

Assessment of employee performance management in Tanzania public health facilities

Kelvin M Mwita^{1*}, Peter Teleli Andrea²

^{1,2}Assistant Lecturer, Dept. of Public Services and Human Resource Management, Mzumbe University, Tanzania

*Corresponding Author: Kelvin M Mwita

Email: kmwita@mzumbe.ac.tz

Abstract

This study assessed how effective employee performance management is in Tanzania public health facilities. Primary data were collected from personnel responsible for human resource management in public health facilities through the use of questionnaires and interviews in Tanzania mainland. It was found that a considerable number of health workers in Tanzania do not understand well how to use the performance management system in place (Open Performance Review Appraisal System-OPRAS). Participatory goal setting was found to be challenging since employees are not given sufficient autonomy to identify and discuss what they are supposed to achieve. Goal implementation has been also affected by the fact that health facilities are allocated with limited resources. The study recommends designing and implementation of capacity building programs to help health workers mastering the use of OPRAS. Supervisors and managers of health facilities should insist participatory goal setting to stir-up motivation and commitment of health workers. The government should increase budget allocated in health facilities to increase employee performance.

Keywords: Performance management, Performance appraisal, Health sector, OPRAS, Health systems, Tanzania.

Introduction

Effectiveness and efficiency of health systems depend on how individual employees within the systems perform. This starts from how goals are set, resources are allocated, employees are supervised and performance appraisal is done. It is essential to ensure that performance management system in health sector like any other sectors is effectively done in order to ensure quality health service is provided.

Tanzania introduced Open Performance Review and Appraisal System (OPRAS) in 2004 in all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Local Government Authorities (LGAs) to ensure proper utilization of human resource and performance improvement in the public sectors is achieved (Mpululu, 2014). This means, all public health facilities are obligated to use OPRAS as their performance management tool. OPRAS was introduced to replace the old confidential performance appraisal system which was seemed to have many flaws.

The principle of OPRAS is that the employee sets targets in consultation with the supervisor. After six months, the achievements are to be evaluated and after 12 months the achievements of the past year are evaluated and the supervisor and employee come to an agreement on the performance to be recorded in OPRAS (Songstad, Lindkvist, Moland, Chimhutu & Blystad, 2012). The practice is consistent with what Armstrong (2000) suggests that performance management should base on the agreement of objectives and the joint and continuing review of an individual's performance against these objectives together with agreement on further development plans.

The literature indicates that there are doubts about how OPRAS is implemented (Nchimbi, 2019). Also, reports show that not all the public agencies in Tanzania implement Open Performance Review and Appraisal System in the way expected (Jovin & Hangi, 2017). Numerous studies have been done focusing on evaluating how effective performance management is in reference to OPRAS,

however, the focus has been too general in the sense that studies have been carried out in public organizations in general with no specific attention to the health sector which is naturally unique. It was recommended by Evans, Hwang and Nagarajan (2001) that among the institutions that have specific characteristics which must be reflected in the choice of performance management artifacts with the best compatibility with its activities and strategy are those in the health sector. Against this backdrop, this study focused on assessing effectiveness of performance management in public health facilities.

Objective

This study aimed at assessing whether employee performance management in Tanzania public health facilities is effectively done by considering 4 elements of performance management which are goal setting, implementation, assessment, and reward management.

Literature Review

This study was deduced from Goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1984, 1990) which is based on the simplest of introspective observations, namely, that conscious human behavior is purposeful. The theory postulates that there is a relationship between goal setting and performance; employees with set goals are usually motivated and therefore more likely to perform better than those without. Goal setting theory predicts, explains, and influences an employee's job performance and satisfaction which triggers employees' commitment to organization (Latham & Locke, 2007). The Literature 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 (Lunenburg, 2011).

Performance management (PM) is one of the most significant human resource management (HRM) practices

and a widely discussed area in management and organizational theory. It has received remarkable attention among practitioners and academics over the years (Tommy, Umoh, Inegbedion, & John, 2015). The essence of performance management is linked to the fact that performance of an organization is directly connected with performance of employees (Mustafa, 2013). This means performance management systems have to be as effective as possible to enhance achievement of individual and organizational goals.

