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Examining Effects of Performance Appraisal System on Employee Productivity in the Public Sector. A Case Study of Ministry of Home Affairs

Anna M. Chileshe[1], Ms. Lynn Kazembe[2]

[1]Human Resource Management, Information and Communication University, Lusaka, Zambia
[2]Department of Management Studies, Information and Communication University, Lusaka, ambia

Abstract

This study examined the effects of performance appraisal systems on employee productivity in Zambia's public sector, focusing on the Ministry of Home Affairs. The problem addressed was the ineffectiveness of existing performance management systems, largely due to the absence of a clear guiding policy, weak top leadership support, and irregular adherence to appraisal procedures. These challenges have resulted in low employee motivation, inconsistent performance monitoring, and reduced service delivery effectiveness in key government departments. Consequently, the study sought to determine the types of performance appraisal systems in use, evaluate their effects on employee productivity, and identify the limitations undermining their success.The study was guided by the Goal Setting Theory and employed a descriptive research design using a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data were collected from 75 employees through structured questionnaires, complemented by qualitative interviews with human resource officers and departmental supervisors. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and regression analysis to assess relationships between appraisal practices and productivity indicators.The findings revealed that 64% of respondents identified rating scales as the primary appraisal method, while 21% cited Management by Objectives (MBO) and 15% used other techniques such as peer reviews and self-assessment. About 72% of employees indicated that performance appraisals were conducted annually, whereas 18% experienced semi-annual reviews and only 10% reported quarterly appraisals. The analysis showed that employees who received regular and constructive feedback demonstrated a 25–30% higher productivity rating compared to those who received minimal feedback. Regression results further indicated a positive correlation ($R = 0.68$) between effective appraisal practices and employee productivity. However, 58% of respondents felt that feedback mechanisms were inadequate, and 47% cited insufficient training for appraisers as a major limitation. In addition, 40% of employees believed that political interference and favoritism negatively influenced fairness and consistency in the appraisal process.The study concluded that while performance appraisal systems exist within the Ministry of Home Affairs, their implementation remains weak and inconsistent, reducing their potential impact on productivity. Effective appraisals characterized by goal alignment, fairness, and timely feedback were associated with improved performance, motivation, and accountability. The research recommends that the government develop a comprehensive policy framework to standardize performance management practices across ministries. Additionally, managers and supervisors should undergo continuous training to

improve objectivity in evaluations. The study further recommends strengthening feedback mechanisms, ensuring regular and transparent appraisals, and linking results to rewards, promotions, and professional development to enhance employee motivation and productivity. Overall, improving performance appraisal practices can significantly enhance efficiency and service delivery within Zambia's public sector.

Keywords: Performance Appraisal, Employee Productivity, Public Sector, Feedback, Goal Setting, Human Resource Management, Zambia.

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

This chapter provides a foundation for the study by presenting its background and contextualizing the research problem. It defines the research gap, outlines the objectives and questions, and identifies key variables. The significance of the study and the conceptual framework are discussed, alongside the scope and limitations. Operational definitions of key terms are also provided, guiding the reader's understanding of the research focus.

1.1 Background to the study

Performance appraisal systems have become a central component of human resource management globally, serving as mechanisms for measuring, managing, and improving employee productivity. Across the world, organizations both public and private have recognized that systematic appraisal practices are essential for aligning individual performance with institutional goals. In developed economies such as the United States and the United Kingdom, performance appraisal systems have evolved into comprehensive performance management frameworks integrating goal setting, feedback, and professional development (Wellins, Bernthal & Phelps, 2006). In Australia, for instance, the Australian Public Service Commission (2023) emphasizes continuous feedback and performance-linked rewards as critical drivers of accountability and efficiency. Studies in Europe and North America indicate that well-structured appraisal systems can improve productivity by up to 25%, largely due to clarity in performance expectations and timely feedback (Huselid, 2009; Armstrong, 2019). However, even in advanced economies, challenges such as bias, inadequate follow-up, and overemphasis on evaluation rather than development persist (Derven, 2010).

Regionally, in Africa, performance appraisal systems have gained prominence as governments and organizations seek to enhance public service delivery and competitiveness. In Kenya, Monari and Wanjau (2022) observed that the effectiveness of appraisal practices depends heavily on managerial support, adequate training, and the availability of financial resources. Similarly, studies conducted in Nigeria and Ghana reveal that public institutions often adopt appraisal systems modeled on Western practices but struggle with consistent implementation due to limited capacity, political influence, and weak feedback mechanisms (Hafiza et al., 2011; Akuoko, Kanwetuu & Dwumah, 2014). In South Africa, performance management reforms introduced in the early 2000s demonstrated that integrating appraisal outcomes with professional development and reward systems could significantly improve employee engagement (Falola, Ibidunni & Olokundun, 2019). However, across much of Sub-Saharan Africa, the gap between policy and practice remains wide—appraisals are often viewed as routine administrative exercises rather than tools for motivating and developing employees (Mone & London, 2010; Prowse & Prowse, 2009).

Locally, Zambia's public sector continues to face major challenges in implementing effective performance appraisal systems despite recognizing their importance. The Zambian government introduced performance

management reforms in the early 2000s aimed at improving accountability and service delivery across ministries. However, these initiatives have not yielded the expected outcomes due to weak institutional frameworks and limited leadership commitment (UNESCO, 2018). The Public Service Management Division (PSMD) has continued to express concern over inefficiencies in performance evaluation processes and their limited influence on employee motivation and productivity. According to Armstrong (2015), many Zambian ministries, including the Ministry of Home Affairs, still rely on outdated appraisal systems that emphasize evaluation rather than developmental feedback. Furthermore, the absence of a uniform national performance management policy has led to inconsistent practices, subjective ratings, and minimal linkage between performance outcomes and rewards. Studies by Mwangi and Njuguna (2019) and Homayounizadpanah & Baqerrkord (2022) have shown that the lack of timely feedback and managerial training in Zambia's public institutions has weakened employee engagement and accountability. As a result, public servants often perceive the appraisal process as procedural rather than motivational, thereby undermining its capacity to drive productivity and service efficiency.

