

FACTORS AFFECTING IMPLEMENTATION OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

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Abstract

Employee performance appraisal (EPAs) is a process for evaluating employee performance based on pre-set standards. EPAs help managers use human resources to improve productivity. They help employees improve their performance as well as help managers to assess staff effectiveness and take actions related to hiring, promotions, demotions, training, compensation, deployment as well as terminations. EPAs in organizations are affected by various factors that can flaw the outcome. This study was carried out to find out whether lack of training, bias practices, employee relationships and lack of monitoring affect the outcome of EPAs. The research was carried out using a case study of JKUAT. A target population of nine hundred (900) staff was used for the study. Simple random sampling technique was used to obtain ninety (90) respondents. The data was collected and coded on SPSS and excel platforms and was analyzed for results using statistical descriptive tools. The results notwithstanding age, gender, level of education, employment status and other parameters, showed that EPAs were viewed as ineffective by majority due to various factors. Lack of training in appraisals was rated 88%, bias practices rated 80%, employee relationships rated at 62% and lack of monitoring rated 71.4%. It was observed that all the hypothesized factors affected the outcome/results of EPAs for individual workers. In view of the outcome of this study, it is recommendable for organizations to review how the EPAs are carried out in order to maximize on the benefits of the process. This can be done by outlining the uses of EPAs which includes growth of the employees as individuals and the growth of the organization as a whole. Secondly, employees should be trained to undertake the appraisal exercise objectively in order to bring out the good intended purposes of EPAs.

Key words: Performance appraisal, training, relationships, monitoring

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Performance is regular work or effort expected from an employee or a set of employees within a set time-frame. The exertion expected from an employee is seen in terms of results, efforts, tasks and quality. Measurement of performance and outlining the activities expected to be undertaken in a specified period is very crucial since it helps to fix accountability (Rao & Rao, 2004). Performance can be evaluated against a set time like on daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or annually basis depending on the nature of work.

Performance appraisal is a formal and a systematic process of identifying, observing, measuring, recording the job-relevant strengths and weaknesses of employees (Swanepoel *et al.*, 2000). Performance appraisal forms the core of performance management systems (Bernardin *et al.*, 1998). Therefore performance appraisal is vital since it is a strategic approach that integrates organizational policies and Human Resource activities (Fletcher, 2001). Results from performance appraisals can be used in Human Resource roles like promotions, transfers, reward management and termination of employees.

Armstrong (2009) defines performance appraisals as a process designed to improve organizational, team and individual performance. He points out that performance management is a joint process that involves both the supervisor and the employee, who identify common goals, which correlate to the higher goals of the institution. This process results in the establishment of written performance expectations later used as measures for feedback and performance evaluation.

Employee performance appraisal is a process by which organizations evaluate employee performance based on pre-set standards (Heathfield, 2011). The main purpose of employee performance appraisals is to help managers effectively staff companies and use human resources to improve productivity. When conducted properly, appraisals can help employees improve their performance, help managers to assess staff effectiveness and take

actions related to hiring, promotions, demotions, training, compensation, job design, transfers, and terminations. Indeed, employee performance appraisal can be used as a tool for maximizing the effectiveness of all aspects of the organization, from staffing and development to production and customer service (Latham and Wexley, 1994).

Employee performance appraisals should be comprehensive and well designed to achieve the intended purpose. The process of employee performance appraisals may however be affected by some factors like sufficient awareness, unfair practices, employee relationships and lack of monitoring. It has been also noted that reactions and conflicts from the employee side are often inevitable in any performance appraisal system. Dissatisfaction and feeling of unfairness in the process and inequality in evaluations can shadow the benefits therein (Taylor *et al.*, 1995).

Globally, conducting employee performance appraisals has been very challenging for both the managers and employees (Brewster & Suutari, 2005). Looking at the difference between Chinese and Western employee performance appraisals, Shen found out that the Chinese appraisals are less transparent than the Western appraisals. The Chinese companies also do not provide training in order to improve appraisal skills and the appraisals are usually limited in feedback and communication (Shen, 2004). Such impediments can complicate the process making it difficult to obtain true and fair feedback of the employee's performance.

Moreover many challenges for Human Resource Management (HRM) globally, focus upon employee performance appraisals (Steven *et al.*, 2011). Employees need to have their work accurately reviewed so that they may be acknowledged and rewarded where appropriate (Francis & Brain, 1994). For the process to be effective, training and adequate preparation for both the appraisers and the appraisee is necessary. Supervisors should also be prepared with skills on control, coaching, counseling, conflict resolution, setting performance standards, linking the system to pay and providing employee feedback (Appelbaum *et al.*, 2011).

