

Factors Influencing Employee Performance Appraisal System: A Case of the Ministry of State for Provincial Administration & Internal Security, Kenya

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Abstract

This study investigated the multifaceted factors influencing employee Performance Appraisal System in the Ministry of State for Provincial Administration, Nyamira District, Kenya. A target population of 76 employees was surveyed. A structured questionnaire was self-administered to the employees to collect data. Multiple regression analysis technique was used to explain the nature of the relationship between PAS and the factors that influence it. Results of the study showed that all the five factors: Implementation process (X_1), interpersonal relationships (X_2), rater accuracy (X_3), informational factors (X_4), and employee attitudes (X_5) had a significant positive relationship with the performance appraisal system (Y). The regression results also showed that 55.1% of the variation in performance appraisal system can be explained by the changes in implementation process, interpersonal relationships, rater accuracy, informational factors and employee attitudes. With these findings, this study provides many implications for the implementation of performance appraisal systems. It shows that if these factors are taken into consideration by the ratees, the raters and the government policy makers, the PAS can be a good performance management tool.

Keywords: Performance Appraisal System; Employee Attitude; Psychometric Rater Accuracy, Monitoring Performance; Performance Management; Government of Kenya.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

There are many challenges which hinder the delivery of public service reforms in Africa (Lienert, 2003). The factors include those relating to human resources like manpower deficiencies and lack of psychological dispositions and shortage of financial and material resources necessary for effective delivery of services. The problems of accountability as well as ethical issues also continue to affect effective delivery of public service.

In an effort to mitigate some of these challenges, the Government of Kenya (GOK) has in the past launched several reform programs to improve service delivery. Some of these reform efforts include the Civil Service Reform Program (CSRP) (GOK, 1993) whose aim was to enhance public service efficiency and productivity. The program was designed to contain costs, improve performance in the public sector, and consolidate and sustain the gains made by reform initiatives (Opiyo, 2006).

The other reform initiatives included the implementation of Results – Based Management that was guided by Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment creation (GOK, 2003) whose strategies included developing benchmarks and evaluating the performance of public institutions. In order to enhance the performance of public officers, the government introduced a program where rewards and sanctions were to be used to encourage provision of quality services in the public sector. This paved way for the piloting of the process of in state corporations in 2003 which saw the introduction and implementation of performance appraisals in the entire public sector. Most firms in Kenya now employ some performance appraisal system (GOK, 2009). The Performance Appraisal System (PAS) was introduced by the GOK to refocus the mind of the public from a culture of inward looking to a culture of businesslike environment, focused on the customer and results in addition to improving service delivery (Obong'o, 2009). According to the new PAS, the evaluation of staff performance is supposed to run concurrently with the duration of ministerial performance contracts and the Government Financial year. Targets should meet acceptable quality standards and benchmarks as determined in each category of service delivery; the system should be supported by training of staff, particularly those with managerial and supervisory responsibility; and the process should be regarded as interactive, for mutual agreement between supervisors and appraisers (GOK, 2009).

Longenecker and Goff (1992), observed that managers and human resource professionals believe that a PAS is a good tool for human resource management and performance improvement. If well designed and implemented it can benefit both the employees and the organizations (Coens and Jenkins, 2000). According to GOK (2009), the PAS has caused a cultural transformation within the public service from a baseline of extremely poor performance before 2003.

The GOK has in the past made some efforts in launching and implementing Public Service Reform initiatives aimed at improving the performance of public servants in service delivery (GOK, 1993; GOK, 2003). However, these reforms have not achieved the envisaged results (AAPAM, 2005; Opiyo, 2006). The introduction of the new PAS (GOK, 2006) is yet another attempt by the Government to manage and improve performance of the Civil Service and Local Authorities by enabling a higher level of staff participation and involvement in planning, delivery and evaluation of work performance. Despite the successful roll out of the program, there is evidence of room for improvement in the process (GOK, 2009) and a lack of knowledge on the factors that influence the PAS in the Ministry of State for Provincial Administration and Internal Security, (MoSPA) Nyamira district, Kenya. Specifically, this study addresses this gap by:

- (a) Establishing how the implementation process of the PAS in the public sector influences the system;
- (b) Determining how rater and ratee interpersonal relationship in a PAS context influences the system in the public sector;
- (c) Determining how psychometric rater accuracy in a PAS context influences the system in the public sector;
- (d) Determining how the level of information exchange between the rater and the ratee in a PAS context influences the system in the public sector; and
- (e) Establishing how the attitudes of employees towards the last PAS rating, towards the rater and towards the PAS influence the system in the public sector.