Given these realities, it is imperative to assess how the existing performance appraisal system within Zambia's Ministry of Home Affairs affects employee productivity. Understanding these dynamics will contribute to evidence-based policy reforms aimed at strengthening human resource management practices in the public sector.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the Zambian government's efforts to improve public service delivery through the introduction of performance management systems, employee productivity within ministries remains low and inconsistent. Studies have shown that the ineffectiveness of these systems stems from the absence of a comprehensive national policy framework to guide performance management and a lack of top leadership commitment to enforcing appraisal standards (UNESCO, 2018; Armstrong, 2019). In many public institutions, including the Ministry of Home Affairs, performance appraisals are conducted irregularly, often serving as administrative formalities rather than developmental tools to enhance motivation and accountability (Mwangi & Njuguna, 2019). Inadequate feedback mechanisms, insufficient training for supervisors, and political interference in managerial appointments further compromise objectivity and fairness in appraisals (Monari & Wanjau, 2022; Mone & London, 2010). Consequently, employees perceive the appraisal process as punitive or irrelevant to their professional growth, leading to diminished morale, weak goal alignment, and declining productivity (Jackson & Schuller, 2012). Empirical evidence from regional and local studies suggests that when performance appraisals are poorly implemented, they fail to improve efficiency, reward high performance, or identify training needs, resulting in stagnation and reduced public confidence in government institutions (Prowse & Prowse, 2009; Homayounizadpanah & Baqerrkord, 2022). Although the Ministry of Home Affairs employs appraisal tools such as rating scales and Management by Objectives (MBO), these are rarely linked to measurable outcomes or used to inform promotion and reward decisions (Wellins, Bernthal & Phelps, 2006). The persistence of these weaknesses underscores a critical gap between appraisal policy and practice, necessitating an in-depth examination of how existing performance appraisal systems influence employee productivity within Zambia's public sector.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 General objective

The aim of the study is to examine the effects of performance appraisal system on employee productivity

in the public sector.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- To establish types of performance appraisals on employee productivity used in the ministry of home affairs.
- To examine the effects of performance appraisal on employee productivity in the ministry of home affairs.
- To ascertain limitations of performance appraisal on employee productivity in the ministry of home affairs.

1.4 Research Questions

- What are the types of performance appraisals on employee productivity used in the ministry of home affairs?
- What are the effects of performance appraisal on employee productivity in the ministry of home affairs?
- What are the limitations of performance appraisal on employee productivity in the ministry of home affairs?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The Goal Setting Theory was first introduced by Edwin Locke in 1968 and has since been widely recognized as one of the most influential theories of motivation in organizational psychology. Its central idea is that setting specific, measurable, and challenging goals can lead to improved performance compared to vague or easy objectives. Locke argued that individuals perform better when they clearly understand what is expected of them and when they are encouraged to stretch their abilities to achieve meaningful results. Over time, this theory has been refined and expanded, with Locke and Latham (2012) highlighting the significance of structured goal setting as a driver of higher productivity and sustained engagement.

At its core, the theory emphasizes the role of goals as motivational tools that provide direction and purpose for employees. Locke and Latham (2012) outlined four essential conditions that make goals effective: acceptance and commitment to the goal, specificity of the goal, difficulty level of the goal, and continuous feedback on progress. These conditions serve as guiding principles for managers and organizations aiming to maximize employee output. When individuals accept and commit to a goal, they are more likely to direct their efforts toward its accomplishment. Similarly, when goals are specific and challenging, employees tend to push themselves harder, while feedback ensures they remain aligned with the desired outcomes.

Building on this foundation, Lunenburg (2011) identified five key principles underpinning goal-setting theory: clarity, challenge, commitment, feedback, and task complexity. Clarity ensures that employees understand the precise nature of their objectives, avoiding ambiguity that can weaken motivation. The challenge element motivates individuals to exert greater effort when tasks are demanding but attainable. Commitment is strengthened when employees are personally invested in the goals, while feedback allows for adjustments in performance. Finally, task complexity recognizes that goals must be balanced with the employee's skills and available resources to prevent frustration or burnout. These principles make the theory adaptable to various workplace contexts.

The practical relevance of Goal Setting Theory is seen in its application across different levels of life and work. On an individual level, it helps people set personal goals for self-improvement and career

advancement. At the group or departmental level, it strengthens teamwork by aligning collective efforts toward common objectives. At the organizational level, goal setting helps institutions like the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) accomplish their broader mission by linking employee performance with institutional objectives. Even in community or social settings, the theory is applicable when individuals or groups strive to achieve specific social or developmental targets. This flexibility explains why the theory remains highly influential across different fields.

However, despite its strengths, Goal Setting Theory has faced some criticisms and limitations. One challenge concerns whether goals are more motivating when set through a participatory process or imposed by supervisors. Research has shown that both approaches can be effective depending on context: supervisor-set goals backed by clarity and rewards can enhance motivation, while participatory goal setting improves self-efficacy and alignment with organizational strategies (Powers, Koestner, Zuroff, Milyavskaya & Gorin, 2011). Another criticism is that when goals are overly ambitious or unattainable, employees may resort to unethical practices or risky behaviors in pursuit of rewards. Similarly, when too many goals are set at once, employees may focus on a select few while neglecting others, leading to inefficiencies.

Despite these challenges, Goal Setting Theory remains a cornerstone of organizational performance management. Its emphasis on measurable, time-bound, realistic, and smart goals aligns well with modern management practices. For the Kenya Revenue Authority, adopting this theory can significantly enhance planning, monitoring, feedback, and reward systems, thereby boosting employee motivation and overall institutional performance. By fostering goal commitment and providing regular feedback, the authority can create a culture of accountability and achievement. Therefore, Goal Setting Theory is highly relevant to this study, as it underpins the variables of planning, monitoring, and employee motivation.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study added to the body of knowledge on performance management, particularly in relation to the Zambian public sector context. Information on the subject of performance management and productivity in Zambia had remained scanty, and most available sources did not provide up-to-date insights. This research therefore played a crucial role in filling that gap by offering current and context-specific evidence. It served as a reference point for academicians and researchers who sought to conduct further investigations into performance management practices and their implications for employee productivity.The findings of the study were also valuable to policymakers and stakeholders within the human resource management function, including government bodies and employer organizations. They were able to utilize the results to formulate new policies, refine existing procedures, and design best-in-class methods of enhancing employee productivity. Additionally, the findings were applicable in the development and implementation of effective performance management systems. Human resource departments benefited from an assessment of the tools in use and gained a basis for improvement, while also receiving constructive feedback on how organizational goals and objectives could be better achieved.The Ministry of Home Affairs, which was the focus of this research, greatly benefited from the findings. The study provided human resource managers and line managers within the ministry with practical insights on strategies to improve employee productivity. It guided them on how to strengthen goal setting, monitoring, and evaluation processes, while also highlighting the importance of aligning performance management systems with institutional objectives. This helped the ministry to identify best practices and areas that required reform to ensure efficiency in service delivery.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study was limited to assessing the effect of performance management systems on employee productivity in the Zambian public sector, with particular emphasis on the Ministry of Home Affairs. It examined the existing practices, identified their strengths and weaknesses, and explored how they influenced the productivity of employees within the ministry. The study also considered both individual and organizational perspectives in order to provide a holistic understanding of the effects of performance management systems.

