Conduct of performance appraisals and the attainment of organizational quality goals in the hotel sector in Zimbabwe

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Abstract
Appraisals are about monitoring the efforts of any organisation’s human capital towards meeting an organisation’s goals. However, the achievement of this goal depends on the conduct of the appraisals. This study sought to interrogate the impact of the conduct of performance appraisals on staff morale at organisation X1, one of the leading hotels in the town of Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. In order to ascertain the impact of appraisals researchers conducted 50 in-depth interviews with hotel employees. The major findings of the study were that the conduct of staff appraisals at X Hotel resulted in a cocktail of consequences; with the prevailing practice of subordinate appraisals being perceived on one hand by a majority of workers as largely serving to antagonise appraisees and their appraisers thereby fomenting a milieu of staff alienation with the organisation they worked for and only a minority of employees perceiving the practice as offering an opportunity for self-actualisation. In essence, the study noted that when the conduct of performance appraisals is perceived by the majority of employees as non-participatory, serving the interests of the elite and mainly serving to expose employee weaknesses and operate as a barrier to their self-actualisation, the consequence is that employees become alienated from the general thrust of the attainment of the organisation’s goals. This militates against any prospects of a shared vision.

Keywords: Performance appraisal, organisational goals, self-actualisation, alienation

1 Actual name withheld to protect the business interests and integrity of the actual Hotel targeted for the study.
Introduction

Performance appraisal is the process by which managers and supervisors evaluate an employee’s job performance (Frankling, 2010). Grubb (1999) argues that performance appraisals, after employee selection, are probably the most powerful employment process managers have at their disposal for getting results but widely detested by managers (Dessler, 2011). According to Deming in Rasch (2010) the annual review nourishes short-term performance, annihilates long-term planning, builds fear, demolishes teamwork, and nourishes rivalry and politics. It leaves people bitter, crushed, bruised, battered, desolate, despondent, dejected, feeling inferior, some even depressed, unfit for work for weeks after receipt of rating, unable to comprehend why they are inferior. It is unfair, as it ascribes to the people in a group differences that may be caused totally by the system that they work in.

According to Dawn (2011), if appraisals are viewed negatively employees may begin to resent their jobs or management leading to burnout, loss of productivity and turnover for the organisation. If due care is not exercised performance appraisal will be fraught with problems and conflicts (Kondrasuk, 2011). Therefore, this study sought to find out the extent to which appraisals are achieving their purpose.

The findings of this study will point at areas requiring attention in order to foster workplace harmony and productivity that will enhance knowledge on the dynamics of performance appraisals in organisations hence, the study sought to seek answers to the following questions: How is performance appraisal conducted at Hotel X? What is the impact of the current conduct of performance appraisals on that hotel’s staff morale? What mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that performance appraisals achieve their purpose of re-aligning workers’ efforts to achieving organisational objectives at Hotel X?

Literature review

Faseeh Ullah Khan, (2013) defines performance appraisal as a formal, structured system of meaning and evaluating an employee's job related behavior and outcome to discover how and why the employee is presently performing on the job and he the employee can perform more effectively in the future so that the employee, organization and society get the benefit. Ferguson (2011) writes that performance appraisals are an employer's way of telling employees what is expected of them in their jobs and how well they are meeting those expectations. It is a deliberate stock taking of success of the organisation. Seemingly then, performance appraisal practices should be deliberate and not accidental, Daoanis (2012) says performance appraisals are conducted monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or annually. Newer employees may have performance appraisals more often than senior employees to check the newer employee's progress against the job responsibilities. A typical performance appraisal entails the supervisor monitoring the employee's performance, completing a performance appraisal form about the employee, and conducting a performance appraisal interview with the employee to discuss his or her performance.

Daoanis (2012) writes that performance appraisal is a company's way to evaluate the talent, skills and abilities of the staff. It also provides an opportunity for the employee and manager to have a one-on-one discussion of where the employee stands and what it takes to get to the next step. However managers should not always wait for performance appraisals to have a one-on-one discussion with their employees especially when issues are essential for the productivity of the organisation.