1.2 Research questions

The following research questions applied in the study.

- a) Does the implementation process of the PAS influence the system?
- b) What is the influence of rater and ratee interpersonal relationship on the PAS?
- c) How does rater accuracy in a PAS context influence the system in the public sector?
- d) Does the level of information exchange between the rater and the ratee influence the PAS?
- e) Do the attitudes of employees towards the last PAS rating, towards the rater and towards the PAS itself influence the system in the public sector?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical review

The process of performance management involves the identification of common goals between the appraiser and the appraisee. These goals must correlate to the overall organizational goals. If such a process is conducted effectively, it will increase productivity and quality of output (Davis, 1995). Armstrong (2001) notes that in performance appraisals, accuracy and fairness in measuring employee performance is very important. Performance management is a control measure used to determine deviations of work tasks with a view of taking corrective action. It is also used to reflect on past performance as the organization plans ahead. Provision of feedback on the required corrective action is critical in the process.

According to the Directorate of Personnel Management, Kenya (in Kipchumba et al, 2010), in order to have a balance of employee work load or over load, the appraisals must be conducted regularly. For the appraisals to be effective, the top management must be supportive in providing information, clear performance standards must be set, the appraisals must not be used for any other purpose apart from performance management, and the evaluations must be free from any rating biases (Goff & Longenecker, 1990).

2.2 Process of the PAS and its influence on the system

Longenecker (1997) contended that a performance appraisal system helps the organization identify three major things: performance standards, core competences, and communicating the standards and competencies to employees. Comparing the employees' performance from the performance appraisal is vital in making future improvements. The performance appraisals are supposed to be conducted at least twice annually.

As a way of institutionalizing the performance appraisals in government institutions, the GOK developed sector performance standards (GOK, 2010). These standards were benchmarked against the best in the world and touched on key areas like performance indicators, medium-term plans and performance targets. These performance targets are set at the beginning of the year and agreed upon by all the ratees (Open Threat, 2008).

Apart from performance monitoring, the annual performance appraisals also help in determining how every employee fits into the organizational development and efficiency in performing all the assigned tasks and responsibilities. It also helps in determining the training needs of the employees in planning future job schedules (Longenecker, 1997). Additionally, the kind of environment that is created by the performance appraisals optimizes the employees' work performance. Individual performance goals that are consistent with organizational goals provide guidelines to the employee on how their effort can lead to organizational improvement. Boice and Kleiner (1997) point out that the organizational objectives must be determined first before embarking on a performance management system in order to make it effective. Departmental and individual objectives are then formulated which must be consistent with the organizational objectives.

All employees involved in the performance rating process must be involved throughout the process. According to Bertone *et al* (1998), involving employees will make them understand organizational goals, what is expected of them and what they will expect for achieving their performance goals.

In order to develop an effective PAS, the individuals who are involved as raters should undergo training (Goff & Longenecker, 1990). They should be trained on the process of managing, motivating and evaluating employee performance. The system should not be seen as a simple "quick fix" solution. The raters should see it within its wider context of performance management (Boice & Kleiner, 1997).

Evans (1991), noted that the raters should be trained on various aspects like supervision skills, conflict resolution, coaching and counseling, setting performance standards, linking the system to pay, and how to provide employee feedback. The training will equip ratees with expertise and knowledge that they need in making decisions in the course of the process. According to Boice and Kleiner (1997) there is need to eliminate selective memory by the raters. This can be eliminated by performing the reviews on a frequent and ongoing basis. The frequent reviews will also remove the surprises experienced during annual reviews. These periods of review can be bi-monthly or quarterly.