A study of Moraa and Datche (2019) which was done in Kenya used 360 National Hospital Insurance Fund employees to establish the effect of goal setting, performance planning, performance review and feedback on employee performance. The study found that there is a positive relationship between performance review and employee performance. The goal setting was found to have a significant influence on employee performance. The coefficients also showed a positive relationship between all the variables and employee performance.

A study of Tommy *et al* (2015) which was done in Nigeria offered an important lesson that if communication is not clear from the management team, employees will not understand well the performance management system that is in place as the result they may not believe that the system gives a proper assessment of their contribution to the organization. Another study of Woyessa (2015) which was done at Central University of Technology (CUT) in Nigeria found that results of performance appraisal system were not effectively linked to decision-making purposes such as on promotion, reward or consequences for non-achievement of targets. This makes performance management tools' contributions to organizations less significant since systems should be able offer information necessary for decision making (Quezada, 2005)

In Tanzania, public organizations have been struggling to improve and sustain their performance. OPRAS has shown some achievements in comparison to confidential appraisal system that was in place before (Sulle, 2014). However, OPRAS has not been fully and well utilized and consequently performance management has been facing challenges. People in the public sectors seem not to master well how to use the tool effectively (Lalika, 2015). The study of Mwaiko (2013) which focused on educational sector found that failure to link organizational vision and mission in performance management, lack of sufficient resources and poor rewarding practices make OPRAS less effective.

Methodology

A study employed a cross-sectional survey through which a total of 105 health secretaries were involved. Health secretaries are responsible for human resource management function and therefore they were purposively included in the study. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected by the use of questionnaires and interviews. A standardized questionnaire used incorporated a five point likert scale. The choices had 1 to 5 points starting from strongly disagree,

disagree, neutral, agree to strongly agree respectively. The points facilitated calculation of weighted mean score for each statement. After computation of the weighted mean scores, strongly disagree and disagree were reported as disagree and agree and strongly agree were reported as agree. A total of 100 respondents filled the questionnaires and five (5) were used for interviews. The use of descriptive data analysis was involved.

Findings and Discussion

Characteristics of the respondents

The study involved a total of 105 respondents from which 47 were males (44.8%) and 58 were females (55.2%). Thirty five respondents were in the age bracket of 25-34 years, 32 respondents in 35-44years, 31 respondents in 45-54 years and 7 respondents were above 54 years.

Table 1: Respondents' age brackets

Age	Frequency	Percent
25-34 Years	35	33.3%
35-44 Years	32	30.5%
45-54 Years	31	29.5%
Above 54 Years	7	6.7%
Total	105	100%

Source: Primary data, 2019

Goal setting

Through the interviews conducted it was revealed that employees are supposed to set goals jointly with their supervisors in the beginning of each government financial year. Goal setting is usually done as per the requirement but not always on time and the goal setting process in many cases is not participatory. It was also revealed that filling OPRAS forms is one of the challenging aspects of performance management among health workers as many mistakes are normally observed.

One of the interviewees commented that "*many people just use the same goals year after year although the directives and organizational priorities change from time to time*"

The above response shows that some of the employees use OPRAS just because it is the requirement but not as a tool to guide them in fulfilling their day-to-day tasks and ultimately achieving organizational goals.

Response from questionnaires as summarized in table 2 shows that goal setting is generally not properly done. Thirty percent (30%) of the respondents who filled the questionnaires disagreed that goals are always set within employees' capacity to achieve while 65% believed that goals are always set within employees' capacity to achieve. A weighted mean of 3.6 was found in the statement which shows a satisfactory level of goal setting within capacity of employees to achieve. The study found that 67% of the respondents believe that discussions between supervisors and appraisees are not always done during goal setting and only 30% agreed that discussions are always involved in the process. In this area, a weighted mean of 2.5 was found

which denotes that discussions during goal setting are not usually done.

The study also assessed the quality of goals that are set by employees. Fifty eight percent (58%) of the respondents disagreed that goals which employees set are always specific, measurable, attainable and time-bound (SMART) and 29% believed that the goals normally have those characteristics.