Behn (2000) states that there are two major purposes of conducting performance appraisals. One purpose is to provide information about work performance that is used for administrative decision making. Decisions about salary increases (if the organisation functions with a merit raise system), bonuses, training, discipline,
promotions, and other administrative actions are generally based on information brought out in a performance appraisal. (Grote 2011). Kondrasuk (2011), state that the other major purpose for conducting performance appraisals is for developmental purposes. Employees are given feedback about their work performance based on the standards established in the job description and analysis. Behn (2003) concludes that as part of the overall management strategy, the leaders of public agencies can use performance measurement to evaluate, control, budget, motivate, promote, celebrate, learn and improve. The main goal being to improve performance and the other seven purposes are simply a means for achieving this ultimate purpose.

**Conduct of performance appraisals**

There are various ways of conducting appraisals. Davidson (2009) suggests the top-down approach which entails, the supervisor monitoring employee performance and progress throughout the appraisal period. At the end of the designated period, the supervisor uses some rating technique to make a performance assessment and meets with the employee to discuss the assessment. Stevenson (2008) proposes self appraisal which allows employees to articulate their interests and goals and explain how they think they have performed, without being encumbered by their supervisor's judgments or conclusions. Mathews (2012) with similar sentiments argues that supervisors like self-appraisal because it requires employees' participation, making evaluation a two-way process; fosters more direct interaction between supervisors and employees, provides common grounds for discussion; and can produce additional information that helps all parties view individual jobs more objectively in the context of the entire organization.

Peer review is another method of appraising employee performance. Hamilton (2010) observes that the peer review method rests on the rationale that individuals who perform similar work are in the best position to judge a fellow employee's performance. Peers understand the nature of the job; are familiar with the worker's activities; share common concerns; and are relatively unencumbered by issues of power, dominance, and control. However, employers often are reluctant to adopt peer review, fearing that employees will be too lenient in their evaluations or overrate their friends while downgrading co-workers they dislike. However, experts discount this concern, pointing out that all ratings, whatever the source, are influenced to some extent by the evaluator's feelings about the person assessed.

Mayhew (2012) also brings in another dimension which is subordinate appraisal of managers (SAM) or upward appraisal; supervisors are reviewed by the employees they supervise. Douglas (2011) says upward appraisal involves gathering information on specific, observable, job-related qualities and skills to uncover behaviours that need to be changed. For example, subordinate feedback might indicate that a supervisor is not keeping employees appraised of progress toward performance goals or delegating assignments in a way that fosters teamwork. Although upward appraisal is not particularly popular with supervisors, it can be an efficient approach to evaluate certain aspects of the supervisor's performance.

Dawn (2011) says computer-based appraisal involves using a computer to monitor and evaluate employee performance. This method is used mostly for judging performance in jobs involving repetitive, quantifiable tasks—for example, data entry. Riley (2012) writes that computer-based appraisal can improve employee accountability and tend to be objective because they are not subject to human biases (Meissen 2011). The conduct of PAs tends to be affected by a lot of bias and subjectivity (Berger, Harbring and Sliwka, 2010). The most common defect in the evaluator's role of effective performance appraisals is supposedly caused by personal bias. Common biases include: central tendency, leniency, severity, recency effect, primacy/first actions effect, favouritism, halo or horns effect, attributional bias, giving
evaluations/ratings to justify prejudged actions (e.g. pay raise), and the Hawthorne Effect (Kondrasuk 2011). But who says computers cannot make an error? It all depends on what they have been programmed to do or achieve.

Besides selecting an appraisal method, employers must decide on an appropriate rating technique (Riley 2012). A rating technique is the instrument the appraiser uses to assess the employee's performance. Common rating techniques include: graphic rating scales (Mayhew, 2012), behaviourally anchored rating scales (Obis, 2011, Meagan 2012), comparison rankings (Obis 2011, Mathews 2010), forced choices (Megan 2010), narrative essays, (Mondy, 2009), management by objectives (Kruger, 2010) and critical incidents (Mondy, 2008, Norman, 2011).