PAS should also link individual performance with reward (Townley, 1999). It is assumed that linking performance with reward increases the levels of performance. Such schemes have been used in both public and private sectors (Armstrong & Brown, 2005). Linking employees with reward motivates employees and commits them to the appraisal process. It will also show the employees that the completion of the performance targets and objectives will affect them directly (Prowse & Prowse, 2009).

In order to have an effective system, ratees should be given room to appeal against a rating that they feel is incorrect. The appeals may be against any rating that may be perceived to be discriminatory. The appeals would protect the employees from any unfair ratings. It could also protect the organization from any potential charges of unfair treatment of employees and assure that the raters will not be biased in their evaluations because their appraisals will also be reviewed by others in the organization ((Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Caruth & Humphreys, 2005).

2.3 Informational factors and the PAS

The quality of interactions and communication between the rater and the ratee during the appraisals will influence the process. According to Fletcher and Williams (1996), there should be frequent meetings between the rater and ratee, during which time action plans should be developed and areas where they may not agree looked into. Quarterly communication between the rater and ratee will result in a variety of positive job outcome like job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

During such formal meetings, individual performance should be discussed. The performance review may include the actual performance, the tasks that were completed and areas that need improvement. Walsh and Fisher (2005) call such meetings "Action Inquiry", a method where organizational members use dialogue to foster their working relationships. This kind of dialogue can be used to enhance individual and group decision-making in an organization thereby improving productivity (Fisher & Tolbert, 1991).

Feedback is an important part of the PAS. According to Longenecker (1997), the ratees should be given feedback on their competence and overall progress within the organization. The feedback should be specific and timely and be against the predetermined performance expectations. It's within the employees' rights to know how they are progressing in performing the assigned tasks and to receive feedback. The feedback should be provided on a continuous basis – daily, weekly or monthly reviews (Lee, 2005).

The 360-degree feedback method can be utilized by organizations. This is a method that combines evaluations from various sources into the overall appraisal (Garavan *et al*, 1997). The evaluations can be from peers, subordinates, superiors and the ratee herself (Tornow, 1993). Evaluations from clients, suppliers, or customers can also be sought. McDowall and Fletcher (2004) argue that the 360-degree feedback is costly but it is the most comprehensive since feedback is sought from everyone who is directly involved with the ratee.

2.4 Rater accuracy and the PAS

According to Prowse and Prowse (2009), the dilemma of a performance appraisal process has always been developing performance measures. Henderson (1984) says that a good PAS should be based on measuring employee's contribution to the job as opposed to the employee's activities or behaviors. However, developing a PAS that accurately reflects employee performance is not an easy task. Such systems must be tailor-made to match employee and organizational characteristics. Performance ratings are based on rater evaluations which are subjective to human judgments. Personal factors and prejudices are likely to influence the ratings (Cleveland and Murphy, 1992). On the other hand, errors based on age, gender or race can influence the raters evaluations. Sometimes raters can be too harsh or too lenient on the ratee and this affects the accuracy of evaluations.

Poor performance evaluations will not have the desired effect. There should be a proper development of the appraisal to remove subjectivity and bias in the ratings. Attwood (1985) noted that some sources of rater inaccuracy include instances where female juniors tend to be assessed essentially from masculine points of view. On some occasions, male superiors who appraise women subordinates often have inappropriate masculine interpretations of female characteristics, aptitudes and abilities for managerial work. Consequently, personality-based appraisals disadvantage women and minorities who emerge as having less of the desired attributes than their male counterparts. Multi-rater systems can be used to deal with rater inaccuracy. This method consists of a questionnaire that contains instances of work behavior (Jansen & Yloeberghs, 1999). "Bystanders" who are directly involved with the person who is being evaluated are asked to give their views on the person from a long list of phrased behaviors. The ratee is hence evaluated on account of a number of work situations.

