



PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE OF EMPLOYEES IN HEALTH SECTOR IN EMBU COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The provision of high-quality healthcare relied heavily on the efficient administration of human resources. More research and a shift in emphasis on healthcare HRM were necessary for policy reform. Better results in healthcare service providing on a global scale were only possible with well-executed human resource management techniques. An essential component of every nation's health system was its human resources for health. The health staff's inadequate numbers, subpar care, insensitivity to community and patient needs, high turnover, low morale, unhappiness with job, lack of opportunities for professional growth, negative attitudes, and unsafe working conditions all contributed to poor performance. Researching how health-related human resource management practices in Embu County, Kenya, affected worker productivity was the overarching goal of this research. The study set out to establish to find out how different performance appraisal strategies affected health sector employee performance in Embu County, Kenya. Equity theory, human capital theory, and ability, motivation, and opportunity theories were used. A descriptive survey research design was used. Primary data were collected through the use of questionnaires from a sample of 81 managers working in Health facilities in Embu County, Kenya. Content, face validity, and reliability tests using Cronbach Alpha were conducted. Data analysis was done through the use of qualitative and quantitative analysis. Data were presented in tables and figures through the use of descriptive measures such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The findings revealed that performance appraisal strategies were perceived moderately, with clear targets but room for improvement in effectiveness. Employee performance assessment indicated challenges in turnover and moderate satisfaction with day-to-day responsibilities. Alignment of organizational strategies with employee needs is crucial for optimizing performance outcomes in the healthcare sector.

Key Words: Performance Appraisal Strategies, Organizational Performance

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INTRODUCTION

As it relates to the workplace, employee performance is defined as the degree to which a worker satisfies expectations and completes assigned duties. According to Linge et al. (2013), the phrase encompasses all of an employee's anticipated job-related responsibilities as well as the extent to which those tasks were carried out effectively. Results and behavior have been used to evaluate employee performance. Furthermore, factors unique to each person, like their character, aptitude, level of education, work history, and experience, could play a role. Armstrong (2009) utilizes a multitude of metrics to gauge achievement. Timeliness may be determined by how quickly workers finish their jobs, customer happiness by how many loyal clients we have and their comments, and work output quality by how much of it has to be redone or rejected. Social cohesiveness, human flourishing, and equitable economic progress cannot exist without health and adequate employment. Efficient and robust health systems rely on excellent work in the health sector, which is crucial for overcoming shortages in the health workforce and attaining equitable access to high-quality healthcare. The health sector primarily revolves on individuals; health care cannot exist without the presence of healthcare professionals (Afshan, Sobia, Kamran & Nasir 2012). Recent international policy efforts have emphasized the crucial importance of investing in health and the health workforce for sustainable development. These initiatives recognize the potential of boosting the health sector to fulfill many Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) concurrently. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) acknowledge that decent employment plays a pivotal role in guaranteeing equitable economic development and its positive impact on social advancement. Ensuring comprehensive and effective job opportunities and satisfactory working conditions for both women and men is an essential component of SDG 8, which also emphasizes the safeguarding of labor rights. SDG 8 is closely connected to SDG 3 in the context of the health

sector. It emphasizes the need to enhance the recruitment, development, training, and retention of healthcare professionals to achieve the goal of ensuring good health and well-being for everyone.

The Kenya Health Sector Human Resources Strategy, 2014–2018 recognizes HRH as crucial driver to attaining the goals outlined in the Kenya Health Policy, 2014–2030 (MOH, 2014a) and KHSSP IV (MOH, 2016). The strategy envisions 6 key outcomes: 1. Adequate and equitably distributed health workforce 2. Conducive environment that attracts and retains the health workforce 3. Responsive institutional framework that support workforce performance management 4. Responsive human resources development systems and practices 5. Strengthened human resource planning in human resources development 6. Adequate financial resources mobilized for support investment in HRH. Efficiency and effectiveness, along with productivity and competitiveness, are essential aspects of performance. According to Simiyu (2015), strategic training programs may help employees perform better. Employee performance is determined via performance reviews, according to Apiah et al. (2010). Pleasure, mastery, and pride are the feelings that result from accomplishing goals and performing at a high level. It may be disheartening and even embarrassing to have poor performance and not reach goals. The success or failure of an organization is directly proportional to the level of performance of its personnel, particularly in a very competitive market. In light of new human resources concerns, companies have had to reevaluate their approaches to staff recruitment, development, retention, and pay. How each economic sector handles economic strategy determines how well it will do in the future (Nyanjom, 2011). The performance of the health sector personnel in Embu County will be assessed in this research using a variety of metrics, including staff productivity, feedback forms, and service quality.

