



INFLUENCE OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PRACTICES ON EMPLOYEES PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED SUGAR COMPANIES IN WESTERN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Performance appraisal practices have a significant role in the enhancement of employee performance. Several studies in Kenya have indicated low employee performance due to various reasons in the sugar industry. The main objective of this research was to find out the influence of performance appraisal practices on employee performance in selected sugar companies in Western Kenya. Goal Setting theory underpinned the study. The study adopted descriptive research design. The study population involved all the employees in selected sugar companies in Western Kenya who were 5000 in total. The sample size for this population was 357 employees. Data was collected by a questionnaire and analyzed using a statistical package for social sciences. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analysis of the data. The findings of the study resulted in an understanding that performance appraisal influence employee performance. The findings of this study would provide managers with an indication on areas that require higher or lower investment to support responsiveness. The research findings would also contribute to formulation of human resource practice policies by the sugar firms and and human resource professionals.

Key Words: Performance Appraisal, Employee Performance

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INTRODUCTION

Performance appraisal practices have a significant role in the enhancement of employee performance (EP). Organizations pursue proactively HRM practices and systems to capitalize on strength of this vital asset for sustained competitive advantage (Jackson & Schuler, 2000). Becker, Huselid and Ulrich (2001) argued that because organizations consider human capital one of the most salient organizational assets in establishing and maintaining a competitive advantage, many are investing considerable resources to support employee and organizational development activities such as training and development, employee reward schemes, performance appraisal among other activities. The sugar industry worldwide is faced by complex problems affecting both developed and developing countries (FAO, 2012). Most of these problems result from poor HRM practices that greatly influence employee performance.

In Tanzania Balozi (2011) researched on the influence of HR practices on employee performance Public Service College (TPSC) and established that six dimensions of 6 HR practices, namely, career development, staffing, training and development, performance appraisal, incentives and employee relations, were positively related to employee performance, with training and development showing the strongest contribution to employee performance.

Human resource management practices in Kenya is faced with its fair share of challenges that have hindered its success and development. There is a need for these challenges to be tackled so that organization can succeed in the modern day market. The main challenges of implementing HRMP in Kenya are limited resources for training, challenges from trade unions, recognition of human resource practices in contributing to business access and achievement, retrenchment and downsizing, organizational work ethic and limited research in the field of HRM (Caliskan, 2010). In this regard Nyakundi (2016) noted that with the

exception of human resource in an organization, all the other resources present are rendered static (Okpara & Wynn, 2010).

The sugar sector is one of the significant contributors to the marketed production for Agricultural crops. It plays a critical socio-economic role among the sugar cane farming communities. The government aims at converting the sugar industry into a vibrant commercial enterprise in line with the National Vision 2030. In this regard several sugar factories have been established, both private and public owned. Despite these investments, self sufficiency in sugar industry has remained illusive over the years as consumption continues to outstrip supply. There however exists potential for Kenya to become and retain self sufficiency in sugar production and also produce surplus for export (Kenya Sugar Board Strategic Plan, 2009 - 2014).

Statement of the Problem

In Kenya, it has been reported that poor conditions affect employee performance in many manufacturing firms. According to the performance audit of manufacturing firms (2014), the poor working conditions of the employees put excessive pressure on the personnel and put them under severe stressful conditions hence affecting their performance. Theoretical and empirical studies have shown that there are many push and pull factors affecting employee performance among them human resource management practices such as remuneration (Munyiva, 2015), career advancement (Gupta, S., Karpowicz, I., & Tareq, 2015), work-life balance (Kar and Misra, 2013) and work environment (Winterton, 2011). Performance appraisal practices have a significant role in the enhancement of employee performance. Organizations pursue proactively performance appraisal practices and systems to capitalize on strength of this vital asset for sustained competitive advantage (Jackson & Schuler, 2000). The sugar sector has faced a steady decline in its growth over the years, resulting in systematic increase in poverty among farmers. Kidero, (2004) cites decline

has been on a myriad of problems including policy failures; poor institutional framework and inadequate training of the human resource and un-competitiveness of local sugar given the high cost of production more so employee strikes which are inevitable. Most studies that centre on the linkage between strategic human resource management practices and firm performance have been conducted in the United States and United Kingdom (Gerhart, 2005; Ericksen & Dyer, 2005). Previous studies done in Kenya were limited and hence a need for more evidence from the Sugar Industry to support the link between performance appraisal practices and employee performance. Other Studies conducted in this area include: Kiboi (2006) focused on management perception of performance contracts in State Corporation. Tuitoek (2008) studied performance appraisal practices among mass media in Nairobi. Lang'at (2006) evaluated factors that are necessary for the design of good performance contracts in state corporations. Obare (2006) focused on implementation of strategic plans in the public sector with reference to personnel management of the Government of Kenya.