1.8 Operational definition of concepts

Employee Performance: Employee performance refers to their output at a minimal cost from the use of their technical skills, raw materials in carrying out work responsibilities. In this case, employee performance is directly linked with appraisal, rewards and feedback (Mwanje, 2010).

Employee Productivity: Productivity can be defined as "quality or volume of the major product or services that an organization provides" (Moorhead & Griffin, 2012).

Feedback: This refers to the information reflecting past performance and results and given by the manager to the employee (Solmon & Podgursky, 2010).

Performance Appraisal: Performance appraisal is where a superior evaluates and judges the work performance of subordinates (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2012).

Performance Management: Performance management practice is a systematic way of communicating to employees on what they are expected to do and what the performance and productivity parameters (Marsor, 2011).

Performance Management: Practice Performance management practice as a systematic way of communicating to employees on what they are expected to do and what the performance and productivity parameters are (Marsor, 2011).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Types of Performance Appraisals on Employee Productivity

Performance appraisal has been described as "the process of identifying, observing, measuring, and developing employee performance in organization" (Carrol & Scheider, 2012). This definition is very important, because it comprises all important components needed for the well-performed appraisal process. Identification criteria orientate the appraisal process to the determination of what has to be examined and the performance related criteria. The observation component means that the supervisors need to frequently observe the identified characteristics (Moulder, 2011). The measurement component indicates that the superior has to translate the observations into a judgmental rating. They have to be relevant, but also must be comparable across raters in the organization (Derven, 2010). By development component, the definition shows that the performance appraisal should not only be the evaluation of the past. The supervisor, who makes the appraisal, should focus on the future and on the improvement of the results (Dzinkowski, 2010; Mone & London, 2010).

The definition also suggests that effective appraisal can improve the employee performance in the organization, which also means increased employee motivation (Jackson & Schuller, 2012). Performance appraisal can and should be linked to performance improvement process and can also be used to identify training needs and potential, agree future objectives, support a career development and solve existing problems (Brown & Benson, 2013).

Researches from Schraeder, Becton and Portis, 2007; Mone and London (2010); Macey, Schneider, Barbera and Young (2009) also identified that the method of personnel appraisal also go a long way in determining the success and competitive positioning of an organization. Prowse and Prowse (2009) study indicates that a number of techniques that can be used to measure performance appraisals. This can be measured by looking at an individual's performance in respect to another, evaluation of their performance in relation to a given set of behaviours in measuring the performance of the workers against the goals of the organization (Mansor, 2011).

Some of these methods as obtained in Prowse and Prowse (2009); Macey, Schneider, Barbera and Young (2009) and Mansor (2011) and are supervisory rating, subordinate rating method, peer rating and the multi-source rating method is based on the information collected from a cross section of the stakeholders who account for the main performance appraisal.

Performance appraisal could be an effective source of management information, given to employees. According to Malcolm and Jackson (2002) there are three main groups of purposes: performance reviews, potential reviews and reward reviews. In Performance reviews, the managers discuss with employees the progress in their current positions, their strengths and areas requiring further development. In regards to the potential reviews, the discussion is on the employees' opportunities for progression, and the type of work they will be fitted for in the future and how this can be achieved. In relation to the reward reviews, the discussion is separate but linked to the appraisal system. The manager communicates decisions on rewards such as pay, benefits or promotion and provides feedback (Blau, 2009).

Performance reviews are focused on contributions to the organizational goals. Outcomes of performance appraisal can lead to improvements in work performance and therefore overall business performance via, for example increased productivity or customer service. Malcolm and Jackson (2002) outline four different benefits for the organization. These are targeted training approach based on identified needs, future employee promotion decisions, effective bases for reward decisions and improved retention of employees. The importance of performance appraisal for training and promotion needs is also discussed (Mullins, 2009).

Mullins (2009) identifies an additional benefit: performance appraisal can help to identify inefficient work practices or reveal potential problems, which are restricting the progress of the company. Derven (2010) and Mullins (2009) suggest that performance appraisal can help the organization to identify the talented employees and future leaders in the company. Derven (2010) believes that there is a straight connection between the job of an individual and the strategic goals of the organization and this can directly increase the profitability of the company. He gives an example that advantage can be achieved when a company builds its appraisal systems on measuring customer satisfaction.

Performance appraisal gives an opportunity to the manager to formally recognize good performance and this would lead to more motivation from the workers (Derven, 2010). Modern systems for performance appraisal depersonalize issues. Supervisors focus on behaviors and results, rather than on personalities. Such systems support ongoing communication, feedback and dialogue about organizational goals. Also they support communication between an employee and a supervisor. Performance appraisal provides a clear target of job standards and priorities and ensures more trust on the relation manager–worker (Derven, 2010).

Other management benefits of Performance Appraisal are the identification of high performers and poor performers as well as the identification of strengths and development areas (Jackson & Schuller, 2012). However, performance appraisal has been criticized to have discrepancy between the theory and the

practical implementation. Bernardin and Klatt (2005); Hall, Postner and Hardner (2009); Maroney and Buckley (2012), report there is a considerable gap between theory and practice and that human resources specialists do not make full use of the psychometric tools available. Counter argument maintained by line managers is that the process needs to be simple and easy to use; otherwise it becomes time consuming and cost ineffective. Another portion of criticism comes with the fact that performance appraisal increases the dependency of the employees on their superiors (Mone & London, 2010).

Where the process is conducted by managers who are often not trained to be appraisers, the genuine feedback is obstructed because it includes subjectivity and bias of the raters, which leads to incorrect and unreliable data regarding the performance of the employee (Jackson & Schuller, 2012).

influenced (Derven, 2010). A good example is the case of a call centre employee. The appraisal of a call centre employee is based on the amount of work they do, the number of calls they receive, the amount of revenue they collect, the average time they spend on each call (Moulder, 2011).

For the purpose of evaluation, the criteria selected have to be in quantifiable or measurable terms. Sometimes, the evaluation criteria lack competence. In this case, the evaluators are required to have the required expertise and the knowledge to decide the criteria accurately. They should have the experience and the training necessary to carry out the appraisal process objectively (Moulder, 2011). This calls for the most appropriate performance evaluation criterion for examining employee past performance.

2.2 Effects of Performance Appraisal and Employee Productivity

Wellins, Bernthal, Phelps (2006) define engagement as extent to which people enjoy and believe in what they do and feel valued for doing it. Employee engagement is assessed through attitudes or organizational climate surveys. Surveys are typically filled in by managers and employees. Scores from the survey are correlating with various business metrics including staff turnover, absenteeism, productivity and sales. Wellins, Bernthal and Phelps (2006) suggests that performance appraisal enables the right employees are place in the right jobs, exceptional leadership and organizational systems and strategies are the key drivers of employee engagement. An organization drives engagement by leveraging three sources of influence for change that includes the employees, leaders and organizational systems and strategies. Such systems foster employee engagements through hiring, promotion, performance management, recognition, compensation, training and career development.