2.5 Interpersonal factors and the PAS

Interpersonal factors are those factors that relate to the kind of treatment the appraisee receives in the hands of the appraiser (Thurston & McNall, 2010). According to Greenberg (1993), interpersonal factors are important in the PAS as they influence the outcome of the interactions. The quality of these interactions during the process also contribute to fairness perceptions in the whole process. During the rating period, the raters should value the ratees and treat them with dignity and fairness. There should be an environment of trust in the raters. They should also be supportive of their ratees. The absence of such a trust may make the ratees to be dissatisfied with the PAS thereby rendering the whole process ineffective (Korsgaard & Roberson, 1995).

2.6 Employee attitude and performance appraisal system

In a performance appraisal process, employee attitudes toward the system is strongly linked to satisfaction with the system. According to Boswell and Boudreau (2000), perceptions of fairness of the system are an important aspect that contributes to its effectiveness. Understanding employee attitudes about the PAS in organizations is important as they can determine its effectiveness (McDawall & Fletcher, 2004). If the PAS is seen and believed to be biased, irrelevant or political, that may be a source of dissatisfaction with the system. Employee reaction to the PAS is a critical aspect of the acceptance and effectiveness of the system. Extreme dissatisfaction and perceptions of unfairness and inequality in the ratings may lead to the failure of the system (Cardy & Dobbins, 1994; Murphy & Cleveland, 1995).

The criteria that must be met in order to make the system be perceived by ratees to be fair include having a formal system of appraisal, ratees must have a very high degree of job knowledge, the ratees must have an opportunity to appeal against their performance ratings, the dimensions of performance must be relevant, and having action plans to deal with any weaknesses. The organizational climate must be cooperative rather than competitive (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995; Landy *et al*, 1978). It's not only the ratees' attitudes towards the PAS that is critical. Even the attitudes of the raters is also critical to the system (Brown *et al*, 2010). The attitudes and approach the raters to the process has been shown to influence the quality of the appraisals. Some raters have indicated that they are reluctant to conduct the appraisals saying that they hated conducting appraisals, "second only to firing employees".

2.7 The Conceptual framework

The variables under study have been represented diagrammatically to show the relationship between them by illustrating the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variable in order to give coherence to this report.

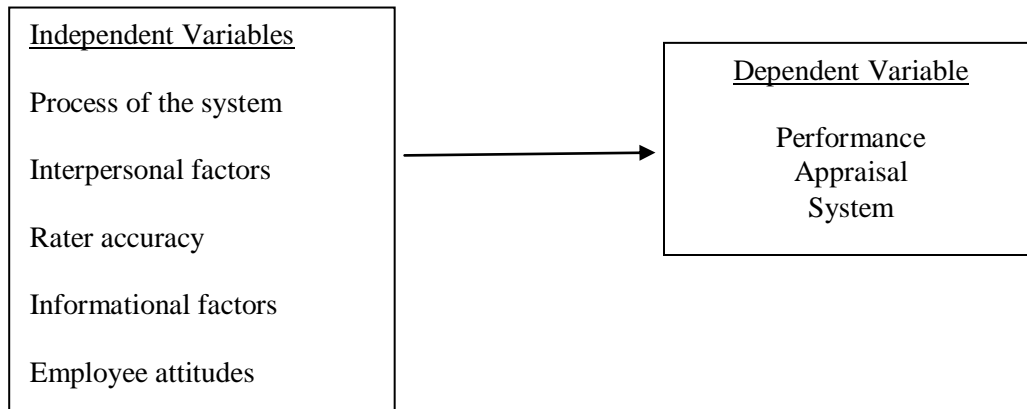


Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing influence relationship between independent and dependent variables.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Sample

Descriptive survey design was adopted in conducting this study. The survey design entails selecting samples to analyze and discover occurrences, qualitatively and quantitatively assess information and make conclusions. This investigation targeted a population of 76 employees in the MoSPA, Nyamira district who have participated in the PAS. Newly employed individuals were excluded because they may not have served under the PAS long enough to give reliable views on the system. Forty four responses were returned, which represents 57.89 % of the population.