Impacts of performance appraisals on individuals and the organisation

Performance appraisal is a widespread, very expensive, counterproductive exercise (Jacksons 2012, Megan 2010, Ryans, 2011). It is typically conducted with good intentions to manage and improve the performance of individual employees, and lead to enhanced overall organizational efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity (Muhammad 2013). Performance appraisal systems are financially, costly and socially demoralizing, (Jacksons 2012, Megan 2010, Ryans, 2011). Edwards (2010) also noted that performance appraisals demoralise individuals and can be annoying as alluded to by (Guerra-Lopez, 2009). It has been observed that conflict is likely to take place ( Zein, 2012). This conflict can be in the form of employee intrapersonal conflict, (Mathews 2010, Neil 2009) employee supervisor conflict, (Meissen 2011, Hastings 2010), supervisor-leadership conflict, (Greg 2011), employee-organizational conflict (Blitz et al 2010) and supervisor-organizational conflicts (Billikopf, 2010). Performance appraisals have been directly linked to motivation. Herzberg (2008) writes that additionally, performance appraisal presumes a behaviouralist view of extrinsic motivation, i.e., that people will improve to attain rewards. In support Kerr (2009) argues that it is based on the assumption that if you merely tell employees what they are doing wrong, they can and will want to correct their performance in order to receive more money, recognition or a promotion.

Mitigating negative impacts of performance appraisals.

Farrow (2010) says that managers look forward to the difficult task of conducting performance appraisals. An evaluation may be seen as a necessary evil, as awkward to give as it is to receive. In some cases, you may be evaluating a friend or colleague with whom you socialise. However, Mayhew (2012) and Riley (2012) agree that if done properly, a performance appraisal can be a positive experience that is more than just a confirmation of a pay increase. It can enhance employee morale and self-esteem and be used as a tool for motivation and development (Lunenburg 2012). “Do it wrongly and you may harbour mutual resentment and damage morale, relationships and productivity” (Zein, 2012). Several strategies were suggested by different authors, putting away the blaming stick (Albright, 2012). Billikopf (2010) avers that if we shift from affixing blame, to identifying barriers to performance we begin to remove the fear and dread people have about these ‘appraisals’.

Roberts (2012) observes that when managers put away the “blaming stick” in appraisals and move to a cooperative, dialogue approach, the whole process can become more comfortable and effective because it puts the manager and the employee on the same side, and working towards the same goals, getting better and better. Megan (2010) and Fredrick (2010) suggest that the appraisals should be done on time because employees may fail to take them seriously if they are not done on time. Riley (2012) and Jackson (2012 ) say that an important component of performance appraisal process is the identification of specific, measurable, actionable, realistic
and time bound (SMART) goals. For the appraisal goals to function well, they must be presented to employees on the first day of employment. Adequate time is needed to do the preparations (Stewarts 2002). Otherwise the result is what leads Albright (2012) to view performance appraisals as probably the most misused and abused management tool in history.

**Methodology**

This study used qualitative research methodology specifically using in-depth interviews for data collection. These were deemed appropriate for capturing the employees’ inner feelings on the phenomenon of performance appraisals. The population of this study comprised employees of Hotel X, that is both managerial and shop floor staff. In all, a sample size of 50 respondents was selected for the study using convenience and purposive sampling methods. The former method was deemed suitable since the study targeted only staff who were available to the interviewers at any one time and the latter was considered appropriate for interviewing managers/appraisers. The sample comprised 10 senior managers, 10 supervisors and 30 junior employees. The data collected was analysed thematically.

**Research findings and discussion**

This study started off by gathering bio-data on the respondents and a summation of the data is presented in the figure below:

![Age and sex chart](image)

**Figure 1. Age and sex chart**

**Level of education**

The majority of the respondents (46%) had ‘O’ Level as their highest level of education, followed by those with ‘O’ Level certificates and diplomas (29%). Advanced level certificate holders constituted 11% of the total. The rest had he Zimbabwe Junior certificate and below. Lastly, only 4% of respondents had a degree (University education).

The employees’ years of experience were also considered. The results indicated that the majority of the respondents had served the company for less than 5 years, thereby constituting 52% of the employees, 20% had
served between 6 to 10 years Eighteen percent had served between 11 and 20 years and finally, those who had served the hotel for 20 years and above constituted 10%.