Correctness in filling OPRAS forms attained a weighted mean of 2.4 which shows that employees do not have sufficient knowledge in filling the forms. The study also found that set goals are not challenging enough to motivate employees to use all of their efforts to achieve them with a weighted mean of 2.7.

Table 2: Goal setting responses

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	WM
Individual goals are always set within employees' capacity to achieve	13	17	5	26	39	3.6
Goals are always set with discussion between appraiser and appraises	26	41	3	17	13	2.5
Health workers always fill OPRAS forms correctly	22	46	8	14	10	2.4
Goal are always SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time Bound)	31	27	13	18	11	2.5
Set goals are always challenging enough to motivate employees to use all of their efforts to achieve	21	24	10	31	14	2.7

SD= Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA= Strongly Agree, WM= Weighted Mean
Source: Research data, 2019.

Numerous studies show that participatory goal is one of important factors towards goal achievement. Further, goal acceptance has been proven to be one of factors influencing task performance (Erez & Kamsfer, 1983). It is important that goal setting becomes a consultative and participatory process to let employees become part and parcel of the set goals to trigger their commitment and performance as well. Through consultative processes various issues relating to willingness and abilities to achieve goals may be discussed and addressed and also setting goals that are SMART since this study shows that setting 'smart goals' is a challenge among employees in the health sector. Further, this study found that OPRAS forms are not correctly filled by employees. Participatory goal setting may be helpful in dealing with the problem. Albaqami (2016) insists that effective performance management mostly requires situational leadership; it does not depend on the control and command only rather requires setting an agreement with

employees and managers in which employees commit providing their best performance in achieving common organizational goals with the management support.

Goal implementation

In implementation of the set goals interviews conducted revealed that health workers are not sufficiently facilitated to achieve the set goals through supply of the needed resources. It was observed that, although employees have capacities to achieve the set goals, resources including money and materials are essential in achieving their goals. Sixty eight percent (68%) of the respondents who filled the questionnaires believed that resources are not sufficiently provided and only 28% believed that the resources are sufficient. In the area of monitoring, 61% of the respondents disagreed that regular monitoring during goal implementation is done by the supervisors while 31% agreed. Sixty five percent (65%) believed that set goals are not implemented as per expectations and 29% believe that goals are achieved as per expectations. In this aspect the weighted mean was 2.5. The study sought to see if employees are offered coaching and mentorship during goal implementation stage. It was found that 73% believed that they are not provided and 24% agreed that coaching and mentorship are provided during goal implementation.

Table 3: Goal implementation responses

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	WA
Employees are always supplied with sufficient resources to achieve their individual goals	28	40	4	19	9	2.4
Regular monitoring during goal implementation is always done by supervisors of respective health workers	24	37	13	19	12	2.5
Goals are always implemented as per expectations	27	38	6	19	10	2.5
Coaching and mentorship are provided to employees during goal implementation	30	43	3	15	9	2.3

SD= Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA= Strongly Agree, WM= Weighted Mean
Source: Research data, 2019.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of the study of Mwanaamani (2013) which explored challenges of administering OPRAS in district councils in Tanzania. The study opined that administration of OPRAS has been affected by budget constraints and therefore limiting employees from reaching their set goals. This study revealed that coaching and mentoring is not sufficiently done to help employees increase the chance of achieving their set goals i.e. effective goal implementation. According to Albaqami (2016) mentoring and coaching are widely used and are more effective to enhance employees' capabilities, skills and work efficiency through inducing advanced knowledge and encouragement. Lack of effective

coaching and mentoring activities may be one of the reasons why goals are not well achieved by the employees in the public health facilities.

Performance assessment

Through the interviews conducted the study found that appraisal criteria are always known by employees. However, the general view is performance assessment is not effectively done since it is not done on time and there is a problem in providing feedback to employees. The findings from interviews are consistent with those found from questionnaires. Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents believed that the employees in the public health facilities know the criteria that are used in the appraisal process. In this aspect, a weighted mean of 3.5 was found. Regarding timely assessment, response from questionnaires was consistent with what was found from the interviews. Seventy seven (77%) disagreed that assessment is done on time with the lowest weighted mean score of 2.1. It was also believed by 63% of the respondents that employees are not given a room to question the ratings by their supervisors. There is also a challenge of not giving appraisal feedback on time since 57% disagreed that it is done on time and 36% agreed that feedback is provided on time. A weighted mean of 2.7 was found in this aspect. It was further found that 56% disagreed that employees have a room to explain reasons for their unsatisfactory performance, if any. Thirty seven percent (37%) agreed that the room is available. In this aspect, 2.7 weighted mean score was found.

