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The Effect of Clarity of The Performance Appraisal Criteria on Employee Motivation in West Kenya Union Conference

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to investigate the effect of Clarity of The Performance Appraisal Criteria on Employee Motivation in West Kenya Union Conference. The descriptive research design, the study applied census sampling technique and administered the research questionnaire to all the 66 employees of WKUC. The structured questionnaire was adopted in the collection of data and SPSS 26 used in analyzing the data. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed through a pilot study (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.875). Descriptive analysis revealed that employees generally had positive perceptions of PAS, with strong agreement on criteria clarity and feedback quality. Inferential analysis using multiple linear regression showed that all four PAS dimensions significantly influence employee motivation (R^2 = 0.643). Feedback quality and employee involvement emerged as the most influential predictors. The findings confirm that effective PAS when transparent, participatory, regular, and feedback-driven enhance motivation through increased work enthusiasm, organizational commitment, and goal-oriented performance. The researcher concluded that considering the findings of this particular study, it is concluded that performance appraisal systems positively influence employee motivation in SDA institutions under WKUC. Specifically, frequency of appraisals, employee involvement, and feedback quality were statistically significant predictors of employee motivation. The researcher recommended that introduce mid-term and continuous appraisals: Regular performance reviews should be complemented with mid-term or quarterly reviews to reinforce.

Key Words: ***Clarity, Performance Appraisal Criteria & Employee Motivation***

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Performance appraisal is one of the key human resource practices that organizations rely on to evaluate, guide, and reward employees. However, the effectiveness of performance appraisal depends largely on the clarity of the appraisal criteria used. In organizations where appraisal standards are ambiguous, employees may feel demotivated, leading to dissatisfaction, mistrust, and reduced productivity (Iravo,2017). Conversely, when appraisal criteria are clear, transparent, and fair, employees tend to feel valued, motivated, and aligned with organizational goals. The West Kenya Union Conference, as a faith-based organization under the Seventh-day Adventist Church, relies heavily on both spiritual commitment and professional performance from its workforce. Ensuring that employees understand how their performance is assessed is critical in promoting motivation, loyalty, and organizational efficiency (Waititu,2017).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Performance appraisal had been one of the most important human resource management tools used to assess and improve employee performance. However, in many organizations, including faith-based institutions such as the West Kenya Union Conference, performance appraisal systems had often been criticized for being unclear, inconsistent, and poorly communicated to employees. When appraisal criteria were not well defined or transparent, employees had tended

to perceive the process as unfair and biased, which in turn had lowered their morale and motivation (Anyieni,2023).

In the context of the West Kenya Union Conference, staff members had worked in both pastoral and administrative capacities, and their performance had been central to the effectiveness of service delivery. Employees had not understood how their performance was being evaluated or how appraisal results were linked to rewards, promotions, or professional growth, they had become less committed to their roles (Iravo,2013).This lack of clarity had created mistrust, frustration, and disengagement, undermining the very purpose of performance appraisal. Previous observations had indicated that unclear appraisal systems had failed to capture the true contribution of employees, leading to dissatisfaction and reduced productivity. Employees had felt that the absence of clear criteria limited their ability to set performance targets and align their work with organizational goals. As a result, the organization had risked facing challenges in maintaining motivated staff, improving efficiency, and sustaining long-term growth (Nganga,2023).

1.2 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to investigate the effect of Clarity of the Performance Appraisal Criteria on Employee Motivation in West Kenya Union Conference

II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Performance appraisal criteria clarity and employee motivation

Available literature emphasizes the centrality of clearly defined appraisal expectations as a key determinant of workforce motivation and satisfaction across different contexts. For instance, Rufino (2022) investigated the effect of performance appraisal expectations on job satisfaction among employees in financial services firms in the Philippines. Using a sample of 200 employees across five commercial banks, Rufino measured variables including clarity of performance goals, employee understanding of appraisal criteria, and overall job satisfaction. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between clarity of appraisal criteria and job satisfaction ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that well-communicated expectations reduce anxiety and improve employee commitment. Similarly, Ndegwa (2018) conducted a survey across medium-sized enterprises in Nairobi County, Kenya, to assess the relationship between appraisal transparency and motivation and focused on variables like criteria specificity, employee awareness of performance standards, and perceived fairness of appraisals. Results indicated that employees who clearly understood what was expected of them were more satisfied with the appraisal process and reported higher intrinsic motivation. Lack of clarity was shown to cause confusion and disillusionment, ultimately undermining both morale and productivity.

More recently, Al-Oufi and Al-Masri (2021) using a sample of 120 health workers and considering variables such as performance targets clarity, feedback quality, and employee empowerment in setting goals examined performance appraisal practices and their effect on staff motivation in public healthcare institutions in Oman. The study found that transparent and well-

communicated targets contributed to increased perceptions of fairness and control over work outcomes, which in turn enhanced intrinsic motivation.