Conduct of performance appraisal at Hotel X

An assessment of the conduct of performance appraisals at Hotel X focused on a variety of issues such as; frequency of appraisals, general understanding of performance appraisals, and purpose of performance appraisal, whether performance appraisal was serving its purpose, conduct of performance appraisal and extent to which employees were benefiting professionally from performance appraisals.

General understanding of performance appraisals

It was important for the study to obtain a snapshot of the respondents’ general understanding of what performance appraisals entailed. The following are some of the few voices providing a snapshot of the findings of the snapshot survey on workers’ understanding of the concept.

For me it’s a style under hospitality that reminds me how to work [sic].
It’s about how well you are doing. So if I am doing well my salary has to increase!
It’s a waste of time because it hardly benefits the organisation!
It’s when they want to down size their human resources and so they hide behind the appraisals when they just want to dismiss and demote people and promote these whites that are creeping into the hotel like scorpions.

The assessment of the respondents’ general understanding of what performance appraisals entailed indicated that 14% of the respondents seemed not to really understand what performance appraisal was. The above responses left a lot to be desired. It seemed appraisals were done despite the lack of knowledge of what performance appraisals meant to the appraisees. It seemed there were a lot of emotions that accompanied the performance appraisal exercise and a poor understanding of performance appraisals also. This management tool seemed to have been abused at the hotel and yet they adhered to it religiously. This resonates with Albright (2012) who views performance appraisals as the most misused and abused management tool in history. Mathews (2010) says human resource professionals spend a lot of time whipping people into doing them, while managers look for a variety of reasons to delay the process. Finely (2011) says that the reason for this is that it’s often an uncomfortable practice to carry out, people undertake performance appraisal for the wrong reasons and from the wrong perspective. This can end up putting the manager and the employee on different sides.

To the majority of employees, performance appraisals were a mandatory exercise that was to be done “like it or not”. Others seemed visibly disturbed by the exercise. Generally respondents seemed not to like the exercise but just participated because it was mandatory. This synchronises with Grubb (1999) who observed that performance appraisals seem hated by employees and supervisors alike. They intuitively know that it is a game of ‘let’s pretend,’ yet it continues. In Mitchels (2011)’s view the process is so painful for all participants hence employees do not even want to be bothered by them. Respondents were also interviewed on their knowledge of the purpose of performance appraisals. A spectrum of some of the respondents’ views on this issue is presented below:

I think it’s to identify areas that you are not performing well and areas that you are performing well and come up with a plan to assist you to do better.
To earn a bonus.
They ask questions but to honestly see who has passed the appraisal and who has not is a real problem.
The appraisers don't come back to us.
Well I don’t really understand the purpose so I can’t really say much.

The assessment indicated that 44% of the respondents were aware of the purpose of performance appraisals. Thirty six (36%) of the respondents aligned performance appraisals to monetary benefits. Twenty percent (20%) of the respondents seemed not to know the purpose of performance appraisals. It was noticeable from the findings that there seemed to be a relatively high degree of ignorance among the respondents on the purpose of performance appraisals.

Ideally, managers should ensure that the appraisees understand the purpose of the performance appraisal exercise. It was not surprising then that 20% of the respondents expressed ignorance of the purpose and lack of interest in the exercise. Some of the respondents indicated that they were only interested in the financial rewards that sometimes followed the appraisal. However, it is noteworthy that appraisals must not only be about monetary benefits. The conduct of performance appraisals at Hotel X missed the plot which Mitchels (2010) and Daoanis (2012) has on as serving as a means of identifying not only what people’s performance levels are but which areas those levels need to be improved if maximum use is to made of human resource. In the same ambit, Ferguson (2011) hints that a formal appraisal interview should focus on behaviours and outcomes, issues and problems and constructive development to improve the appraiser's motivation, growth and performance.

Performance appraisals and achievement of their purpose.

The study also sought to find out from employees if performance appraisals were serving their purpose. The findings on the respondents’ views are reflected in the voices below:

If they keep conducting them then it means it’s serving the purpose!

