendations for improved staff performance.

Secondly, participants were asked if they believe that staff performance appraisals are just paper exercise. The results showed that combination of 45% of the participants disagreed, 38% agreed while 16% remained neutral. The findings indicate that not all staff trust the performance appraisal system and the managers that performs the performance appraisal exercise. This finding supports the findings of Stanikzai and Lawraand [22] the authors highlight the importance of a positive organizational culture characterized by building trust among employees, fairness and transparency, creating organizational plans for employee career development, and providing opportunities for employees to suggest process improvements to foster an outstanding performance appraisal experience.

The third question seeks to determine if staff receive performance appraisal feedback after appraisal meetings. Findings show that participants (61%) do not receive appraisal feedback after the appraisal meetings. According to Yusoff [23] for performance appraisal system to be effective, continuous feedback should be prioritised together with employee engagement, and alignment with strategic goals. This indicate that timeous and continuous performance appraisal feedback is crucial for effective implementation of staff performance appraisal because it is through the feedback that staff identify their weaknesses and strive for improvement.

Fourthly, participants were asked if they believe that the negative performance issues have to do with organisation's poor appraisal system. The findings from the study showed that the negative performance issues have nothing to do with the organisation's poor appraisal system. This may be because they already know the organizations goals and objectives and work towards achieving them. A good appraisal system improves the employee performance and motivation which in turn accomplishes the set goals by the organisation [24].

The purpose of the fifth question asked was to establish if the participants believe that the performance appraisal system can be improved. Findings from the study revealed that the participants agreed (87%) that there is room for improvement. According to Kalogiannidis, et al. [25] "performance appraisal systems consist of goals, feedback, assessment tools, training, and development, and rewards". The combination of all these components fosters an organisation culture that supports ongoing improvement and excellence.

5. Recommendations

It has been acknowledged that an effective staff performance appraisal system will support organisation's competitive advantage strategically by enhancing the satisfaction levels of the staff, thereby effectively increasing the productivity of both the staff and the entire organization. Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made to organizations that strive for the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system.

- There should be a strong communication links between the staff and the managers. The managers should use verbal and non-verbal communications channels to notify the staff before the commencement of the appraisal process so that the staff will get prepared before the appraisals are conducted, thereby making the appraisal exercise effective.
- The managers should be adequately trained on the staff performance appraisal process to carry out the staff performance appraisals effectively.
- The manager/supervisor carrying out the exercise must show leadership by carrying all the staff along throughout the performance rating process because it will assist the staff towards understanding the organizational goals as well as the requirements needed to achieve performance goals.
- The staff performance appraisal system must conform with the organization's mission and values.
- Effective and timeous feedback should be given to the staff after every appraisal process/exercise.
- Managers should be able to earn their trust so that the staff will believe in the appraisal process.
- After each appraisal, staff should be recognized and rewarded appropriately according to their efforts and performance.
- Staff should be aware of the staff performance appraisal system and be carried along in the appraisal process.
- Staff performance appraisal should be done periodically not only when promotion is due.

6. Conclusion

The study evaluated the factors affecting the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system at an organisation. The findings of the research provide that organizations strive for the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system with better understanding of the factors considered for the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal systems. It was revealed that communication, leadership and late performance feedback are the factors affecting the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system. Lack of trust and attitude of manager/supervisor were identified as the reasons for the ineffective implementation of staff performance appraisal system. The study concluded that the managers/supervisors need to be adequately trained to be able to conduct appraisals

process/exercise. Secondly, performance feedback needs to be periodic and timely. Additionally, staff should be trained on the values and mission of the organisation as well as its effect on their job performances. It is also recommended that the managers should be trained to avoid bias and strive to earn the trust of the staff for the effective implementation of staff performance appraisal system.

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