These studies have not considered performance appraisal practices. It was therefore important to conduct a study to determine performance appraisal practices in Kenya Sugar Board. For any business organization to have a sustained competitive advantage, an effective performance management system needs to be put in place. Infusion of employee performance management practices is vital to improve performance. This research sought to determine the influence of performance appraisal practices on employee job performance in selected sugar companies in Western Kenya.

Study Objective

The main objective of this study was to determine the influence of performance appraisal practices on employee job performance in selected Sugar Companies in Western Kenya. The study tested the following research hypotheses;

- **H₀:** Performance appraisal practices has no influence on employee performance in selected sugar companies in Western Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Goal-Setting Theory

Goal-setting theory had been proposed by Edwin Locke in the year 1968. This theory suggests that the individual goals established by an employee play an important role in motivating him/her for superior performance. This is because the employees keep following their goals. If these goals are not achieved, they either improve their performance or modify the goals and make them more realistic (Salaman, 2005). The theory emphasizes the important relationship between goals and performance.

Research supports predictions that the most effective performance seems to result when goals are specific and challenging, when they are used to evaluate performance and linked to feedback on results, and create commitment and acceptance. The motivational impact of goals may be affected by moderators such as ability and self-efficacy. Managers widely accept goal setting as a means to improve and sustain performance (DuBrin, 2012). Based on hundreds of studies, the major findings of goal setting is that individuals who are provided with specific, difficult but attainable goals perform better than those given easy, nonspecific, or no goals at all. At the same time, however, the individuals must have sufficient ability, accept the goals, and receive feedback related to performance (Latham, 2003).

Review of Variables

One of the major concerns of any organization is to attain maximum performance. Employees' performance is determined by a number of factors like managerial standards, Knowledge and Skill, Commitment and Performance appraisals effecting employee's performance (Lillian & Sitati 2011). Performance appraisal is defined as a systematic process that helps to evaluate past and current employees' performance and identifying

employee's potential for further growth and advancement within the organization's career ladder (Igbojekwe & Ugo-Okoro, 2015).

Performance Appraisal (PA) has been also defined by Byers and Rue, (2000) as the process of determining and communicating to employees how he or she is performing on the job and ideally establishing a plan of improvement. These definitions show that, if performance appraisal system (PAS) is successfully carried out in an organization, the employees would be able to know how well they are performing and what is expected of them in future in terms of effort and task direction through an established plan for performance improvement. In general performance appraisal is a useful tool for understanding and assessing employee skill and potential .

The history of performance appraisal roots can be traced in the early 20th century to Taylor's pioneering time and motion studies. The practice of performance appraisal system started mainly in the 1940s and with the help of this system, merit rating was used for the first time near the Second World War as a method of justifying an employee's wages (Lillian & Sitati, 2011).

During 1950's, great interest developed in the performance appraisal of technical, professional and managerial personnel. It was recognized that appraisal, on systematic basis, was an integral part of a well-designed development programs. Even though the writers of this paper did not find when performance appraisal system was started in Ethiopian higher education, it was a common practice that every University employee in Ethiopia receives a written performance appraisal each semester which provides a feedback on performance and justifies personnel decision such as promotion and compensation. Danielle (1998) indicated that performance appraisal system measures usually include both behaviors (what an employee does) and results (the outcomes of an employee's behavior).

In order to realize the purpose of performance appraisal, organizations should carefully design appraisal system and implement accordingly. According to Gomez-Mejia (2001), different steps are followed in appraisal process. The first step in the performance appraisal process is identifying what is to be measured. This process seems fairly simple at first glance, in practice, however, it can be quite complicated. If a significant dimension is missed, employee morale is likely to suffer because employee who does well on that dimension is missed, employee will not be recognized or rewarded. He goes on saying if an irrelevant or trivial dimension is included, employees may perceive the whole appraisal process as meaningless.

The Second step in performance appraisal process is measuring employees' performance. This process involves a number to reflect an employee's performance on the identified characteristics or dimensions. The third step in performance appraisal is managing performance. The effective management of human performance in organizations requires more than formal reporting and annual rating. A complete appraisal process includes informal day to day interaction between managers and workers as well as formal face to face interviews (Gomez-Mejia, 2001). The latest growths of performance appraisal (PA) systems have tended to move away from being primarily control and maintenance based towards an approach that is more concerned with motivational and developmental issues (Kimiz, 2005).