Well yes, performance appraisals should be serving their purpose because a lot of people have been demoted and a lot have been promoted. I was a housekeeping supervisor but look at me now I am only a general hand.
No, performance appraisals are not serving their purpose because they are not done fairly. You work to bring the best out of yourself but you find out that you may be just rated the same with another lazy bum because he or she is related to the boss. It’s rubbish!
Maybe appraisals are serving their purpose. I am not sure but I really don’t care.

In sum 44% of the respondents were of the opinion that the performance appraisals were serving their purpose. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the respondents were of the view that the performance appraisal exercise was not serving its purpose. Instead, it triggered supervisor-employee conflicts. Seemingly, to some employees, performance appraisals were a waste of time and a `non-event’. In essence, appraisals de-motivated employees and undermined their self-esteem.

If the process of performance appraisals were to be appreciated by employees at X Hotel, their purpose and employee job descriptions should have been clearly defined prior to conducting the exercise. According to Riley (2012), an organisation’s “high performance culture,” which presumes that “some have it and some don’t,” serves to amplify individual employee competition and game playing. It sets up a zero-sum game which discourages cooperation. Obis (2011) argues that employees do not perceive performance appraisals to be necessary because consequently, managers avoid giving honest feedback which defeats the purpose of the performance appraisals. Further to, the staff member whose performance is under review often becomes defensive.

Employees also had diverse views on how performance appraisals were conducted at X
Hotel. Some of the views are captured below:

**Appraisals here are top-bottom and full of tribalism and nepotism.**
They are top-bottom all the time!

I think only those at the top enjoy appraisals because they are not easily affected negatively.

The above picture is one of where the immediate bosses appraised subordinates. For managers appraisals seemed to be welcomed as they had the chance to rate themselves and justify their ratings to their immediate bosses before the appraisals were concluded. Unlike the rest of the junior staff who discussed the ratings after their supervisors had rated them already.

Greg (2010) observes that despite the complaints of bias that come from performance appraisals, bias will always be inherent in one way or the other because appraisals are awkward when one reviews his or her close companion. The issue of conduct of appraisals was cited as a critical determinant of the value of the exercise. The views of employees in managerial positions on the benefit of performance appraisals are presented below:

**Of course yes, it’s a very effective system that has helped me to self-actualise and become a better manager.**
Yes like I said before I am benefiting professionally….
**This is a very significant exercise in that it re-aligns employees with their job descriptions**

The views from some of the junior staff contrasted with management position:

**Performance appraisals are not really of importance because they are done in a hurry….**
**Pas are unnecessary work for us. They are really an unnecessary burden!**

Personally, I am not benefitting from them that’s why I was saying to you I don’t want to talk about politics at work PAs rarely leave workers happy hence I don’t like them!.

In sum, 56% of the respondents perceived appraisals as not beneficial while 44% thought they were. Of course, without exception, those in management positions perceived performance appraisals positively since they rated themselves or self-appraised. It was a different scenario with most ordinary workers. According to Ryans (2012) performance reviews are hated by most employees. “Further, others believe performance evaluation is not worth the effort because it encourages mediocrity through rewarding those who set ‘safe’ standards; there is no interest in improving the system as it puts pressure on employees to work around systems, rather than improve them; everyone is pressuring the system for their own personal gain, and not looking to improve the system for collective gain” (Farrow, 2010).

**Impact of performance appraisals on individuals and the organisation**

An assessment of the impact of the current conduct of performance appraisals at X Hotel sought to establish the general feeling of employees before, during and after the appraisal exercise, the extent to which performance appraisals were benefiting individuals, the significance of the PA to the organisation and the extent to which employees were satisfied with the way PA were conducted at the organisation. On how employees felt when the date for performance review was close. Some of the respondents’ responses are as follows:

**I feel a bit tense….**
Nothing really because it doesn’t change anything…there is no feedback…. Its frustrating
I am always happy because I know it’s another promotion on the way.
Its never good news but always scaring!
Generally, performance appraisals triggered a lot of uneasiness among ordinary employees. This was particularly the case with ordinary employees who likened PAs to a witch-hunting exercise. Seemingly, a shift from affixing blame, to identifying barriers to good performance by ordinary employees would eliminate the fear associated with appraisals at X Hotel. Ferguson (2010) averred that managers need not create tension by telling employees what they should do; but rather communicate in a way that holds up a mirror to the individual so he or she can see themselves and choose to change when they accept their own behaviour and its present consequences.