Vasset, Marnburg, and Furunes (2011) provide a definition of performance appraisal as an ongoing

assessment carried out to assess employee performance and their overall impact on the company. Davidson (2005) emphasizes that performance evaluation is a vital activity that enables an organization to adapt, grow, enhance operations, and succeed in a rapidly changing environment. Additionally, performance assessment may be used to enhance performance and ascertain the proper course of action for the future, as well as to derive insights from both successes and failures (García et al., 2013). This research will assess performance assessment by examining the frequency of employee performance appraisal, performance objectives, and the appraisal methods.

Embu County is among the 47 counties of Kenya. Embu town serves as the seat of Embu County and was once the headquarters of the Eastern province. The county has an area of 2818 square kilometers and is located in the former Eastern Province. The County shares its boundaries with Kirinyaga to the west, Kitui to the east, Tharaka Nithi to the north, and Machakos to the southwest (Kenya County guide, 2016). Embu County is partitioned into four sub-counties, namely Mbeere North (Siakago), Mbeere South (Gachoka), Manyatta, and Runyenjes. The region is divided into four constituencies: Mbeere South, Mbeere North, Manyatta, and Runyenjes. Each constituency is represented by a Member of Parliament. Embu county is a spacious and mostly urban region with a population of 608,599 individuals. There is one hospital in the county that is classified as a level five, four hospitals that are level four, eleven hospitals that are level three, and seventy-seven hospitals that are level two. There are a total of 93 county public health facilities. Mbeere South subcounty has the highest number of health facilities, with Runyenjes sub-county having 25, Manyatta sub-county having 23, and Mbeere North Sub County having 17 public health facilities. In order to enhance the accessibility and usage of health services, the county has expanded the number of dispensaries and health facilities, hence

increasing the provision of services to the population. The prioritization of upgrading the current facilities to provide enhanced services has been a top priority in order to satisfy the demands of the community. It has become necessary to collaborate with other partners in order to provide a greater variety of health services at a lower cost. In early 2014, the county provided medications to all health clinics within its jurisdiction and acquired ambulances to facilitate the community's convenient access to healthcare services (Embu County Report, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

The health sector in Kenya acknowledges that the limitations in human resources for health are a crucial factor that hinders the planning and implementation of healthcare services, and ultimately affects the overall health results of the country. Human Resource for health is a fundamental component of a nation's healthcare system. There is strong global data that shows a clear link between the size of a country's health staff and its health results, as stated by the Ministry of Health in 2014. The Human Resource Management function at many health care institutions in Kenya is in a state of disorder (Maria, 2018). The scarcity of healthcare professionals in Embu county highlights difficulties in the areas of recruiting, training, and workforce planning. Embu County is experiencing workforce imbalances, which may be related to inadequate human resource planning, ineffective deployment techniques, absence of a human resource development strategy, and attrition caused by retirement, migration, and turnover (Njagi, 2019). The health sector has a crucial impact on the economic progress of a nation by enhancing the well-being of its population. The Health sector in Embu County has suffered from inadequate staffing, failure to meet care standards, lack of responsiveness to community and patient needs, absenteeism, low motivation, job dissatisfaction, insufficient professional development, negative attitudes, and unfavorable working conditions (Muthoni, 2018;

County government of Embu, 2022). Although the County government of Embu and the national government have made significant investments in the health sector, many individuals in the villages of Embu County have been unable to access proper healthcare, thereby preventing them from enjoying their right to health (Njagi et al., 2018).

Objectives of the Study

To establish the effect of performance Management Strategies on employee performance in health sector in Embu County Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Literature Review

The following theories were used

Equity Theory

John Stacy Adams introduced the concept of Equity theory in 1963. This theory assesses the fairness of a person by comparing the value they provide with the value they get. The equity theory examines the factors that drive workers to increase their productivity and the reasons behind their expectations for certain levels or types of recompense for their labor. Optimal employee performance is more likely to occur when there is a balance between inputs and outputs in the relationship. The theory illustrates two instances of inequality that may arise: under-reward or over-reward. It also examines the reactions of individuals in each of these scenarios. Equity theory encompasses many key features, such as the ability to forecast performance and the impact of performance when a worker is either over-compensated or under-compensated (Cappelen et al., 2014).

