



**Performance Appraisal Practice: The Case of Civil Service Sector in
Benishangul Gumuz Regional State, Ethiopia**

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Abstract

This research was conducted to assess performance appraisal practice in civil service sector bureaus of Benishangul Gumuz Regional State (BGRS), Ethiopia. Performance appraisal is a process by which managers evaluate subordinates' performance over a certain period of time. The population of this study was 1796 employees or civil servants working in civil service sector bureaus in BGRS. 11 bureaus were selected from the total of 35 bureaus and also 304 civil servants were selected among the whole population of 1796 in the bureaus. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the bureaus and simple random sampling method was used to select respondents. In this study both primary and secondary data were used. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 20. The findings of this study revealed that, the performance appraisal practice was found to be weak in the civil service sector bureaus in BGRS. Furthermore, the results of this study indicated that, there is significant difference in the employee's perception of performance appraisal practice across bureaus and sectors. Finally, based on the findings of the study, the researcher forwards recommendations to the management of the civil service sector bureaus in BGRS.

Introduction

Performance appraisal is a vital component of a broader set of human resource practices which it is the mechanism for evaluating the extent to which each employee's day to day performance is linked to the goals that establishes by an organization (Coutts & Schneider, 2004). Performance appraisal is defined as the process of measuring and evaluating employees' performance through information collection of individual job performance data within the company (Noe, et al. 2010). Moreover, performance appraisal is the systematic description of individual job relevant strength and weakness for the purpose of making a decision about the individual (Ahmad & Bujang, 2013). Employees' performance is determined by a number of factors like managerial standards, knowledge skill, and commitment and performance appraisals. Armstrong (2009) stated that employee performance evaluation criteria should be balanced between: achievements in relation to objectives; the level of knowledge and skills possessed and applied (competences or technical competencies); behavior in the job as it affects performance (competencies); the degree to which behavior upholds the core values of the organization; day to day effectiveness. Appropriate and fair practice of performance appraisal can bring motivation, employee behavior and attitude development, align individual goals with organizational goals and this will bring positive relationship between employee and management.

Performance appraisal is not just about rating employees, Meenakshi (2012) identified that organizations carry out performance appraisal as a basis for administrative decisions such as promotion, allocation of financial rewards, employee development and identification of training needs. According to Armstrong (2006) the purpose of performance appraisal is to help and encourage everyone to raise their performance, develop their abilities, increase job satisfaction and achieve their full potential to the benefit of the individual and the organization as a whole. Besides, Khan (2007) stated that the fundamental objective of performance appraisal is to

facilitate management in carrying out administrative decisions relating to promotions, firings, layoffs and pay increases. From carrying out the performance appraisal, management then has to make choices in relation to retention, future assignments and training and developmental needs. Performance appraisal can motivate staffs by clarifying objectives and setting clear future objectives with provision for training and development needs to establish the performance objective. Since performance appraisal systems will allow communicating strategies, goals and vision, employees should experience higher levels of commitment to organizational goals and therefore, become more affectively committed to their organization (Belete, Tariku & Assefa, 2014).

Different studies shows that organizations in developing countries are not evaluating the job performance of employees properly, for instance a study by Dargie (2007) indicated that existence of poor performance appraisal practice in the organization. Moreover, Mekonnen (2016) in his study shows that performance appraisal practice is found to be poor in the banking sector of Ethiopia. A study by Abadi (2017) found that ineffective performance appraisal in the organization. So far a few studies were conducted on performance appraisal practice in Ethiopia, but none of the study conducted in performance appraisal practice in the civil service sector of Benishangul gumuz region state (BGRS). Therefore, this study examined performance appraisal practice in civil service sector bureaus of Benishangul gumuz regional state, Ethiopia. The questions being raised in this study are: what is the extent of performance appraisal practice in the civil service sector bureaus in BGRS? Is there a significant difference in the employee's perception of performance appraisal practice across bureaus? Is there a significant difference in the employee's perception of performance practice regarding sectors?