3.2 Research Instruments

A questionnaire was used to collect data from eligible employees. Part I of the survey required the participants to provide demographic information while Part II included factors that influence the PAS as conceptualized in this study. The components included per factor are considered to be indicators of the influence on the PAS.

3.3 Data Analysis

Before the actual data analysis, questionnaires were checked for completeness and consistency. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency distributions and percentages. Multiple regression analysis was used to establish and explain the relationship between the PAS and the independent variables. Results of the analysis were presented using tables.

The model below was used to determine the quantitative association between the variables:

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2 X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + \varepsilon$$

Where b_0 , b_1 , b_2 , b_3 , b_4 and b_5 are constants;

X_1 = implementation process of PAS;

X_2 = interpersonal relationship;

X_3 = Rater accuracy;

X_4 = Informational factors;

X_5 = Employee attitudes; and

ε is the error term.

The Statistical Software Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.5 generated descriptive statistics and established the relationship between the dependent and the independent variables of the study.

4. Findings

4.1 Multiple regression analysis and findings

In this subsection, multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether independent variables (X_1 , X_2 , X_3 , X_4 and X_5) simultaneously impact the dependent variable (Y). As a result, the subsection examines whether the multiple regression equation can be used to explain the causal theory of the various factors on performance appraisal systems. To investigate the influence of implementation process(X_1), interpersonal relationships(X_2), rater accuracy(X_3), informational factors(X_4) and employee attitude(X_5) on performance appraisal systems, the model used for the regression analysis was expressed in the general form as given below:

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + \varepsilon$$

For this model, PAS was used as the dependent variable (Y) and independent variables included X_1 , X_2 , X_3 , X_4 and X_5 . The relationships between the dependent variable and independent variables, and the results of testing significance of the model have been respectively interpreted. In interpreting the results of multiple regression analysis, the three major elements considered were: the coefficient of multiple determinations, the standard error of estimate and the regression coefficients. These elements and the results of multiple regression analysis were presented and interpreted accordingly.

Table 1 below presents the result on the performance appraisal model.

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Squared	Std Error of the Estimate
1	.742	.551	.552	3.0594

Table 1: The PAS Model Summary

Table 1 reports the model of performance appraisal system with the coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.552$ at 0.05 a significant level. The coefficient of determination indicated that 55.2 % of the variation in the PAS for the sample of 44 can be explained by the implementation process (X_1), interpersonal relationships (X_2), rater accuracy (X_3), informational factors (X_4) and employee attitude (X_5) while 44.8 % remains unexplained.

The results of the summary Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were presented and interpreted in Table 2.

		Sum of squares	df	mean square	F	Sig
Model	Regression	79.116	5	15.823	15.	0
	Residual	13.751	38	1.020		
	Total	117.867	43			

Table 2: Summary ANOVA

Table 2 reports the summary ANOVA and F statistic which reveals the value of F (15.513) being significant at 0.05 confidence level. The value of F is large enough to conclude that the set of independent variables: implementation process (X_1), interpersonal relationships (X_2), rater accuracy (X_3), informational factors (X_4) and employee attitude (X_5) as a whole were contributing to the variance in performance appraisal systems.

The results of the PAS regression model using the five independent variables were presented and interpreted in Table 3.

	Unstandardized Coefficients	
	B	Std. Error
Constant	2.011	1.532
X ₁	3.025	0.325
X ₂	0.258	0.256
X ₃	0.123	0.145
X ₄	0.236	0.219
X ₅	0.367	0.308

Predictors: (constant), Implementation process (X₁), Interpersonal relationships (X₂), Rater accuracy (X₃), Informational factors (X₄), and Employee attitudes (X₅)

Table 3: PAS Regression Model

Table 3 evaluates and interprets the standardized coefficients of correlation (beta). In estimating the contribution of each independent variable in the study, it was established that all independent variables significantly contributed in variance of the PAS at significance level of 0.05. However, the relative importance of each independent variable was different. Also, since the significance values are less than 0.05, the coefficients are significant and therefore the regression equation would be:

$$Y = 2.011 + 3.025X_1 + 0.258 X_2 + 0.123 X_3 + 0.236X_4 + 0.367X_5$$

Implementation process was positively related to performance appraisal systems with $\beta=0.601$ ($\alpha<.05$). Therefore support was found to indicate that the implementation process has an influence on performance appraisal systems. It therefore implied that the better the process of implementation, the more effective the PAS.