Table 4: Performance assessment responses

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	WA
Criteria for assessment are always known	10	18	10	34	28	3.5
Assessment is always done timely	34	43	5	11	7	2.1
During assessment subordinates have a room to question the rating	23	41	6	18	12	2.6
Employees usually receive their assessment feedback on time	23	34	7	25	11	2.7
Employees have a room to explain reasons for their unsatisfactory performance, if any.	23	33	7	24	13	2.7

SD= Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA= Strongly Agree, WM= Weighted Mean
Source: Research data, 2019.

Employees react more favorably to the appraisal process when it satisfies their needs and includes an opportunity to state their position; when factors on which they were being evaluated were job-related; and when objectives and plans were discussed openly (Longenecker & Nykodym, 1996). Performance assessment process is

incomplete without the communication of feedback or the result of performance assessment to employees by the manager. This enables employees to know that their efforts are appreciated and rewarded, while to the employees with poor performance make them aware that their performance should be improved (Osmani & Maliqi, 2012). Performance feedback which was seemed not to be offered on time in this study is one of very essential factors influencing employee performance (Sen, 2017). This implies that it should be taken seriously to improve performance of employees. Two-way communication, during and after assessment is very important for successful performance management. In the process is where challenges are identified and solutions are suggested in order to improve employee performance.

Employee rewarding

Interviews revealed a serious problem in rewarding employees based on the performance appraisal. It was found that rewarding is not well integrated into the performance management process which affects employee motivation towards achieving their goals. Out of 100 respondents 60 disagreed that best performers are always rewarded only 34 agreed with the statement while 6 were neutral. This aspect attained a weighted mean of 2.7. Although rewarding practices were found not to be sufficiently done but non-financial rewards was found to be offered more that the financial rewards with 3.4 and 2.5 weighted mean respectively. In responding to whether rewards are always offered openly or privately 72% agreed that the rewards are always offered publicly.

Table 5: Rewards responses

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	WA
Best performers are always rewarded	23	37	6	20	14	2.7
Best performers receive financial rewards	24	42	5	17	12	2.5
Best performers receive non-financial rewards (e.g. recognition and appreciation)	12	23	6	35	24	3.4
Rewards are always offered openly/publicly	8	12	8	46	26	3.7

SD= Strongly Disagree, D=Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA= Strongly Agree, WM= Weighted Mean
Source: Research data, 2019.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Sendoro (2013) which found lack of a link between OPRAS and both financial and non-financial rewards. Rewards play a significant role in performance of employees and therefore it should be one of aspects to be taken into consideration in Tanzania public health facilities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Performance management is facing numerous challenges that need to be addressed for effective improvement of employee performance. Although OPRAS as a tool for performance management in the public sector has important

features to enhance performance in public health facilities, how it is used needs some improvements to make it more effective. Generally, health secretaries who were involved in the study show lack of trust in how goals are set, implemented, employees are assessed and even in rewarding employees

The study recommends the following;

1. Designing and implementation of capacity building programs to equip health workers with knowledge and skills necessary for mastering the use of OPRAS.
2. Rewards should be integrated into the performance management system to enhance motivation and commitment of employees towards goal achievement.
3. Performance management should be participatory in all the stages to increase employee ownership of the system which may also reduce unnecessary mistakes in filling of OPRAS forms.
4. Employees should also take performance management process seriously because it important for their individual and organizational performance.
5. The government of Tanzania should increase budget allocated in health facilities to increase employee performance.