Hence, a favorable PA would positively affect employee attitudes, behaviors and the organizational efficiency. For example, higher employee performance and productivity attainment is derived through the PA capability in reflecting, measuring and evaluating an individual employee's behavior. Over a specific period of time these positive outcomes are a function of the employees' perception on the overall PA effectiveness. As Coens and Jenkins (2000) state, performance appraisal is a mandated process, in which a group of

employees' work performance and personal traits over a specified period of time are individually judged, rated and described by the rater of the group and the results of the evaluation are kept by the organizations for future reference. Performance appraisal is normally a formal process and an important part of the human resource management practices in organizations.

The researchers also inspired by the low attention given to the practice of PA system and lack of sufficient empirical studies related to the practice of performance appraisal system in the Ethiopian HEIs. The current study tried to assess the practices of performance appraisal process and the processes which its main focus on performance standards were established, performance expectation to employees were communicated, how actual performance was measured, actual performance with standards was compared, how the appraisal result with the employee was discussed and how corrective actions (Decision making) were indicated.

H₀: Employee Performance Appraisal has no influence on employee Performance in Selected Sugar Companies in Western Kenya.

Employee performance refers to the final fulfillments of an employee with respect to meeting certain targets within the prescribed period of time. Gibson *et al.*, (2010) argue that employee performance can be perceived to be the ability of an employee to realize high profit, quality production, large market share for the product produced and the ability to survive in a competitive field. Koontz and Donnell (2013) see employee performance as the manifestation of the productivity of the employees in terms of revenue, profit, growth, development and expansion of organization. Enhancing performance requires a balance between employee motivation and achieving organization's goals and objectives. Proper human resource management practices will by extension result in managing organizational performance. It is also vital to note that employee performance determines survival of organization in a competitive world of business.

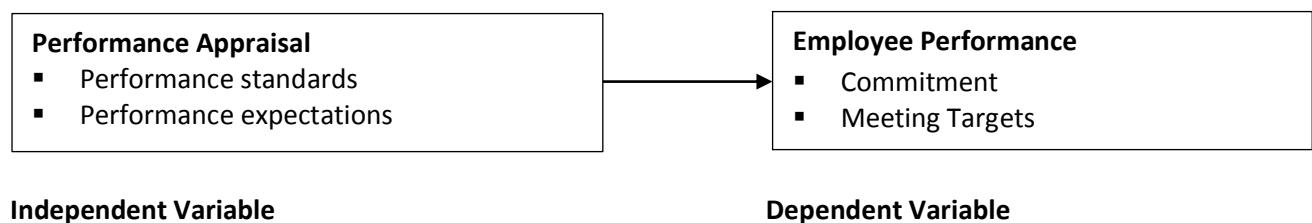


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Empirical Review

Boselie *et al.*, (2005) stated that in 104 research studies, HRM was taken as a set of employee management practices. Delery and Doty (1996) described seven HRM practices that are relevant to overall organizational performance. Pfeffer (1994) argues that organizations must hire skilled and capable employees in order to be successful in today's global environment. Actual HR practices are applied by line managers on a daily basis that positively impact employee's perception about HRM practices applied to them (Purcell & Kinnie, 2007). The successful implementation or failure of

HRM practices depends on the skills of the managers (Guest, 2011).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design since it explained the relationship between the study variables. The study targeted 5000 employees working in the sugar companies namely Muhoroni, Butali, West Kenya and Nzoia sugar. The study used questionnaire as a tool for collecting the data. The primary data was gathered using questionnaire for closed-ended and open ended questions. The study assessed validity of the primary data instrument using content and

construct validity. The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) computer software was used for analysis.

The study used the parameters where: 1= Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 = Disagree (D), 3=Undecided (U) , 4 = Agree (A) and 5= Strongly agree (SA). A summary of the findings was as shown in table 1.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Performance Appraisal Practices

	N	SD (%)	D (%)	U (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Max	Min
We have established performance standards	307	22 (7.1)	85 (27.8)	78 (25.4)	69 (22.5)	53 (17.2)	4.01	1.045	5	1
Communication of established standards is done	307	12 (4.1)	22 (7.0)	32 (10.3)	153 (50.0)	88 (28.6)	4.96	1.782	5	1
Performance Appraisal measures actual performance and compares with standards	307	37 (12.1)	69 (22.5)	145 (47.3)	56 (18.1)	0 (0.0)	3.99	1.962	5	1
Discussion of the appraisal with the employee and giving feedback is done.	307	35 (11.3)	31 (10.2)	61 (20.0)	99 (32.1)	81 (26.4)	4.14	1.217	5	1
Corrective action is indicated	307	0 (0.0)	22 (7.1)	45 (14.3)	121 (39.3)	121 (39.3)	4.11	0.905	4	1