Interpersonal relationships were positively related to performance appraisal systems with $\beta = 0.321$ ($\alpha<.05$). This evidence indicates that interpersonal relationships have an influence on performance appraisal systems. It therefore implied that the better the interpersonal relationships between the rater and the ratee, the more successful the PAS.

The Performance appraisal system was positively related to psychometric rater accuracy with $\beta = 0.123$ ($\alpha<.05$). Therefore support was also found to show that there is a relationship between performance appraisal systems and rater accuracy.

Informational factors were positively related to performance appraisal systems with $\beta = 0.256$ ($\alpha<.05$) Like the previous factors, evidence was found to indicate that informational factors have an influence on performance appraisal systems. Employee attitudes were also positively related to PAS with $\beta = 0.314$ ($\alpha<.05$). Support was therefore found to indicate that employee attitudes have an influence on performance appraisal systems. Therefore, all the five factors (X₁, X₂, X₃, X₄ and X₅) have an influence on the PAS, explaining 55.2 % of the variation in the PAS.

5. Conclusions

The study concludes that all the five variables investigated that include the implementation process, rater and ratee interpersonal relationship, psychometric rater accuracy, informational factors and employee attitudes all influence the PAS. The factors under these variables have shown the influence of the implementation process of the PAS and the quality of treatment that the ratee receives in the hands of the rater. It has also been shown that elimination of rating errors increases system efficiency. Communication between the rater and ratee is crucial as is understanding the employee attitudes towards the PAS. However, according to the findings, the implementation process has a relatively high influence on the performance appraisal systems as compared to the other factors. If all these factors are taken into consideration, then PAS has the potential of being a good performance management tool.

5.1 Implications for practice

The raters and ratees in the MoSPA, Nyamira district should ensure that there is total commitment support in all matters concerning the PAS implementation. The government should also continually train the raters for effective implementation of the PAS. The MoSPA policy makers should evaluate the validity of the rating form itself. The prescribed use of the same form for all employees at different organizational levels and with varying degrees of education and job classifications does raise the question of its usefulness. The raters in the ministry should value and aim to treat the ratees with dignity and fairness. The interpersonal treatment received is an important contributor to overall system success. To ensure rater accuracy, the raters should remove subjectivity and bias in performance evaluation. The PAS should be an effectiveness-based system whereby 'objective' results are given representing the measurement of an employee's contribution into the job, not on employees' activities or behaviors.

Both raters and ratees should hold frequent meetings aimed at developing action plans. During these meetings, matters such as performance expectations should be discussed as well as reviewing employee performance on tasks that have been adequately accomplished and any areas that need improvement. The Government policy makers should endeavor to understand both the raters' and ratees' attitudes and beliefs about the PAS. The attitudes and approach of raters to the PAS can be a source of quality variations in performance appraisals. Some employees also perceive the

5.2 Suggestions for Further Research

The study recommends for further research to be conducted on the alignment of PAS with the MoSPA objectives for strategic control. This will assist in unlocking the abilities of the PAS in the realization of vision 2030 development goal. Further research should also be conducted to determine the influence of the PAS outcome on employee performance. This will help in determining whether the PAS, as it is conducted in various Ministries is the much sought after Public Service initiative that is needed in improving service delivery. Further research should also be conducted on the suitability of the rating tool as it is currently used in the PAS so as to determine its relevance in realizing the objectives of the PAS. Finally, this investigation recommends that further research be undertaken to determine whether these same factors (implementation process, interpersonal relationships, rater accuracy, informational factors, and employee attitude) influence the PAS in other ministries of the GOK.

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