The Kenya Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) targets greater alignment of existing performance management tools (GOK, 2008). It focuses on operational performance management, monitoring and reporting tools and instruments. This requires proper alignment of leadership competencies and a performance appraisal system which deliver accurate results. Evaluation is not only a matter of using the right form or method, but it's rather dependent on the openness and willingness of the parties to do it rightly (Francis & Brain, 1994). The Kenya Vision 2030 advocates a consultative approach of working in the Government, private sector, civil society and corporations with involvement of many stakeholders as possible (GOK, 2007). There is need for the process of employee performance appraisals in the Kenyan Public Universities to be consultative. The Government also recognizes the need for an open and a democratic culture that values transparency and accountability.

Employees' performance appraisals serve as a strategic tool for raising overall standards in government service and for increasing accountability to citizens. This will create an advantage edge in today's global competitive marketplace (Schiavo-Campo & McFerson, 2008). Managers should strive to conduct performance reviews that serve as a positive source of employee motivation. In most cases however, the process may remain ineffective due to defensive responses by the involved parties. (Mathison & Vinja, 2010). Accuracy is very important in employee performance appraisals because it has significant effects on appraisee reactions such as satisfaction and acceptance of appraisal results (Chen, 2009). Accurate appraisal of the employee performance has been regarded as a key to organizational success (Judge & Ferris, 1993). Appraisals can also point out the need for provision of required resources and or need for motivation through rewards (Mondy & Noel, 2005).

2.0 Statement of the Problem

Employee performance appraisals experience some shortfalls in the process which can result to the exercise adding little or no value to HRM activities. The purpose of employee performance appraisal has been misunderstood by some workers, everyone yearns to be rated as an excellent performer. It is misunderstood that being rated poor can point out to training needs in the area of challenge or better still lead to placement to rightful roles. Additionally the appraisals have even been used as punitive measures by colleague workers (Mondy & Noel, 2005). For example if the relationship between the appraisee and the appraiser is sour, the performance appraisal will not be objective but rather subjective.

On the other hand if the relationship of the appraiser and the appraisee is cordial the appraiser will seek to please the appraisee and even go to an extent of revealing the details. The purpose of this study was to expound the factors affecting the implementation of employee performance appraisals including lack of training in appraisals, unfair bias practices during appraisals, existing employee relationships and lack of monitoring of the appraisal exercise. The study targeted the Kenyan Public Universities and JKUAT in specific.

Employees are naturally concerned with the fairness of the process by which the performance appraisals are conducted (Erdogan, 2002). People will value justice regardless of whether the results of the performance appraisal are appealing or not. The organizational set up and employee relationships can also affect the process of the appraisals if care is not taken (Cawley, 1998). Employee performance appraisals should be carried out accurately because they serve as resourceful records that can be used to support HRM decisions concerning employees.

2.1 Objective

The objective of the study was to assess the factors affecting implementation of employee performance appraisals in Kenyan Public Universities and make recommendations that can improve its success.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study used survey research design because of its capability to describe a population that is too large to observe directly (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The research was conducted in the JKUAT's main campus which has a population of about 3000 employees. Survey research was used because of its ability to help study existing conditions and relationships in a large group (Kothari, 2004). Data was collected from a target population of 900 staff of JKUAT main campus using lime survey. Choosing 900 staffs was adequate representation of the JKUAT main campus population of about 3000 staffs. A total of 90 respondents were sampled from the target population to provide the needed data. A quantitative approach was used to obtain quantifiable data (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003) on the variables of the study. The data was coded using the Excel and SPSS flat forms in order to get data results in form of charts and tables which apparently are more convincing (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

3.2 Population of the Study

The population for this research incorporated all the staffs in JKUAT main campus, with a target population of 900 staff members in all cadres. Working with a target number of 900 staff was manageable to handle in terms of the time used for the study (Kothari 2008).

3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

JKUAT main campus has a population of about 3000 employees. A target population of 30% (900) of the total population was used for the study. Simple random sampling was used to arrive at 90 respondents of the staff to participate in the survey to ensure a fair representation of the population. Simple random sampling helps to avoid any biasness (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Simple random sampling was employed for the study, given the heterogeneity of the target population (Kothari, 2004).

3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected using structured questionnaires because they gather data over a large sample. The structured questionnaires were administered by the researcher to the respondents (Kothari, 2008) online through lime survey using JKUAT staff emails to save on time. Open ended questions were used in the questionnaire because they are simple to formulate and gives the researcher insights into the respondents' feelings and motives (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

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3.6 Data Collection Procedure

A list of 900 JKUAT staff emails were obtained and sorted alphabetically and every 10th email was selected to draw a sample of 90 respondents. The questionnaire was uploaded on the Lime Survey hosted on JKUAT IT system. This method was considered to eliminate interviewer bias and also reduce the toil involved in manual method of data collection. The questionnaire was online for a period of five weeks with a weekly reminder from the initial upload.