Huselid (2009) found considerable support for the hypothesis that investments in high performance work practices are associated with lower employee turnover and greater productivity and corporate financial performance. Huselid (2009) results were based on a US national sample of nearly one thousand firms and indicated that HR practices that foster high performance also have an economically and statistically significant impact on both intermediate employee outcomes (turnover and productivity) and short- and longterm measures of corporate financial performance. Wright, Gardner and Moynihan (2013) ran a research whose results support the notion that businesses which manage employees by using more progressive HR practices can expect to see higher operational performance as a result. When employees are managed with progressive performance appraisal they become more committed to their organization. At least in part, this commitment leads them to exhibit proper role behaviour (and thus lower workers' compensation costs, higher quality and higher productivity). These operational performance outcomes result in lower overall operating expenses and higher profitability (Blau, 2009).

description of each person's role (Schraeder, Becton & Portis, 2007), communicate that role to them in a concise manner (Mone & London, 2010), and adequately reward or correct their performance (Macey, Schneider, Barbera & Young, 2009). The development of reward management can be seen along the lines

suggested by Etzioni (2005) in terms of coercive (work harder or lose your job), remunerative (work harder and receive more money) and normative (work harder to achieve organizational goals). Such findings are a serious challenge to those who feel that appraisal results and reward outcomes must be strictly isolated from each other.

Randell (2014) reports implicitly that when good performance is observed and then rewarded, the chances of it being repeated are increased, while poor performance is discouraged or even punished to decrease the chance of it happening again. Important issues that help ensure a successful reward process are: rewards can be used effectively to enhance interest and performance; rewards do not undermine performance and interest; verbal rewards lead to greater task interest and performance; tangible rewards enhance motivation when they are offered to people for completing work or for attaining or exceeding specified performance standards. Mone and London (2010) explains that the rewards given for creativity encourage generalized creativity in other tasks; reward systems should support the new dynamics of team-based organizations and reward the right kind of team behavior and performance; reward systems should recognize both the importance of co-operation and the differences in individual performance; problems can occur when reward systems stress individual results even though people have worked together in teams (Gichuhi, Abaja & Ochieng, 2014).

If a company is just developing its appraisal system without a baseline performance to reward accordingly, there is likely to be a problem from the side of the employee which will in turn affect the goal of the organization in general. Appraisals are often developed mostly in the public sectors to reward or recognize employees for a job well done. This kind of motivation for high performers also serves as a challenge for the low performers (Mone & London, 2010).

It has been a culture in Zambian public sector that when appraisals are done, they are often linked with bonuses and not to promotion. Also, it was also observed that appraisal system in the Zambia public sectors does not always ensure that high performer employees are treated fairly with regard to both the appraisal and resulting promotions. In developing an appraisal system for organizations, management needs to think through pay increases and promotions (Moulder, 2011).

A number of studies like Prowse and Prowse (2009); Macey, Schneider, Barbera and Young (2009) have pointed that employees get motivated to work when they get frequent promotions after appraisal system in their work place. While some also argued that factor such as promotion, training and career development, and appreciation and improved work place environment gives employees greater opportunities and this will either directly or indirectly influence their satisfaction on the job (Erdogan, 2012). When high performances are recorded for employees, it must be supported with a basis for pay increases and promotions (Jackson & Schuller, 2012).

However, when developing an appraisal system, the management of the public sectors needs to consider the connection between the appraisal and pay increases or promotions. While performance feedback for development/improvement purposes may be given verbally, a written summary of the individual's work performance must accompany a pay increase or promotion (or demotion or termination) (Derven, 2010). It is crucial that the manager regularly document an employee's job performance. On the other hand, employee promotions may actually serve to decrease productivity due to a lack of continued extrinsic incentives. Moulder (2011) explains that once an employee receives a promotion to indicate that they have achieved the desired goal. The potential for improved productivity may be limited once a goal is achieved because there is little inspiration to continue improving on their productivity (Derven, 2010).

Employee productivity is an assessment of the efficiency of a worker or group of workers. In actual terms, productivity is a component which directly affects the company's profits (Kehinde & Adeagbo, 2020). Productivity may be evaluated in terms of the output of an employee in a specific period of time. Typically, the productivity of a given worker will be assessed relative to an average out for employees doing similar work. It can also be assessed according to the amount of units of a product or service that an employee handles in a defined time frame (Samatha, Amewugah and Mawutor, 2018).

2.3 Limitations of Performance Feedback on Employee Productivity

Effective performance feedback between employees and supervisors is the key to successful organization productivity. Regular feedback helps employees focus their work activities so the employees, the department, and the organization to achieve their goals (Solmon & Podgursky, 2010). It builds accountability, since employees and supervisors participate in developing goals, identifying competencies, discussing career development and employee motivation. However, there are some organizations that fail to provide feedback (Jackson & Schuller, 2012).

Although a few managers may intentionally hold back employee feedback, many are overwhelmed with other management tasks that take up their valuable time. In addition, many organizations lack formal evaluation systems or the managers do not apply the systems that are in place (Banket, 2011).

Without any type of formal system and with many other demands, otherwise good managers often let feedback fall to the wayside. The lack of feedback also leaves good employees unrecognized. Even poor performance may not be given adequate feedback (Solmon and Podgursky, 2010). Many managers often are uncomfortable giving negative feedback to employees. This leads to significant problems where the organization finds itself at a crisis point. Further exacerbating the feedback dilemma is the lack of an organized feedback system in many organizations (Salau, Oludayo & Omoniy, 2014).

Becoming frustrated with traditional performance appraisal systems, many companies have abandoned them altogether and feedback has become a hit or miss proposition. In doing so, feedback has become sporadic and unpredictable (Jackson & Schuller, 2012). But with the change of times, the desire for a more formalized feedback system is becoming essential. Managers have realized that they need to tell their workers when they have done a good job and when they have not. In this instance, silence is not golden (Banket, 2011).

Hinkin and Schriesheim (2012) has revealed that there are three types of managers from those who look for good performance, those who look for poor performance, and those who do very little to reinforce either type of behaviour and those managers who provide the least feedback will have the least satisfied employees.

It improves the effectiveness and helps in decision making within the organization. The feedback directs the individual to the organization missions and objectives. In the ideal situation the employee receives information about how they are performing and where they could improve. Schraeder, Becton and Portis (2009) suggest that performance feedback can serve as way of knowing the employees strength and weaknesses. Performance feedback can also serve as a crucial element that enhances the performance of individual employees in the areas of weakness. For the sustenance of the organization performance, it is important for the top management to frequently provide employees feedback on their efforts and strengthen the progress of their jobs through unbiased feedback. In this regard, performance feedback records needs to be retained for future references (Macey, Schneider, Barbera and Young, 2009).