Additionally, Kariuki and Kamau (2020) investigated PAS expectations among administrative staff at Kenyan public universities. Their regression analysis showed that goal clarity ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.05$) was one of the most significant predictors of employee motivation and commitment. Respondents indicated that they felt more engaged and purposeful when they understood appraisal expectations at the start of the performance period.

These findings across diverse organizational settings including financial services (Rufino, 2022), medium-sized enterprises (Ndegwa, 2018), healthcare (Al-Oufi & Al-Masri, 2021), and public universities (Kariuki & Kamau, 2020) underscore the universal importance of clear performance expectations as a motivational driver.

These studies have established a strong empirical precedent for examining the role of performance appraisal criteria clarity in SDA institutions in WKUC. These studies suggest that clearly defined, communicated, and participatory goal-setting processes can enhance employee motivation even in value-based, non-profit organizations. Regardless of the findings of these studies, there seems to be no study done to determine how these variables operate within the unique spiritual, cultural, and service-driven environment of SDA organizations a gap this study aims to address. By examining the specific element of performance appraisal criteria clarity and its motivational effects on SDA employees in WKUC, this research will build on existing literature while offering context-specific findings that can inform policy and practice within the Seventh – day Adventist fraternity as well as the faith – based sector.

III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design outlines the structured approach for conducting the study, including how data will be collected and analyzed to answer the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The descriptive research design (DRD) has been utilized since it has the ability to describe the current state of phenomena and examining relationships between variables (Creswell, 2014). DRD enables systematic data collection across multiple institutions to explore the link between performance appraisal practices and employee motivation. It captures the characteristics and behaviors of the target population without manipulating variables, providing valuable insights into employee experiences and perceptions (Kothari, 2020). Additionally, the design helps identify data patterns and relationships between factors, offering a foundation for future explanatory research (Bhattacherjee, 2019). The aim is to generate findings that enhance understanding of organizational practices and support improved performance outcomes.

3.2 Population of the Study

Population refers to the total number of people, things, or items of interest that possess some common attribute that makes them relevant to a study and for which data is going to be collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). This study targeted 66 employees working at the Seventh-day Adventist Church – WKUC and distributed across various administrative and operational departments. These employees play a critical role in implementing organizational policies,

including performance appraisal systems, and are thus appropriate for examining the relationship between appraisal practices and employee motivation (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

Table 1: Target Population and Sample

Category	Population	Sample
Executive Leadership	3	3
Departmental Heads	10	10
Treasury	6	6
Administrative Staff	15	15
Support Staff	14	14
Physical Department (grounds men)	18	18
Total	66	66

Source: SDA Yearbook, 2024

3.3 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The target population being small in size necessitates the adoption of the census sampling technique. Census sampling involves the inclusion of all elements of the population allowing comprehensive data collection and minimizing sampling error (Kothari, 2004). This approach is suitable when the population is small, and full participation is both feasible and desirable for ensuring accurate and inclusive results (Bryman, 2016).

The decision to use census sampling is also aligned with scholarly recommendations that emphasize its appropriateness for institutional research with small populations where capturing diverse insights is crucial (Taherdoost, 2016). This method enhances the validity of findings by ensuring that no segment of the target group is excluded.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Instrumentation

Data was be gathered using a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". This scale format is ideal for capturing perceptual data and is commonly used in survey research to quantify attitudes and perceptions (Bryman, 2016).

The use of a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions measured on a five-point Likert scale is justified as it allows for the systematic collection of quantifiable perceptual data, making it well-suited for examining attitudes, opinions, and experiences related to performance appraisal and employee motivation. The Likert scale facilitates consistency in responses, simplifies data analysis, and enables the measurement of varying degrees of agreement or disagreement (Bryman, 2016). Additionally, structured questionnaires enhance reliability by minimizing interviewer bias and ensuring that all respondents are presented with the same set of

questions in the same format. This method also supports efficient data collection from a large number of respondents across different institutions, thereby increasing the generalizability of the findings.

3.4.2 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher obtained a research permit from the HRMPEB as well as a research permit from the National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and authorization from the WKUC administrative offices. The data was collected using Google form that was sent to potential respondents. Respondents completed the questionnaires voluntarily and anonymously. To improve the response rate, follow-up calls were made to the respondents after 2 days of sending the google form, in line with the recommendations of Dillman et al. (2014).