Human Capital Theory (HCT)

The notion of human capital, first proposed by Becker (1962) and Rosen (1976), posits that individual workers possess a certain set of talents or abilities that may be enhanced or accumulated via training and education. According to the human capital hypothesis, allocating resources towards the development and enhancement of individuals brings about substantial economic advantages for

both the individuals themselves and the broader community. These investments may take the form of training individuals, with the expectation that the returns will be equal to or higher than the initial investment (Gao et al., 2010). The concept of human capital theory regards individuals as valuable resources, suggesting that firms may enhance their performance by investing in their employees. This, in turn, leads to favorable outcomes for the company (Armstrong 2010).

Ability, Motivation, Opportunity Theory (AMO Theory)

The AMO Theory, introduced by Appelbaum et al. in 2000, focuses on the factors of ability, motivation, and opportunity. Katua et al. (2014) proposed an HRM-performance framework, asserting that organizational success is enhanced by employees who possess the requisite capacity, skills, knowledge, motivation, and ability to execute their job effectively. Nevertheless, Musah (2008) contended that enhanced employee performance stemmed from the combination of Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity (AMO). The AMO hypothesis was founded on the notion that there is no specific set of HR tasks that may directly impact efficiency. Instead, the whole process depended on HR architecture that included rules specifically created to establish and sustain human capital, which in turn influenced employee behavior. The HRM policies required to implement AMO (ability, motivation, and opportunity) typically encompassed recruitment and selection, training and career development, performance-based rewards and incentives, fostering collaboration, promoting work-life balance, and providing welfare and autonomy to encourage employee participation.

Empirical Literature Review

Performance Appraisal Strategies and Employee Performance

Muriuki (2016) looked at the East African Community, Labour, and Social Protection Ministry to see how performance evaluation affected employee motivation. Several performance assessment methodologies used by the ministry to

assess employees were analyzed in the study. The following are examples of what is involved in managing and evaluating performance: planning, monitoring, assessing, rewarding, and encouraging employees. A descriptive research design—more precisely, a survey—was used in the study, and a total of 120 participants were surveyed. Members of the Ministry's upper and middle management as well as its lower-level workers and other job categories were among those chosen to participate in the survey. To guarantee that respondents were chosen from different strata within the Ministry, a stratified random sample was used. A five-point Likert scale was used to construct the structured questionnaires that were used to gather data. We used SPSS, which is scientific software for the social sciences, to collect and analyze the data. Performance reviews are positively associated with employee motivation, according to the study. This correlation is both strong and statistically significant. It finds that the employee motivation at the Ministry of Labor, East Africa Community, and Social Protection is significantly affected by the performance evaluation system. Appropriate feedback and communication, training opportunities to improve skills, and encouraging employees' active participation in performance evaluation processes are the three pillars upon which the study rests, all of which are necessary for optimum employee performance. Staff morale at the East African Community, Labor, and Social Protection Ministry was the primary focus of the study. The focus of this research, however, is on healthcare workers' productivity.

Researchers Batool et al. (2013) looked examined the effect of performance reviews on workers' productivity at Pakistani banks in Dera Ghazi Khan, with a focus on how intrinsic motivation mediated this relationship. With a focus on investigating the impact of performance evaluation on employee performance, the study included performance assessment, employee performance, and motivational variables. The effect of intrinsic motivation on the relationship between performance reviews and actual work output was also considered in the study. Using a simple random sampling strategy, we were able to collect data from 150 employees. The information was gathered by means of a predetermined survey. Amos and IBM SPSS were used for data analysis using the correlation coefficient. The findings point to a positive relationship between performance evaluation and the output of the workforce. There is a positive correlation between performance evaluation and actual work output when intrinsic motivation is present as a moderator. Using the evaluation method strategically in conjunction with company strategy and HR procedures may help divisional banks raise employee performance requirements, according to the study. The findings are based on research that looked at bank employees in an Arabian country where modern values and norms are different. To fill a current information gap, this study will investigate how performance evaluation affects healthcare workers' productivity in Kenya.