Salau, Oludayo and Omoniy (2014) explain that the use of 360 degree feedback can also be adopted in evaluating the performance of individual. The purpose of 360-degree performance appraisal is generally

the same as for normal performance appraisal, but it is assumed that the new process offers some advantages: Dalton (2006) argues that it provides people with information about the effect of their action on others in the workplace. From the viewpoint of the ratee 360-degree appraisal thus provides one with a rich, textured and multifaceted opportunity to see oneself as others do. Stark et al. (2008) also believe that a notion of behavioural change might be elicited through a process of enhanced self-awareness. Individuals are forced into a cognitive process of reflection that ultimately results in greater levels of awareness of their own actions and the consequences those actions have on others across various levels in and out of the organisation. One example for the usefulness of 360-degree appraisal stems (Raju & Collins, 2008).

2.5 Establishment of Research gaps

Globally, performance management systems (PMS) have been widely studied as mechanisms for enhancing employee productivity in both public and private organizations. In developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, PMS are often associated with structured performance appraisals, continuous feedback, and clearly defined reward mechanisms (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). For instance, in the United States, the adoption of competency-based appraisal systems has significantly improved accountability and organizational performance. In the United Kingdom, public institutions have incorporated PMS to align employee performance with government policy objectives, thereby ensuring efficiency in service delivery (Guest, 2011). These studies underscore the importance of PMS as a tool for enhancing workforce motivation and productivity when implemented consistently and systematically.

Research in Canada and European Union countries has also emphasized the role of PMS in fostering innovation and productivity. According to DeNisi and Smith (2014), PMS not only facilitates employee evaluation but also enables career development planning, which increases organizational loyalty and reduces turnover rates. In Sweden, government agencies utilize PMS to ensure transparency, fairness, and accountability, particularly in the distribution of rewards and promotions (Boxall & Purcell, 2016). Similarly, German firms have integrated PMS with digital technologies, such as Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS), to provide real-time performance feedback (Kuvaas, 2016). The global evidence demonstrates that countries that successfully integrate PMS into human resource policies experience higher employee engagement, improved service delivery, and sustainable productivity gains across industries.

In the Asian context, countries such as Japan, China, and South Korea have adopted performance management systems tailored to their unique organizational cultures. For instance, Japanese companies emphasize collective performance, teamwork, and long-term career development, linking PMS with continuous training and mentorship programs (Mone & London, 2010). In contrast, Chinese organizations often employ PMS as part of a results-driven approach, focusing on productivity targets and individual accountability (Zhang & Jia, 2010). South Korea has adopted a hybrid model, balancing collective achievements with individual appraisals to foster competitiveness (Kim & Holzer, 2016). These diverse approaches reveal that while PMS is globally relevant, its effectiveness depends heavily on cultural adaptability, management practices, and alignment with national development priorities.

In Australia and New Zealand, PMS implementation in the public sector has been emphasized as a tool for enhancing service delivery and ensuring accountability of civil servants. According to Brown and Benson (2013), the introduction of outcome-based performance systems in government agencies led to improved efficiency, greater employee satisfaction, and accountability to the public. Studies have further

shown that PMS can significantly improve communication between supervisors and subordinates, leading to better goal alignment (Macey, Schneider, Barbera, & Young, 2009). The experience from these countries suggests that even in bureaucratic institutions, PMS fosters a results-oriented culture, thereby bridging the gap between policy objectives and employee performance outcomes. This illustrates the universal importance of PMS in driving productivity.

Global research has also pointed to challenges associated with PMS, particularly in balancing fairness, transparency, and objectivity. Studies in the United States and United Kingdom have noted that poorly implemented appraisal systems may create bias, demotivate employees, and reduce overall performance (Pulakos, 2009). Moreover, employees often perceive PMS as a tool for control rather than development, which undermines trust in management (Wright & Nishii, 2013). To mitigate these challenges, scholars recommend participatory approaches where employees are actively involved in setting performance goals and evaluating results (Aguinis, 2013). This reinforces the idea that while PMS has the potential to enhance productivity, its success depends on fairness, inclusivity, and consistency in execution.

Another global perspective highlights the integration of technology in performance management. With the rise of digital transformation, many organizations in developed countries have shifted to electronic PMS platforms that allow real-time monitoring and data-driven decision-making (Bersin, 2015). For example, multinational corporations such as Google and Microsoft utilize cloud-based systems to track individual and team productivity, align performance with organizational goals, and provide instant feedback (Cappelli & Tavis, 2016). This technological integration reduces administrative burdens, increases transparency, and enhances employee motivation through timely recognition. Such trends indicate that the digitalization of PMS is increasingly becoming a global best practice, which can be adapted even in public institutions in developing countries to improve efficiency and accountability.

The Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR, 2021) highlighted performance contracting as a key mechanism for improving productivity in government agencies. Structured contracts outlining employee responsibilities, targets, and expected results foster accountability and provide clear performance benchmarks. ZIPAR's findings indicated that employees working under performance contracts exhibited higher engagement, better alignment with organizational goals, and improved service delivery. However, challenges such as limited managerial capacity, inadequate monitoring, and political interference often undermined these systems. This suggests that while performance contracting has potential, its success depends on proper implementation, monitoring, and support. Strengthening performance management practices can therefore play a central role in improving employee productivity in Zambia's public sector.

Overall, local empirical evidence suggests that while Zambia has embraced performance management systems in the public sector, implementation challenges limit their effectiveness. Key issues include inconsistent application of appraisals, inadequate feedback mechanisms, reliance on financial rewards, managerial capacity gaps, and resource constraints (Chirwa, 2017; Mwila & Mumba, 2018; Phiri, 2019). Despite these challenges, where PMS is applied consistently and integrated with training, rewards, and feedback, employee productivity improves significantly. These findings underscore the urgent need for strengthened PMS frameworks in Zambia's public institutions to enhance motivation, accountability, and service delivery. The local experience also highlights the importance of tailoring performance management practices to contextual realities, rather than directly importing global models.

2.6 Personal Critique of Literature Review

The review of literature revealed that most studies on performance management systems (PMS) and emp-

loyee productivity have been conducted in Western countries, particularly in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. These studies provide valuable insights into best practices, such as structured performance appraisals, integrated feedback mechanisms, and reward systems that enhance productivity (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Kuvaas, 2016). However, the contexts in these countries differ significantly from Zambia in terms of organizational culture, institutional capacity, and resource availability. For example, public sector institutions in Western countries operate in highly competitive environments with strong accountability mechanisms, which are often absent in Zambia. This discrepancy suggests that while global findings are informative, their direct application in the Zambian public sector may be limited without contextual adaptation.