We established performance standards (mean =4.01; std dev. = 1.045) Communication of established standards is done (mean =4.96; std dev. = 1.782) Performance Appraisal measures actual performance and compares with standards (mean

=3.99; std dev. = 1.962) Discussion of the appraisal with the employee and giving feedback is done (mean =4.14; std dev. = 1.217) Corrective action is indicated (mean =4.11; std dev. = 0.905)

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Employee Performance

	N	SD (%)	D (%)	U (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Max	Min
Employees in our organization are able to meet target by producing the units allocated	307	32 (10.4)	40 (13.1)	46 (14.9)	106 (34.6)	83 (27.0)	4.21	1.142	5	1
Employee performance is indicated by the number of units produced	307	31 (10.0)	43 (13.9)	76 (24.9)	100 (32.5)	57 (18.7)	4.03	1.066	5	1
The employees time taken per task is an indicator of performance	307	35 (11.4)	54 (17.6)	86 (28.0)	91 (29.5)	41 (13.5)	4.16	0.944	5	1
Employee performance enhances profits	307	41 (13.4)	47 (15.2)	58 (18.8)	89 (29.1)	72 (23.5)	4.02	0.865	5	1

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=4.03; std dev. = 1.066)The employees time taken per task is an indicator of performance (mean =4.16; std dev. = 0.944)Employee performance enhances profits (mean =4.02; std dev. = 0.865)

Table 3: Correlations Employee Performance Appraisal Practices on Employee performance

		Employee Performance	Employment Recruitment Practices
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.7132**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	307	307
Performance Appraisal Practices	Pearson Correlation	.713**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	
	N	307	307

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Testing Hypothesis

H_0 Performance appraisal practices has no influence on employee performance in Selected Sugar Companies in Western Kenya.

Table 4: Model Summary for Performance appraisal

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.226 ^a	.506	.503	6.441

From findings in Table 4, the value of R-Square was 0.506. This implied that, 50.6% of variation of employee performance in selected sugar companies in Western Kenya was explained performance appraisal practices.

Table 5: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2075.817	1	2075.817	37.423	.000 ^a
	Residual	17472.656	306	55.469		
	Total	19548.473	307			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Performance appraisal practices

b. Dependent Variable: Employee performance

From the findings in table 5, at 0.05 level of significance the ANOVA test indicated that in this model the independent variable namely; performance appraisal practices is important in

predicting of employee performance in selected sugar companies in Western Kenya as indicated by significance value=0.000 which is less than 0.05 level of significance ($p=0.000<0.05$).

Table 6: Coefficients model

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	27.245	1.638		16.637	.000
	Performance appraisal practices	1.326	.053	.326	6.117	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee performance

From Table 6; the study revealed that performance appraisal practices had a significant influence on employee performance in selected sugar companies in Western Kenya (t-statistic=6.117, p-value=0.000 < 0.05). Therefore at 5% level of significance the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that performance appraisal practices had a positive influence on employee performance in selected sugar companies in Western Kenya. This meant that for every unit increase in performance appraisal practices there was a corresponding increase in employee performance in selected sugar companies in Western Kenya by 1.326.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the results it showed that there was variation of employee performance in selected sugar companies in Western Kenya explained by performance appraisal practices. From the findings at level of significance the ANOVA test indicated that in this model the independent variable namely; performance appraisal practices is important in predicting of employee performance in selected sugar companies in Western Kenya as indicated by significance value.

Influence of selected human resource practices on employee job performance in selected Sugar Companies in Western Kenya was studied in terms of performance appraisal practices and their

influence. The study made a number of important contributions into sugar companies. The findings of the study resulted in an understanding that among the human resource practices, performance appraisal practices have influence on employee job performance .

In today's dynamic market environment performance appraisal is perceived to be significant. The study therefore recommended that for organizations to be more competitive so as to cope with more highly changing environments there is need in enhancing their performance appraisal practices. The study recommended that firms should streamline with all parties in performance appraisal practices matters in order to improve employee job performance. A more in-depth analysis is required to further the findings about performance appraisal practices, therefore further research was recommended to confirm the findings of the study in developing economy. Based on the findings, sugar companies should focus on performance appraisal practices as a key element of employee job performance.

Recommendation for Future Research

Future studies should focus on the relationship between strategic human resource practices and employee job performance in Kenya.

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