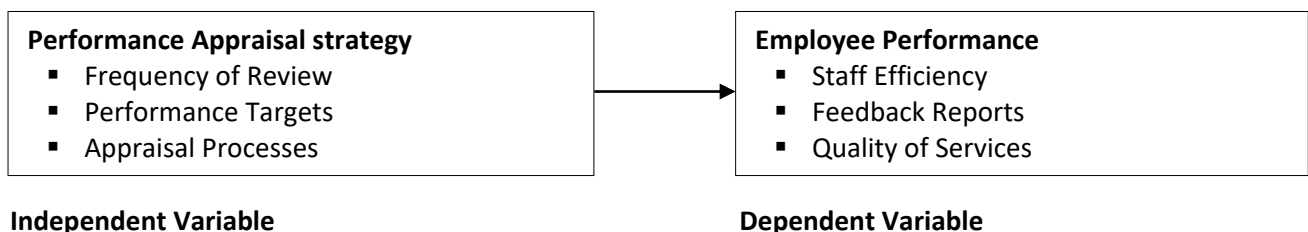


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher (2020)

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: A descriptive survey research strategy was used in the study. According to Orodho (2005), descriptive surveys help researchers gather, combine, display, and assess data with the purpose of gaining clarity in preliminary and exploratory investigations.

Target Population: The study focused on three groups of employees at Embu level 5 hospital. The total target population was 102 individuals. Due to the small and manageable sample size, the study conducted a census.

Data Collection Instruments: The study data was gathered by having participants fill out a self-administered Questionnaire.

Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments: Content, construct and supervisor opinions were used. The consistency of the test results is a measure of the instruments' dependability. Dependability was evaluated using the Cronbach Alpha score by the researcher. A high degree of data dependability is indicated by a coefficient of 0.70 or above, according to Mugenda et al. (1999).

Table 1: Reliability Tests Results

Constructs	Alpha Score	No. of Items	Comments
Performance Appraisal Strategies	0.888	6	Reliable
Employee Performance	0.877	7	Reliable

Source: Researcher (2024)

The alpha score of 0.888 suggests high reliability for the performance appraisal strategies construct. The alpha score of 0.877 signifies high reliability for the employee performance construct.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Data analysis was conducted using the total scores and percentages of the respondents. Percentages, means, and standard deviations were shown as descriptive statistics for the respondents' scores. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to examine the data. Percentages, frequencies, means, standard deviations, and Pearson's product correlation coefficient were used to examine the data. Finding out whether the independent and dependent variables were significantly and positively related was the goal of this study.

FINDINGS

Response Rate

The response rate and completion status of the questionnaires are crucial metrics that provide insights into the effectiveness of the survey administration process. Out of the total number of distributed questionnaires, 81 were completed, accounting for approximately 79.40% of the total sample size. This indicates a relatively high response rate, suggesting that the survey methodology employed was successful in eliciting participant engagement and feedback. On the other hand, 21 questionnaires remained uncompleted, representing approximately 20.60% of the total sample. While this is a relatively small proportion, it is essential to consider strategies to increase completion rates for future surveys. Analyzing the reasons behind the incomplete responses and addressing potential barriers could help enhance participation rates and the overall quality of data collected.

Descriptive Statistics Analysis of Performance Appraisal Strategies

Table 2: Performance Appraisal Strategies

	Mean	Std. Dev
Performance reviews are conducted regularly	3.2229	.65466
The performance reviews in the health sector were effective	3.2344	.47679
Performance targets set are clear and achievable	3.9978	.55436
The hospital is effective on performance targets in driving improvement	3.0089	.56566
Appraisal processes are transparent and fair	3.2211	.55558
I believe the appraisal processes align with organizational goals	3.3443	.50085
Aggregate Score	3.3382	0.55131

Source: Field Data (2024)

The data reveals a moderate level of satisfaction among respondents regarding the performance appraisal strategies implemented within the healthcare sector in Embu County. While performance targets are perceived to be clear and achievable (Mean = 3.9978, Std. Dev = 0.55436), other aspects such as the effectiveness of performance reviews (Mean = 3.2344, Std. Dev = 0.47679) and the hospital's effectiveness in driving improvement through performance targets (Mean = 3.0089, Std. Dev = 0.56566) receive slightly lower mean scores, indicating potential areas for enhancement.

The relatively high mean score for the belief that appraisal processes align with organizational goals (Mean = 3.3443, Std. Dev = 0.50085) suggests a perception of alignment between appraisal practices and organizational objectives, which is crucial for driving employee engagement and performance. However, the lower mean scores for aspects such as the regularity and effectiveness of performance reviews highlight the need for healthcare organizations to refine their appraisal processes to ensure consistency and efficacy in evaluating employee performance. The findings reveal a moderate level of satisfaction among respondents regarding these strategies, with certain

aspects such as clear and achievable performance targets receiving higher ratings compared to others like the effectiveness of performance reviews. Muriuki (2016) and Batool et al. (2013), among others, have highlighted the favorable association between performance assessment and employee motivation or performance, and our findings are in line with that. Everyone knows that performance reviews are a great way to boost morale and productivity in the workplace, but some approaches may work better than others depending on factors like company culture and historical standards. However, every study highlights the importance of performance evaluation as a strategic tool to boost employee engagement, motivation, and overall performance in firms.