At the regional level, African studies offered more relevant insights due to similarities in public sector challenges, including limited resources, political interference, and managerial capacity gaps (Nkosi, 2015; Kihoro, 2017). These studies demonstrate that PMS can improve accountability, employee engagement, and service delivery when applied consistently. However, they also highlight persistent implementation challenges that reduce effectiveness, such as lack of training for managers, inadequate monitoring systems, and employee resistance to change. The regional literature underscores the need for context-specific solutions that consider socio-cultural and institutional realities. For Zambia, adopting PMS without addressing these local constraints may yield limited improvements in productivity, emphasizing the importance of tailored frameworks rather than adopting foreign models wholesale.

In conclusion, the literature review highlights both the value and limitations of existing research on PMS and employee productivity. While global studies offer extensive evidence on best practices, regional and local studies reveal significant contextual challenges, particularly in resource-limited public sector environments. For Zambia, the literature underscores the need to strengthen PMS frameworks by integrating consistent appraisal systems, structured feedback mechanisms, balanced reward strategies, and employee participation. The critique also emphasizes the importance of conducting empirical research within the Zambian public sector to generate contextually relevant evidence. Such research can guide policymakers, managers, and stakeholders in designing performance management strategies that effectively enhance employee productivity, accountability, and organizational performance.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design, which was suitable because the problem under investigation was well-defined and did not require exploration of causal relationships between variables. Descriptive research design enabled the researcher to observe and describe phenomena as they naturally occurred, providing a clear and accurate understanding of the effects of performance management systems on productivity (Backlund & Suikki, 2005). The design allowed detailed examination of independent variables such as performance appraisals, reward systems, and performance feedback, and their influence on the dependent variable, employee productivity. Descriptive research also facilitated systematic data collection from multiple sources, allowing the researcher to draw valid conclusions. This design was particularly appropriate for the public sector context, where direct experimentation was impractical, but detailed observation and reporting could generate meaningful insights for policy and practice.

3.2 Target Population and Sampling Design

3.2.1 Target Population

The study focused on all employees of the Ministry of Home Affairs in Lusaka, comprising a total of 50

individuals, including both management and non-management staff. According to Frankel and Wallen (2000), a population represents the group to which research findings are intended to apply. Kumekpor (2002) emphasized that a population consists of all units possessing characteristics relevant to the study. In this research, the population was deemed appropriate because employees had direct experience with performance management practices and could provide insights into how appraisals, feedback, and rewards influenced their productivity. The inclusion of both managerial and non-managerial staff ensured diverse perspectives, making the findings comprehensive and reflective of the Ministry's workforce. This approach provided a rich source of primary data essential for understanding the operational effectiveness of performance management systems.

3.2.2 Sampling Design

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across both management and non-management staff. Stratification allowed the population to be divided into subgroups based on employee roles, ensuring that each subgroup was proportionally represented. This approach enhanced the accuracy and reliability of inferences drawn from the study. Cooper and Schindler (2003) emphasized that a well-structured sampling design outlines procedures for selecting respondents and ensures that the sample reflects the population's characteristics. Within each stratum, respondents were randomly selected to reduce selection bias. The sampling design ensured that all staff categories were included, improving the credibility of findings and enabling meaningful analysis of how performance management practices affected productivity across different employee levels.

3.3 Sample Size Determination

Given the small population size, the study employed a census approach, including all 50 employees as respondents. A census ensures that every member of the population is included in the study, eliminating sampling errors and providing comprehensive data (Cooper & Schindler, 2003). This method allowed the researcher to capture the views of all employees, ensuring that the results reflected the entire Ministry workforce. Using a census was advantageous because it facilitated in-depth analysis of both management and non-management perspectives. The data collected from the entire population provided robust insights into how performance appraisals, reward systems, and feedback mechanisms influenced employee productivity, allowing for a thorough assessment of the Ministry's performance management practices.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The primary data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire, containing both open- and closed-ended questions. Questionnaires were selected because they allowed for standardized data collection from a relatively large population while maintaining consistency in responses (Burns, 2000). The questionnaire was divided into sections covering general demographic information, perceptions of performance appraisals, reward systems, and feedback mechanisms, and their effects on employee productivity. Structured questions enabled quantitative analysis, while open-ended items allowed respondents to provide qualitative insights, adding depth to the findings. Questionnaires were administered directly to employees to ensure clarity of instructions, maximize response rates, and allow for immediate clarification of ambiguous questions. This approach facilitated efficient data collection and captured the experiences and perceptions of all staff categories.

3.5 Data Analysis

Collected data were pre-coded and entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Identifying information, such as names, was removed to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, were used to summarize and

present quantitative data. Data were displayed in tables, graphs, and charts for clarity. Cross-tabulation was conducted to explore relationships between independent variables (performance appraisals, reward systems, and feedback) and employee productivity. This method allowed the researcher to identify patterns, trends, and variations in responses across different staff categories. The analytical approach ensured accuracy, reliability, and validity of results, providing meaningful insights into how performance management practices influenced productivity within the Ministry of Home Affairs.

3.6 Triangulation

Triangulation was applied to enhance validity and reliability by using multiple data sources and techniques to corroborate findings (Patton, 2019). The study incorporated method triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and data source triangulation (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). For instance, data collected through questionnaires were compared with secondary sources, such as employee performance reports and official records, to confirm consistency. Triangulation reduced bias, ensured comprehensive understanding, and strengthened the credibility of findings. By comparing multiple perspectives, the researcher could more accurately assess the effects of performance appraisals, rewards, and feedback on employee productivity. Triangulation also enabled identification of discrepancies or gaps in the data, providing a robust foundation for conclusions and recommendations.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to examining the effects of current performance management systems on employee productivity in the Ministry of Home Affairs. Historical systems, such as the Annual Confidential Reporting System, and alternative approaches like the 360-Degree appraisal and Balanced Scorecard were excluded, as they were either obsolete or adequately covered in previous research (Mark & Ann, 1996; Robert & Norton, 1996). The small population size restricted the generalizability of findings beyond the Ministry. Time and resource constraints also limited the depth of qualitative exploration. Despite these limitations, the study provided valuable insights into the practical implementation of performance management practices and their influence on employee productivity within the Zambian public sector.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the research to safeguard participants from any form of harm, whether physical, psychological, or social. Before data collection, respondents received a formal **introductory letter** explaining the purpose of the study, its relevance, and the procedures to be followed. The letter also emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary and that individuals could decline or withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. **Informed consent** was formally obtained from all participants, ensuring that they fully understood the study's objectives, the type of information being collected, and how the data would be used. This process promoted transparency, allowed participants to make informed decisions, and demonstrated respect for their autonomy and personal rights. By providing clear information and obtaining consent, the researcher established a foundation of trust, which encouraged honest and thoughtful responses.