3.7 Data Processing and Analysis

The data was sorted and coded, using excel and SSPS platforms and descriptive tools including estimates, frequency distribution tables and percentages (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003) were used to analyze the data. Descriptive Statistics, and reliability estimates were also used to analyze the strength of linear relationships between the dependent and independent variables (Kothari, 2008). All variables measuring effectiveness of employee performance appraisals were aggregated and the composite variable was categorized on a scale of 1 to 5.

Values 3.4 and below, were coded '*not effective*' while values 3.4 and above were coded '*effective*'. Pearson's Chi-square test (X^2) and $P \leq 0.1$ was used to test the significance of the variables on the views of the effectiveness of employee performance appraisals. This was done to determine the effectiveness of employee performance appraisals on various variables of the study. Additionally, the tests helped to determine whether various variables used in the study affected the view that the respondents had on the effectiveness of the employee performance appraisals.

4.0 Results and Discussions

4.1.1 Factors affecting the implementation of employee performance appraisals

The hypothesized factors that affect the implementation of employee performance appraisals were; training, bias practices, employee relationships and monitoring of the implementation of employee performance appraisals.

4.1.2 Training on Employee Performance Appraisals

It was assumed that lack of training on the part of both the appraiser and the appraisee affects the implementation of employee performance appraisals. From the findings, only 12.2 % of the respondents indicated that they had had training on employee performance appraisals. A whopping 87.8% of employees indicated that they have had no training on employee performance appraisals. This is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Training on employee performance appraisals

Response on training on employee performance appraisals	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	5	12.2	12.2
No	36	87.8	100.0
Total	41	100.0	

n=41

The high degree of lack of training affects the exercise of carrying out employee performance appraisals.

4.1.3 Effects of Bias Practices

Consideration was given on what participants disliked about employee performance appraisals. Most of responses received were on bias practices during the implementation of EPAs. The responses are as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Areas disliked in performance appraisals

Areas disliked in performance appraisals	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lot of favoritism/employees selecting people to appraise them/ lack of fairness	40	80.0	80.0
You don't want to hurt the appraise/ It becomes personal/ it can never be objective	5	10.0	90.0
Does not give a true picture of one's abilities and performances/not accurate	3	6.0	96
No follow up or implementation of the recommendations.	2	4.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	

n=50

From the responses, 80% of employees point out favouritism or unfairness as some of the areas that affect the effectiveness of EPAs. Other employees still feel that implementation of EPAs is not effective due to lack of objectivity, accuracy and failure to implement the recommendations of the appraisals.

4.1.4 Effects of Employee Relationships

From the question on whether employee performance appraisals helped improve teamwork, 30% of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 8% were neutral and a 62% simple majority of the employees felt that EPAs do not help in improving team work. This is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Teamwork

Responses on whether employee performance appraisals helps to improve teamwork	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	9	18.0	18.0
Agree	6	12.0	30.0
Neutral	4	8.0	38.0
Disagree	16	36.0	74.0
Strongly disagree	13	26.0	100.0
Total	48	100.0	

n=48

From the responses, it shows that on the bigger part employee performance appraisals do not encourage teamwork. In this case therefore, the unpleasant relationships arising between employees after the appraisal exercise, may encourage strife among workers which is not healthy ground for effective performance.

4.1.5 Lack of Monitoring

It was assumed that lack of monitoring by HR managers affect the implementation of employee performance appraisals. From the question whether the process of employee performance appraisal was monitored for accuracy, a 74.1% significance majority indicated the process of carrying out EPAs was never monitored for accuracy. This is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Monitoring of EPAs for accuracy

Response on monitoring of EPAs for accuracy	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	7	25.9	25.9
No	20	74.1	100.0
Total	27	100.0	

n=27

As seen in Table 20 above, majority of the respondents indicated that the exercise of carrying out EPAs was not monitored. Monitoring is necessary for this exercise so as to give guidelines, check the irregularities and also come up with recommendations for improvement. Furthermore motoring will help avoid faults during the process and increases satisfaction with the appraisal results obtained.

4.2 Conclusions

This study sought to determine various factors that affect the implementation of Employee Performance Appraisals carried out in organizations. Among the factors affecting implementation of EPAs were found to be lack of training in appraisals rated at 88%, bias practices 80%, lack of monitoring 71.4% and employee relationships rated at 62%. It was observed that all the hypothesized factors affected the implementation of EPAs. From the results of the study one can conclude that implementation of EPAs is not effective due to various factors including and not limited to lack of training on EPAs, bias practices during appraisal process, type of relationships between employees and lack of monitoring of the process implementation of EPAs. Organizations should invest in training both the appraisers and the appraised. Training helps in eliminating the errors that are experienced with the employee performance appraisal systems. This helps the parties involved to be effective and consequently makes employee performance appraisals useful.

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