References

1. Albaqami T. Mentoring As Performance Management Tool. *Int J Sci Eng Res* 2016;7(4):627-31.
2. Armstrong M. Performance Management, Key Strategies and Practical Guidelines, Second Edition. London: Kogan Page Limited; 2000.
3. Erez M, Kamsfer F. The Role of Goal Acceptance in Goal Setting and Task Performance. *Acad Manag Rev* 1983;8(3):454-63
4. Evans J H, Hwang Y, Nagarajan, N J. Management control and hospital cost reduction: additional evidence. *J Accounting Public Policy* 2001;20(1):73-88.
5. Jovin J, Hangi A. Challenges of Implementing Open Performance Review and Appraisal System (OPRAS) in the Public Sector in Tanzania. *Int J Sci Arts Commerce*, 2017;2(3):71-6.
6. Lalika, S. M. An assessment of the implementation of open performance review and appraisal system in local government authorities: A Case of Morogoro Municipal Council. A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy in political science and public administration of the open university of Tanzania; 2015.
7. Latham G P, Locke E A. Self-Regulation through Goal Setting. Organizational behavior and human decision processes, 1991;50:212-47.
8. Latham G P, Locke E A. New developments in and directions for goal setting. *Eur Psychol* 2007;12:290-300.
9. Longenecker C O, Nykodym N. Public Sector Performance Appraisal Effectiveness: A Case Study. *Public Personnel Manag* 1996;25(2).
10. Lunenburg F C. Goal-Setting Theory of Motivation. *Int J Manag, Business, Administration* 2011;15(1):1-6.
11. Mustafa M S. Key Factors in Performance Management: Employee point of view. Bachelor's thesis Degree Programme in Supply chain management. HAMK University of Applied Sciences; 2013.
12. Moraa A A, Datche E. Effect of performance appraisal on employee performance: a case study of national health insurance fund. *Strategic J Business Change Manag*, 2019;6(2):424-42.
13. Mpululu M M. The effectiveness of open performance review and appraisal system of public primary school teachers: A case of Mvomero district. A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of master of education in administration, planning and policy studies of the open university of Tanzania; 2014.
14. Mwanaamani M. Challenges of Administering OPRAS in district councils in Tanzania: The case of Iushoto district council. a dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for award of the degree of Master of Public Administration (MPA) of Mzumbe University; 2013.
15. Nchimbi A. Implementation of Open Performance Review and Appraisal System in Tanzania Local Government Authorities: Some Observations and Remarks. *Int J Afr Asian Studies* 2019;53(1):32-40.
16. Mwaiko M. Factors affecting employee performance assessment in the education sector in Tanzania: A case study of pugu secondary school. A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of master of science in Human Resource Management (MSc-HRM) of Mzumbe University Dar es Salaam Campus College; 2013.
17. Osmani F, Maliqi G. Performance Management, its assessment and importance. *Procedia - Soc Behav Sci* 2012;41:434-41.
18. Quezada G. Performance Evaluation Models for Strategic Decision-Making: Towards a Hybrid Model. PhD Dissertations submitted at Western Michigan University; 2005.
19. Sen N B. The role of feedback in employee performance improvement. A dissertation submitted to the university of Liverpool in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science (Human Resource Management); 2017.
20. Sendoro H. The assessment of implementation challenges for open performance review and appraisal system in local government authorities in Tanzania: A case study of morogoro municipality. A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of master of business administration of Mzumbe University; 2013.
21. Songstad N G, Lindkvist I L, Moland K M, Chimhutu V C, Blystad A. Assessing performance enhancing tools: experiences with the open performance review and appraisal system (OPRAS) and expectations towards payment for performance (P4P) in the public health sector in Tanzania. *Global Health* 2012;8(33):1-13.
22. Sulle A. The Use of Performance Measurement Information in the Tanzanian Public Sector: The Case of National Housing Corporation. *Int J Manag Sci Business Res* 2014;3(7):1-10.
23. Tommy U A, Umoh V A, Inegbedion D O, John N E. Effective Performance Management Systems and Employee Productivity: Evidence from Multichoice Company, Nigeria. *Int J Manag Sci Business Res*, 2015;4(5):39-51.
24. Woyessa Y E. The Effectiveness of Performance Management Systems at the Central University of Technology, Free State. A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Business Administration at the University of the Free State; 2015.

How to cite this article: Mwita KM, Andrea PT. Assessment of employee performance management in Tanzania public health facilities. *J Manag Res Anal* 2019;6(4):169-73.