All things considered, the descriptive study of performance evaluation methodologies sheds light on how the healthcare industry in Embu County perceives the efficacy of assessment procedures. By highlighting growth opportunities and connecting them with company objectives, healthcare organizations may boost performance evaluation's impact on employee engagement, motivation, and output. This, in turn, helps ensure that people get top-notch medical treatment.

Employee Performance

Table 3: Employee Performance

	Mean	Std. Dev
Staff members at this hospital are resigning from their positions in order to seek better employment opportunities elsewhere.	4.1131	.65470
The consumer feedback surveys reflect favorable outcomes.	2.5436	.54367
The hospital has seen a drop in staff turnover as a result of improved efficiency.	2.9456	.52345
The hospital employs human resource techniques that effectively incentivize, allure, and maintain our presence inside this institution.	3.4461	.55555
The personnel at this facility are content with their daily duties and tasks.	2.8791	.56779
The workers' work ethic has seen a positive transformation.	3.2233	.55222
The personnel at this institution consistently provide work of excellent quality.	3.1055	.54566
Aggregate Score	3.1795	0.56329

Source: Field Data (2024)

According to the data in Table 3, personnel at the hospital are resigning in order to find better career prospects elsewhere. This is evident from the high average score of 4.1131 and a standard deviation of 0.65470. This indicates a serious problem with the ability to keep employees and their level of contentment with their jobs inside the institution. On the other hand, the data shows that staff turnover has decreased owing to increased efficiency (mean = 2.9456, std. dev = 0.52345) and the hospital has implemented human resource policies to encourage, attract, and retain personnel (mean = 3.4461, std. dev = 0.55555), indicating some positive characteristics. Nevertheless, some measures, such as the level of contentment among workers about their daily tasks and duties (mean = 2.8791, standard deviation = 0.56779) and the excellent quality of work delivered (mean = 3.1055, standard deviation = 0.54566), show very modest perspectives. The overall score of 3.1795, together with a standard deviation of 0.56329, emphasizes the varied nature of personnel performance within the facility. Although the hospital has made commendable efforts to inspire and retain personnel, there are still difficulties to be addressed in terms of reducing turnover and guaranteeing general job satisfaction among staff members. The findings above indicate that there is a need for a comprehensive knowledge of employee performance in the healthcare industry in Embu

County, Kenya. The elevated average score, which signifies individuals departing their positions in order to pursue more favorable prospects elsewhere, highlights the urgent need of resolving concerns related to staff retention and job satisfaction inside the institution. This emphasizes possible obstacles such as insufficient remuneration, restricted professional advancement prospects, or bad working conditions that might be motivating individuals to pursue employment elsewhere. Conversely, the hospital's positive indications, such as reduced staff turnover resulting from improved efficiency and the use of human resource techniques to enhance motivation and retention, demonstrate areas of significant progress. Nevertheless, the average ratings for employee contentment with their daily tasks and the quality of work delivered indicate that there is potential for boosting overall job happiness and performance.

Comparing these results with other studies, similarities and differences emerge. For instance, studies like Kepha et al. (2014) and Rahmany (2018) may share common findings regarding challenges with employee turnover and the importance of effective human resource practices in retaining staff and improving performance. However, contextual factors such as cultural norms, organizational structures, and sector-specific challenges may vary, leading to differences in the effectiveness of

strategies and the overall outcomes. Nonetheless, the overarching implication remains consistent across studies: addressing employee performance issues requires a comprehensive approach that considers factors such as compensation, career development opportunities, work environment, and organizational culture to foster a conducive and satisfying workplace environment.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis of performance appraisal strategies revealed a moderate level of satisfaction among respondents. While aspects such as clear and

achievable performance targets received relatively high ratings, other areas like the effectiveness of performance reviews and the hospital's effectiveness in driving improvement through performance targets received slightly lower ratings, indicating potential areas for enhancement.

Based on the findings, recommendations were made to improve practice and policy within the healthcare sector in Embu County to improve Performance Appraisal Processes: Regularly review and refine performance appraisal processes to ensure clarity, fairness, and alignment with organizational goals.

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