Confidentiality and anonymity were rigorously maintained throughout the study to protect participants' identities and private information. All data collected were used strictly for **academic purposes**, and no names or personally identifiable information appeared in the questionnaires, records, or reports. The researcher ensured that participants' privacy was respected and that sensitive information was handled securely, minimizing potential risks such as social judgment or professional repercussions. By adhering to these ethical guidelines, the study complied with professional research standards and institutional requirements, enhancing its legitimacy and credibility. Observing these principles also strengthened the

overall quality of the research, as participants felt safe to provide accurate and reliable information, thereby improving the validity of the findings and supporting sound conclusions and recommendations.

4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DICUSSIONS

4.1 Demographics

Table 4.1.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	32	64.0
	Female	18	36.0
Age (Years)	22–29 years	10	20.0
	30–39 years	20	40.0
	40–49 years	12	24.0
	50–60 years	8	16.0
Education	Certificate	6	12.0
	Diploma	14	28.0
	Bachelor's	24	48.0
	Master's	6	12.0
Years of Service	0–2 years	6	12.0
	3–7 years	14	28.0
	8–15 years	18	36.0
	16–30 years	12	24.0
Position level	Operational	30	60.0
	Supervisory	13	26.0
	Managerial	7	14.0
Department	Immigration	12	24.0
	Registration	10	20.0
	HR	6	12
	Finance	7	14.0
	IT	5	10.0
	Logistics	6	12.0
	Other	4	8.0
Employment Type	Permanent	42	84.0
	Contract	8	16.0

The study sample was predominantly male, accounting for 64.0% of respondents, while females represented 36.0% of the workforce. This gender disparity reflects a notable imbalance within the Ministry of Home Affairs, suggesting that male employees occupy a majority of operational and decision-making roles. The age distribution indicated that most respondents fell within the 30–39 years category (40.0%), followed by 40–49 years (24.0%), 22–29 years (20.0%), and 50–60 years (16.0%). This pattern revealed a workforce that is relatively young to middle-aged, combining the advantages of energy and adaptability

with emerging leadership potential. Age diversity within the Ministry may influence workplace dynamics, learning capacity, and receptiveness to performance management initiatives.

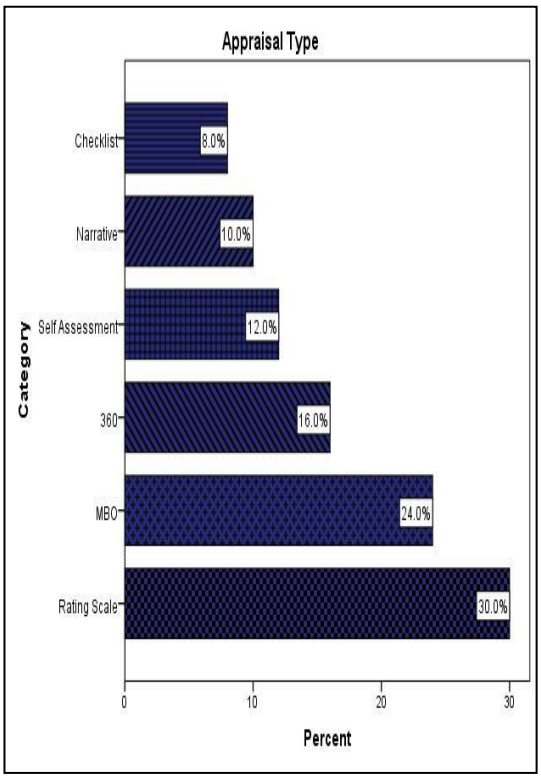
Regarding educational qualifications, the majority of employees held Bachelor's degrees (48.0%), which reflected a moderately skilled and academically competent workforce. A smaller proportion possessed Diplomas (28.0%), while Certificates and Master's degrees each accounted for 12.0% of respondents. The distribution suggests that employees had varying levels of formal education, which could affect their understanding and application of performance management systems, as well as their ability to engage in goal-setting and self-improvement processes. Higher educational attainment, particularly at Bachelor's and Master's levels, may also correlate with increased expectations for career development, recognition, and performance feedback within the organization.

Work experience and position levels further illustrated the workforce composition. Over one-third of respondents (36.0%) had served between 8–15 years, while 28.0% had 3–7 years, 24.0% had 16–30 years, and 12.0% had 0–2 years of service. Operational-level employees made up the largest group (60.0%), followed by supervisory (26.0%) and managerial staff (14.0%), reflecting a typical organizational pyramid with more employees at the base. Departmental representation showed the highest numbers in Immigration (24.0%) and Registration (20.0%), with smaller contributions from HR, Finance, IT, Logistics, and other units. The workforce was predominantly permanent (84.0%), indicating stability and continuity in organizational operations, which likely influences the effectiveness of performance management practices and the sustainability of productivity outcomes.

4.2 The effects of performance appraisal on employee productivity

Patterns of Performance Appraisal and Their Role in Shaping Productivity

Figure 4.2.1: Appraisal Type

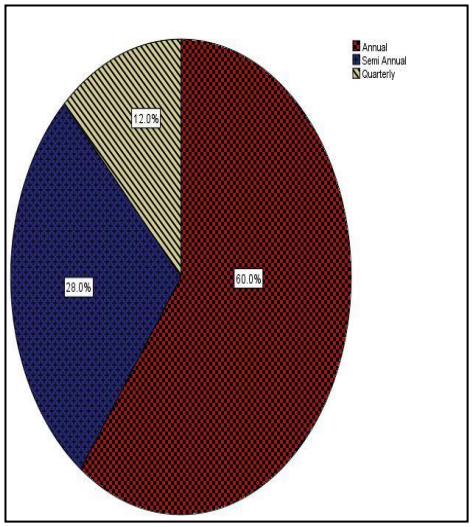


The results reveal a clear preference for certain performance appraisal methods within the Ministry. The rating scale method emerged as the most widely used, cited by 30.0% of respondents. The Management

by Objectives (MBO) approach was the second most common (24.0%), highlighting a strong focus on aligning individual performance with organizational goals. Respondents using MBO often emphasized that "goal-setting makes my work more focused. Other appraisal methods were less frequent. 360-degree feedback accounted for 16.0%, suggesting moderate adoption of multi-source evaluations to capture broader performance perspectives. Self-assessment was reported by 12.0%. The least common methods were narrative assessments (10.0%) and checklists (8.0%). While these may offer qualitative depth or task-specific tracking, their low usage points to a preference for more structured.