Review of Related Literature

Performance appraisal is defined by different scholars of human resource management in different time. Some of the definitions are discussed as follows. Performance appraisal is a systematic process that helps to evaluate past and current employees' performance and identifying employee's potential for further growth and advancement within the organization's career ladder (Igbojekwe and Ugo-Okoro, 2015). Performance appraisal is described as a process by which managers judge and evaluate subordinates' performance or contribution over a certain period of time. Performance appraisal is normally a formal process and an important part of the human resource management practices in organizations. Moreover, performance management is a systematic process for improving organizational performance by developing the performance of individuals and teams (Armstrong, 2009).

Performance Appraisal Methods

Performance appraisal methods serve as a tool in measuring of employees' performance. Turgut and Mert (2014) identified different performance appraisal methods used to measure employees' job performance. Some of the most commonly used methods are discussed below.

Paired comparison method

This method allows the manager to compare each employee separately with each other employee (Erasmus, Schenk, Swanepoel & Van Wyk, 2003). Each employee is compared with other workers, but taking only one at a time and in general only on one trait. Under this method employees of a group are compared with one another at one time. For instance, if there is a group of five employees A, B, C, D and E then A's performance is compared with that of B's and decision is taken as to whose performance is better. The other employees will compare in this manner.

Grading method

In this method the grades are given based on certain attributes of employees such as leadership qualities, self expression, job knowledge, analytical ability and quality of work. The grades are generally assigned on the basis of presence or absence of the evaluated attributes. It is usually five grades (A-E) that can be allotted to employees where A-excellent, B-very good, C-good, D-average, and E-below average. Under this technique of performance evaluation certain categories of worth are determined in advance and they are carefully defined.

Forced distribution method

According to Dagar (2014) forced distribution is a method of performance appraisal in which an evaluator appraises workers depending on a specific distribution. Forced distribution is generally applied to many components of job performance with variable proportions of distribution. Thus, instead of percentage ratings employees are commonly evaluated by including them in predefined categories, such as top, middle, and bottom levels. Erasmus et al. (2003) states that when using this system, the manager should assign some portion of the employees to each number of specified categories on each performance factor.

Critical incident method

This method focuses on certain critical behaviors of workers that make all the difference between effective and non-effective performance of a job. Such incidents are recorded by the superiors as and when they occur (Aswathappa, 2005). The critical incident method is a method in which the manager writes down positive and negative performance behavior of employees throughout the performance period. This method is concentrated on certain critical characteristics of employee that makes significant difference in the performance. According to (Dessler, 2011) critical incident method keeps a record of unusually employee's work related behavior and revisit it with the employee at prearranged times.

Various studies have been conducted on performance appraisal practice, for example Dargie (2007) studied employees performance appraisal practice in the case of bank of Abyssinia in Addis Ababa Ethiopia and showed that performance appraisal feedback is not given on time, unfair performance appraisal practices, lack of communication about the objective of performance evaluation and lack employees participation in designing of performance appraisal criteria. In general the study found that poor performance appraisal practice in the bank of Abssinia.

Moreover, Mekonnen (2016) in his study on the employee's performance appraisal practice in the case of Abay bank in Ethiopia indicated that lack of clear and objective performance evaluation criteria, fails to give feedback on time to employees, lack of discussion between employees and manager about performance appraisal result, performance evaluation is not based on employees' accomplishments and achievements. The study reported that existence of low performance appraisal in the bank.

Daoanis (2012) in his a study of performance appraisal system and it's implication to employee performance shows that no appropriate rewards are given to best performing employees, appraisal system was not well explained to employees, feedback is not given on time and employees do not participate in the formulation of evaluation tools. Another study by Abadi (2017) indicated there is lack of communication between supervisor and employees regarding performance appraisal issue, performance appraisal results are not linked with financial and non financial reward, unfair appraisal practice due to these reason employees were not satisfied with their job in the organization.

Furthermore, Baraka (2015) studied the role of performance appraisal system on individual workers performance in public organization in Tanzania and found that supervisors were not well trained, lack of integration between individual objectives and that of an organization, this goes hand in hand with lack of openness among the personnel. Employees do not have trust on the appraiser in undertaking the performance evaluation and employees do not believe that the performance evaluation has any positive impact to their individual performances.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to examine performance appraisal practice in civil service sector bureaus in BGRS, Ethiopia.