Finely (2011) agrees with Ferguson and goes on to say employees will look forward to PA if they know the PA acts as mirrors for their success.

**General feelings of employees during performance appraisals**

The feelings of employees during the appraisals were quite diverse. Below are some of the feelings captured:

- *If the exercise is going well you are happy but if it’s going otherwise you get frustrated.*
- *If I am given a chance to say something and being heard it’s good. I get nothing from it so I feel nothing. We may argue a little especially when he says I am not efficient. So I argue if I am unfairly treated.*

From the responses above it is noticeable that employees felt that PAs were not achieving their purpose because there was no adequate feedback. Appraisers were supposed to use every contact with their employees as an opportunity to clarify set standards, specify expectations, provide mentorship for success, observe performance, and compare performance with standards so that employees understand clearly when their performance is above or below expected standard. Vroom cited in Hastings (2010) developed a systematic explanatory theory of workplace motivation. The theory stipulates that the motivation to behave positively to performance appraisal is determined by an individual’s expectation that hard work will lead to a reward. It is therefore imperative to align incentives to PA so that employees look forward to PA positively. Douglas (2011) contends that discussing poor performance or inappropriate behaviour may result in denial, blame or an emotional outburst. Therefore it is important to remain constructive and not letting the meeting deteriorates. In Greg (2010)’s view to avoid negative reactions managers must keep feedback focused on employees’ performance especially in terms of meeting objectives, achieving results, handling critical incidents and developing competencies. Kerr (2009) observes that supervisors must have the right attitude during performance reviews. She also says it is human nature to respond defensively when we feel misunderstood or when our goals are blocked. However with a bit of preparation, proactive strategy and a positive attitude, one can make a disappointing work review to work for both parties, rather than against them.

**General feelings of employees when performance appraisal is over**

The study also sought to determine the impacts of performance appraisals on employees after the exercise was over. The following were some of the findings:

- *Some cry foul that the supervisors hate me but for me it’s ok.*
- *I’m now relieved because the bother is over But I am still a bit anxious because I have no idea where exactly I am found wanting.*
- *I wish they could leave me alone because when it’s over I feel like a man who has just been given a break from persecution.*
- *We hardly get to know fully what the results of the appraisal are.*
I feel like a free person until another round of performance appraisal which comes after 6 months again.

The common picture emerging from the views captured above was one of a people generally feeling that the performance appraisal period was characterised by tension and anxiety especially where appropriate feedback to the appraisees was lacking.

According to Mathews (2010) positive feedback serves to reinforce the current performance. In contrast, Jacksons (2012) argues that if the feedback is unfavourable, to minimize its importance employees may engage in defensive behaviour: denial, demoralisation and apportioning the blame to other forces. Meissen (2009) says that self-development requires openness and “hearing” constructive feedback, and willingness to experiment and change. However, openness to criticism may conflict with the employee’s objective of receiving raises, bonuses and promotions especially where they are tied to one’s performance appraisal rating.

Conduct of performance appraisals and its contribution to organisational goals.

Generally, the raison d’etre for any organisation is to achieve organisational goals. Therefore it was important for this study to assess the extent to which performance appraisals were significant to the achievement of organisational goals. The findings of the study with reference to contribution of PAs to attainment of organisational goals were that to a large extent PAs served to antagonise management and their employees and ushered in a feeling of ‘them’ and ‘us’. In addition, the absence of meaningful feedback to appraisees did not augur well for situating the PA exercise in the general thrust of marshalling all employee efforts to the attainment of organisational goals. Guerra-Lopez (2009) observes that ideally, performance appraisals document and monitor employee goals and professional development in preparation for higher-level positions. In part, succession planning depends on the most accurate appraisal of employee contributions and success. Performance appraisal methods such as the management by objectives are known for tracking parallels between employee goals and organisational goals. Where the two goals are appropriately aligned, Lunenburg (2012) hints that employees who possess expertise, leadership capabilities and the desire for promotional opportunities are often tapped for more responsible roles within the company.