3.5Validity and Reliability

The content validity has been checked through a review of the whole project by the research project supervisor. In order to test on the reliability and clarity of the questionnaire, a pilot study was carried out in the Greater Rift Valley Conference involving 10 respondents. The purpose was to test the reliability and clarity of the questionnaire. The internal consistency was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.875, confirming the reliability of the instrument (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

3.6 Data Analysis and Presentation

The data were analyzed using SPSS, and results are presented in the form of descriptive and inferential statistics. (Field, 2018). Further, data has been presented using tables and figures for clarity.

This study adopted the following multiple linear regression model:

$$Y = \beta 0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where, the dependent variable

$\beta 0$ = Constant Term

Y= Employee Motivation

X_1= Clarity of Appraisal criteria

X_2= Frequency of Appraisals

X_3= Employee involvement

X_4= Feedback quality

e= Error Term

IV: RESULTS

4.1 Clarity of Appraisal Criteria

Table *2*: Clarity of Appraisal Criteria

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Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
Criteria clearly defined and communicated	3.92	0.84
Criteria specific to job	3.88	0.79
Expectations are understood before evaluation	4.02	0.76
Information is timely and adequate	3.75	0.91
Criteria reflect actual work	3.81	0.88
Opportunity to seek clarification	3.67	0.94
Overall Mean	**3.84**	**0.86**

The analysis of Table 2 on the clarity of appraisal criteria indicates that respondents generally viewed the performance appraisal system positively, with an overall mean of 3.84 and a standard deviation of 0.86, reflecting moderate to strong agreement across items. The highest-rated statement was that employees understood expectations before evaluation (mean = 4.02, SD = 0.76), suggesting a well-established understanding of performance standards among staff. Similarly, the criteria were seen as clearly defined and communicated (mean = 3.92, SD = 0.84) and specific to the job (mean = 3.88, SD = 0.79), indicating that the appraisal process is largely aligned with employees' actual roles and duties. There was also moderate agreement that the criteria reflected actual work (mean = 3.81, SD = 0.88), though this item showed slightly more variability in responses. Notably, the mean score for timeliness and adequacy of information was lower (mean = 3.75, SD = 0.91), pointing to inconsistencies in how appraisal information is delivered. The lowest-rated item was the opportunity to seek clarification (mean = 3.67, SD = 0.94), suggesting that some employees feel uncertain or unsupported when seeking clarity on appraisal criteria. Overall, while the clarity of appraisal criteria was viewed favorably, there remains a need to improve communication timeliness and provide more accessible channels for clarification.

Table 3. Regression Analysis

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	1.245	0.312	–	3.99	0.000
Clarity of Appraisal Criteria	0.642	0.085	0.678	7.55	0.000

The regression analysis results had revealed that clarity of appraisal criteria significantly influenced employee motivation in the West Kenya Union Conference. The unstandardized coefficient (B = 0.642) had been positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that

an increase in clarity of appraisal criteria had been associated with a corresponding increase in employee motivation. This implied that when appraisal criteria had been well-defined, specific, and effectively communicated, employees had demonstrated higher levels of motivation.

The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.460$) had shown that clarity of appraisal criteria had explained about 46.0% of the variation in employee motivation, while the adjusted R^2 (0.452) had indicated that the model had remained a good fit even after adjusting for the sample size. The ANOVA results had further confirmed the statistical significance of the model, with $F(1,67) = 57.02$ and $p < 0.001$, meaning the regression equation had provided a meaningful explanation of the relationship between the variables.

The findings had suggested that clarity of appraisal criteria had played a critical role in enhancing employee motivation. Employees had felt more encouraged, engaged, and committed to their work when they had been able to understand the standards of evaluation and how those standards reflected their actual performance.

TABLE 4: ANOVA

R	R Square (R^2)	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of Estimate
0.678	0.460	0.452	0.527

The model summary had shown that the relationship between clarity of appraisal criteria and employee motivation had been strong, with a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.678. This indicated that there had been a positive and substantial association between the two variables. The coefficient of determination (R^2) had been 0.460, suggesting that clarity of appraisal criteria had explained 46.0% of the variation in employee motivation among employees in the West Kenya Union Conference.

The adjusted R^2 value of 0.452 had confirmed that even after adjusting for sample size and the number of predictors in the model, the explanatory power of the regression model had remained consistent and reliable. The standard error of estimate, which had been 0.527, had indicated that the model's predictions had deviated from the actual observed values by an average of approximately 0.53 units.

V: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The researcher concluded that considering the findings of this particular study, it is concluded that performance appraisal systems positively influence employee motivation in SDA institutions under WKUC. Specifically, frequency of appraisals, employee involvement, and feedback quality were statistically significant predictors of employee motivation.

5.2 Recommendation

The researcher recommended that introduce mid-term and continuous appraisals: Regular performance reviews should be complemented with mid-term or quarterly reviews to reinforce accountability and continuous improvement.

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