Hypotheses

1. H01: There is no significant difference in the employees' perception of performance appraisal practice across bureaus in BGRS.
2. H02: There is no significant difference in the employees' perception of performance appraisal practice with respect to sectors in BGRS.

Materials and Methods

This section deals about the materials and methods which contains the study area, research type, research approach, population, sample size and sampling techniques. Besides, data source and data collection instruments, data analysis and interpreting techniques were presented in this part. This study is about employees' perceptions of performance appraisal practice in the civil service sector bureaus; it is descriptive research in type that used mixed research approach. Primary and secondary data sources were used. The primary data were gathered through questionnaire on a five-point scale that was adopted from the previous studies by Teseema and Soeters (2006), whereas, the secondary data was collected from various sources such as journals, books, reports, records, internet and documents.

This study was conducted in Benshangul Gumuz Region (BGRS) specifically at Assosa. BGRS is one of the 9 states of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia which lies in the North West part of Ethiopia. Assosa is one the capital city of BGRS. The Region is located in the North-West part of the country. It stretches along the Sudanese border between 9.170 and 12.060 N. The Western Eastern limits are given by the longitudes 34.100 and 37.040 E, respectively. The Amhara, Oromiya and Gambella states are bordering the region in the North East, East and South respectively. It shares international border with South Sudan and Sudan Republic in West.

The region is administratively divided in to three Zones, 19 Woredas, one special Woreda and one city Administration. The three zones are setup to create a link between the region and the Woredas. BGRS has 35 regional civil service sector bureaus. The regional bureaus are found in Assosa where the regional civil service sector bureaus have established to execute economic and social affairs. Accordingly, the population of this study was 1796 employees (civil servants) in the regional bureaus. Stratified sampling method was used to select the bureaus and the respondents. First, stratified random sampling methods were used to select 11 bureaus from 35 bureaus classified under three sectors (social, economic and administrative). The sampled bureaus of this study were Health, Education, Public service, Communication affairs, Agriculture, Trade and Transport, Finance and Development, Water development, Regional council, Justice and Administrative and Security affairs.

The target population of this study was employees of civil service sector bureaus in BGRS. The total population of this study was 1796 among this 317 employees were selected by using Khotari (2004) sample size determination formula. In order to check the reliability and validity of the instruments reliability test was conducted and the Cronbach's Alpha value was found to be 0.87, which was in the accepted range. Moreover, to verify the validity of the instruments the questionnaires were evaluated by Assosa university instructors and the comments of the instructors were incorporated in the instruments. Then 317 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents only 304 questionnaires were returned with valid response. So based on 304 respondents the data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 20. Both descriptive (mean, percent, frequency and standard deviation) and inferential (ANOVA) statistics were used.

Results and Discussion

This section deals about the result and discussion which contains descriptive analysis and a one way Analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Descriptive Statistics Analysis

The descriptive statistics analysis includes mean, percent, frequency and standard deviation. The mean score indicates the average perceived value of respondents towards the items and the standard deviation measure the dispersion of the individual observations from the mean. The researcher used a five point Likert scale (1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree) average mean score of 3 implies a moderate tendency on that practice. A score above 3 indicates existence of a reasonably good level of performance appraisal practice, whereas a score below 3 shows a poor degree of existence of performance appraisal practice.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics analysis for performance appraisal practice

S. no	Items	Mean	Std. dev
1	Employees are allowed to discuss with their appraiser regarding the performance appraisal results and receive feedback on time.	2.37	1.22
2	Appraisers use valid criteria and have good understanding of performance appraisal.	2.72	1.32
3.	Employees have trust on the performance appraisal system in the organization.	2.57	1.46
4	The bureau takes corrective measures when the employee's performance appraisal result is below the standard.	2.76	1.34
5	There is increment in pay resulting from excellent appraisal results.	2.45	1.38
6	The bureau informed the employees how their performance is evaluated.	2.93	1.18
7	Employees can appeal to a higher official of the bureau when they assume the performance appraisal result is unfair.	2.68	1.34
	Overall mean	2.64	0.69