Mechanisms that may be adopted to mitigate negative impacts of performance appraisals (PA).

A variety of suggestions were proffered by employees on how the negative impacts of PAs could be mitigated at personal level and in the general conduct of the PAs.

Conduct of performance appraisals at personal level

At personal level the negative impact of PAs could be mitigated in a number of ways. Employees came up with a number of suggestions presented below:

- They should attach money to appraisals.
- We need feedback after appraisals…
- Maybe they should be done informally so we open up more…
- There is need for more in-house training to enable us to rise to company expectation. In such a situation we would not be afraid when time for appraisals comes.
- They should explain to me why we are doing PA and make me understand each step we take.

The importance of feedback in mitigating negative impact of PAs finds support from Zein (2012) and Lunenburg (2012) who observe that employees need feedback after the performance appraisal exercise by way of providing specific information regarding
the rationale behind the ratings. In Blitz and Mayzlin (2010)’s view, discussing the review presents an opportunity for the employee to give his opinions and possible solutions to his or her weaknesses. In addition, Billikopf (2010) says that it provides a platform where the supervisors can clarify and justify his ratings toward the employee. The issue of training also resonates with Norman (2011)’s view that in organisations people at times need to realise their full potential on the job so it is important to train and develop employees in areas of their expertise.

Suggestions to improve the conduct of (pa)

The conduct of PAs was also an issue that deserved review to minimise the negative impact of appraisals on employees. The various responses to what could be done resulted in the following views:

There is need for confidentiality. Appraisers should not conclude on their ratings without engaging the employee fully to understand his side of the story. It's better to engage an outsider to do the performance appraisals. Appraisers should avoid nepotism in their conduct of duty. People must be rated according to their performance only and not bring in other issues to influence the rating. They must be done fairly and free from tribalism. Well the form is a bit complicated so it needs to be revised. Appraisers must not use appraisals to sort out personal differences.

The predominant concern among the respondents was that the appraisals were not being held in a level playing field. Issues of fairness preoccupied the respondents’ minds. Assessing someone’s weaknesses in a constructive way is a challenge therefore it is important to give examples of how to improve in specific areas so the employee can remain optimistic. Findings also indicated the need for the organisation to have built a community culture based on honest, ethical treatment of all employees and managers. Finely (2011) says that there is need for managers to promote an ethic of caring and good community citizenship. Coffman (2012) states that performance appraisal represents a “push” and control approach. Meissen (2009) urges managers to develop an organizational culture with practices that present a “pull and empowerment” approach; one where managers engage in collaborative influence, not control practices. It is also important to note that the environment and system determine one’s ability to maximize one's performance. Zhang (2012) says that managers must promote an organizational culture of leadership and coaching; one focused on developing people, not one of using people as instruments. According to Frankling (2010) the review process should not remind the employee of being called into the principal’s office in high school. Billikopf (2010) says that supervisors must praise the employee for past successes and encourage the employee to take advantage of suggestions for even greater contributions to the company and his or her personnel development. However if a cause for concern arises, managers need to focus on finding a solutions

Conclusion

Participatory performance appraisal is an essential component of a fair and ethical evaluation of an employee’s performance. When employees possess a meaningful role in the appraisal process, employee acceptance and satisfaction with the appraisal is strongly enhanced. Clearly, many variables contribute to dissatisfaction with performance appraisal systems, but failure to institute a participatory system will result in continued performance appraisal ineffectiveness. In essence, the study noted that when the conduct of performance appraisals is perceived by the majority of employees as non-participatory, serving the
interests of the elite and mainly serving to expose employee weaknesses and operate as a barrier to their self-actualisation, the consequence is that employees become alienated from the general thrust of the attainment of the organisation's goals. This influences against the existence of a shared vision in the organisation.

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