Source: Computed from survey data, 2018

As indicated in table 1 above the overall mean value for performance appraisal practice was (Mean= 2.64 and Std. dev = 0.69), which is below the average mean value. This implies that the respondents have low perception towards the performance appraisal practice in the bureaus. Accordingly, the mean value of the item stating 'employees are allowed to discuss with their appraiser regarding the performance appraisal results and receive timely feedback' was (Mean= 2.37 and Std. dev= 1.22). Besides, the items stating 'there is increment in pay resulting from excellent appraisal results' and 'employees have trust on the performance appraisal system in the organization' scored lower mean values (Mean= 2.45, Std. dev= 1.38) and (Mean= 2.57, Std.dev= 1.46) respectively.

Similarly, the item stating 'employees can appeal to a higher official of the bureau when they assume the performance appraisal result is unfair' has low mean value (Mean= 2.68 and Std. dev= 1.34). Generally, employees evaluated all items of performance appraisal practice at low level of mean value and indicating that existence of poor performance appraisal practice in the bureaus of BGRS. The main contributors to the poor performance appraisal practice in the bureaus were lack of chance to discuss with higher official of the bureaus when they assume that the performance evaluation result is unfair and lack of timely feedback and trust on performance appraisal system in the bureaus of BGRS. The finding of this study is supported by the study Baraka (2015) reported that existence of weak performance appraisal practice in the public organization in Tanzania. Moreover, Abadi (2017), Mekonnen (2016) and Dargie (2007) in their studies found that poor performance appraisal practice in the banking sector in Ethiopia.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

A one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is used when there is a need to compare more than two means to see if there are any statistically significant differences among them (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2007). In this study a one way ANOVA was used to identify whether there is a difference in the employees' perception of performance appraisal practice across bureaus and sectors. The perception of the group is said to be different if p (significant level) is less than 0.05.

Performance appraisal practice across bureaus

In this part, ANOVA was used to identify whether there is a variation in the employees' perception of performance appraisal practice across bureaus. Accordingly hypotheses were dealt in the following sections.

H01: There is no significant difference in the employee's perception of performance appraisal practice across bureaus in BGRS.

Table 2: The mean scores of performance appraisal practice regarding bureaus

Variable	Bureaus	N	Mean	Std. dev.
Performance appraisal practice	Education Bureau	30	2.55	.530
	Health Bureau	33	2.23	.465
	Public Service Bureau	27	2.56	.731
	Communication Affairs Bureau	29	2.45	.808
	Agriculture Bureau	31	3.08	.682
	Trade and transport Bureau	29	2.53	.552
	Finance & Economic Development	35	2.77	.544
	Water development Bureau	28	2.68	.689
	Regional Council Bureau	19	2.43	.650
	Administrative and Security Affairs	21	2.94	.911
	Justice Bureau	22	2.90	.686
Total	304	2.66	.692	

Source: Computed from survey data, 2018

The table 2 above revealed that the overall mean value of the performance appraisal practice for the bureaus was (Mean= 2.66 and Std. dev= 0.692), which is below average mean value. The mean values for performance appraisal practice ranging 2.23 to 3.08 across bureaus. Moreover, the highest mean value is registered for the bureau of agriculture and the least mean value is registered for the bureau of health.

Among the bureaus, only one bureau scored average mean value and they are the bureau of agriculture with mean value (Mean=3.08 and Std. dev=.682), However, the remaining ten bureaus scored below average mean values. This signifies that existence of weak performance appraisal practice in the bureaus. This implies performance appraisal is not well practiced in the bureaus of BGRS in Ethiopia. Therefore, it is important for the bureaus to give attention to bring change on the HRM practices and to achieve the bureaus objectives effectively.

Table 3: ANOVA for performance appraisal practice across bureaus

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Performance Appraisal Practice	Between Groups	18.275	10	1.828	4.219	.000
	Within Groups	126.907	293	.433		
	Total	145.183	303			

Source: Computed from survey data, 2018

The result of a one way ANOVA in table 3 above indicates that there was significant difference in the employee’s perception of performance appraisal practice across bureaus, $F(10,293)=4.219$, $P=.000$, indicating that the difference in the mean score is significant at 0.001 significant level. Therefore, the null hypothesis of there is no significant difference in the employee’s perceptions of performance appraisal practice across bureau was rejected. This means that there is a significant difference in the employee’s perceptions of performance appraisal practice across bureaus in BGRS.

H02: There is no significant difference in the employee’s perception of performance appraisal practice with regard to sectors in BGRS.

Table 4: The mean scores of performance appraisal practice with respect to each sector

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Performance appraisal practice	Social Sector	119	2.34	.637
	Economic Sector	123	2.63	.652
	Administrative sector	62	3.01	.782
	Total	304	2.66	.692

Source: Computed from survey data, 2018

Table 4 above shows that the mean value for performance appraisal practice across sectors ranging between 2.34 to 3.01. Among the three sectors only one sector scored average mean value, while the remaining two sectors scored below average mean values. Accordingly, Administrative sector has scored mean value of (Mean=3.01 and Std. dev= 0.782); Economic sector has scored a mean value of (Mean=2.63 and Std. dev= 0.652) and social sector has scored a mean value of (Mean=2.34 and Std. dev= 0.637). Among the three sectors, the social sector scored the least mean value. In general, the overall mean value for performance appraisal practice across sectors was (Mean=2.66 and Std. dev= 0.692), it is below average mean values. Therefore, the results are suggesting the existence of weak performance appraisal practice in the sectors.

Table 5: ANOVA for performance appraisal practice across sectors

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Performance appraisal practice	Between Groups	8.055	2	4.028	8.841	.000
	Within Groups	137.127	301	.456		
	Total	145.183	303			

Source: Computed from survey data, 2018

As shown in table 5 above the results of ANOVA revealed that there was significant difference in the employee's perception of performance appraisal practice across sectors, $F(2,301)=8.841$, $P=.000$, indicating that the variation in the mean score is significant at 0.001 significant level. This implies that employee's perception of performance appraisal practice varies from sector to sectors in BGRS. Hence, there is significant difference in the employee's perception of HRM performance appraisal practice across sectors. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected which states that 'there is no statistically significant difference in the employee's perception of performance appraisal practice across sectors. This indicates that there is significant difference in the employee's perception of performance appraisal practice across sectors in BGRS.

Conclusions

This study was conducted to assess performance appraisal practice in civil service sector bureaus of BGRS. Performance appraisal is a process by which managers judge and evaluate subordinates' performance or contribution over a certain period of time. Besides, performance appraisal is the process of measuring and evaluating employees' performance through information collection of individual job performance data within the company. The finding of this study revealed that performance appraisal practice is found to be poor in the civil service sector bureaus of BGRS. Moreover, the result of this study indicated that there is significant difference in the employee's perception of performance appraisal practice across bureaus in BGRS. This means employee's perception of performance appraisal practice varies across bureaus. Furthermore, the finding shows that there is significant difference in the employee's perception of performance appraisal practice regarding sectors in BGRS.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher forwards the following recommendations to the management of the bureaus in BGRS.

- The finding of this study shows that performance appraisal practice has been poorly evaluated by the employees in the bureaus. One way of handling this problem is by giving chance to employees to discuss with their appraiser regarding the performance appraisal results and avoid bias in performance appraisal practice in order to create trust on employees towards performance appraisal system in the bureaus.
- Besides, the result of this study indicates that employee performance evaluation feedback was not given on time. Therefore, performance evaluation feedback should be given to employees on time, because employees could not perform better without feedback given to them on time.

- The finding also shows that the bureaus do not take corrective measures when the employee's performance result is below the standard and do not motivate employees when they obtained excellent appraisal result.
- Therefore, the management should give training to those employees perform below the standard and encourage those high achiever employees by providing incentives.

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