Frequency of Performance Appraisals and Their Implications for Productivity

Figure 4.2.2 Frequency of Performance Appraisals



The findings indicate that annual performance appraisals are the predominant practice within the Ministry, reported by 60.0% of respondents. While this approach may allow for in-depth reflection, some respondents hinted that "waiting a whole year for feedback slows my improvement," Semi-annual appraisals accounted for 28.0%. Employees under this system often find it easier to track progress toward targets and receive developmental support in shorter intervals. The least common frequency was quarterly appraisals, at 12.0%, suggesting limited adoption of continuous performance monitoring. While less common, this approach may provide the most immediate feedback loop, potentially fostering quicker productivity improvements.

4.3 The effects of performance appraisal on employee productivity

Table 4.3.1: Relationship between Appraisal Types and Changes in Employee Productivity

ANOVA

Productivity Change

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	279.647	5	55.929	.327	.894
Within Groups	7520.933	44	170.930		
Total	7800.580	49			

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Productivity Change

Tukey HSD

(I) Appraisal Type	(J) Appraisal Type	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Rating Scale	MBO	2.867	5.064	.993	-12.22	17.95
	360	2.033	5.724	.999	-15.02	19.08
	Self Assessment	6.867	6.315	.884	-11.95	25.68
	Narrative	5.133	6.751	.973	-14.98	25.25
	Checklist	-.467	7.357	1.000	-22.38	21.45
MBO	Rating Scale	-2.867	5.064	.993	-17.95	12.22
	360	-.833	5.967	1.000	-18.61	16.94
	Self Assessment	4.000	6.537	.990	-15.47	23.47
	Narrative	2.267	6.959	.999	-18.46	23.00
	Checklist	-3.333	7.548	.998	-25.82	19.15
360	Rating Scale	-2.033	5.724	.999	-19.08	15.02
	MBO	.833	5.967	1.000	-16.94	18.61
	Self Assessment	4.833	7.061	.983	-16.20	25.87
	Narrative	3.100	7.453	.998	-19.10	25.30
	Checklist	-2.500	8.006	1.000	-26.35	21.35
Self Assessment	Rating Scale	-6.867	6.315	.884	-25.68	11.95
	MBO	-4.000	6.537	.990	-23.47	15.47
	360	-4.833	7.061	.983	-25.87	16.20
	Narrative	-1.733	7.917	1.000	-25.32	21.85
	Checklist	-7.333	8.439	.952	-32.47	17.81
Narrative	Rating Scale	-5.133	6.751	.973	-25.25	14.98
	MBO	-2.267	6.959	.999	-23.00	18.46
	360	-3.100	7.453	.998	-25.30	19.10
	Self Assessment	1.733	7.917	1.000	-21.85	25.32
	Checklist	-5.600	8.770	.987	-31.73	20.53
Checklist	Rating Scale	.467	7.357	1.000	-21.45	22.38
	MBO	3.333	7.548	.998	-19.15	25.82
	360	2.500	8.006	1.000	-21.35	26.35
	Self Assessment	7.333	8.439	.952	-17.81	32.47
	Narrative	5.600	8.770	.987	-20.53	31.73

Productivity Change

Tukey HSD[a,b]

Appraisal Type	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05
		1

Self Assessment	6	3.67
Narrative	5	5.40
MBO	12	7.67
360	8	8.50
Rating Scale	15	10.53
Checklist	4	11.00
Sig.		.906

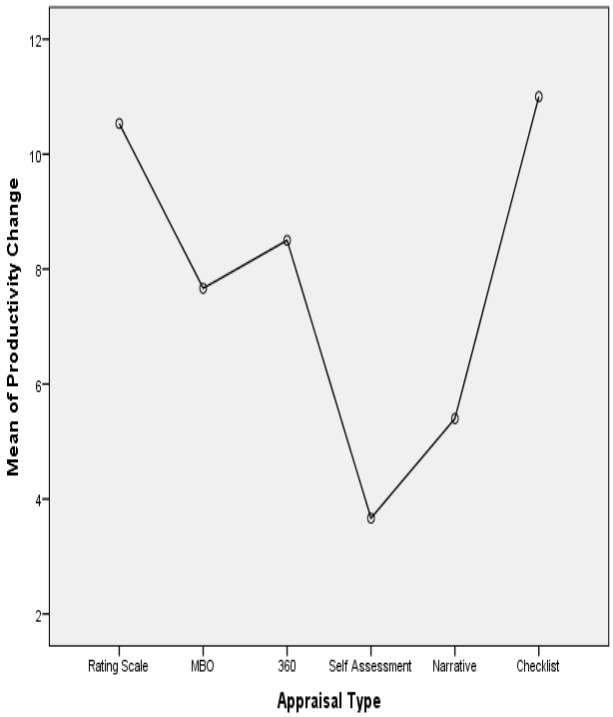
Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.
a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 6.729.
b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted to determine differences in productivity change across the various performance appraisal types revealed no statistically significant variation ($F(5,44) = 0.327$, $p = .894$). This result suggested that, within the Ministry of Home Affairs, the type of appraisal method used—whether Rating Scale, Management by Objectives (MBO), 360-Degree Feedback, Self-Assessment, Narrative, or Checklist—did not have a measurable effect on employee productivity. While performance appraisal is generally assumed to influence outcomes, these findings indicated that other factors beyond the choice of appraisal type may have a stronger role in determining productivity changes, such as managerial support, organizational culture, or employee motivation mechanisms.

Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) test further reinforced this conclusion, as no specific pairs of appraisal types differed significantly from one another. All p-values exceeded the 0.88 threshold, highlighting that differences in mean productivity scores were not statistically meaningful. Although slight variations in mean productivity changes were observed, they were not sufficient to indicate a real effect. The highest mean changes were recorded for the Checklist ($M = 11.00$) and Rating Scale ($M = 10.53$) methods, suggesting that these structured approaches might provide minor benefits in performance tracking or clarity of expectations, even if not statistically significant.

Intermediate productivity changes were noted for the 360-Degree Appraisal ($M = 8.50$), MBO ($M = 7.67$), and Narrative methods ($M = 5.40$), while Self-Assessment ($M = 3.67$) produced the lowest mean change. These results illustrated that multi-source evaluations and goal-aligned methods such as MBO did not significantly outperform other appraisal types in this context, despite theoretical expectations. Overall, the findings suggested that the effectiveness of performance appraisals on productivity may depend less on the method itself and more on the implementation quality, frequency, feedback mechanisms, and the broader organizational environment in which employees operate.

Figure 4.3.2 Relationship between Appraisal Types and Changes in Employee Productivity



4.4 To ascertain limitations of performance appraisal on employee productivity

Table 4.4.1: Influence of Appraisal Limitations on Employee Productivity

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	476.891	5	95.378	.573	.720[b]
	Residual	7323.689	44	166.447		
	Total	7800.580	49			

a. Dependent Variable: Productivity Change

b. Predictors: (Constant), Appeals Filed Last 3years, Bias Reported, Manager Trained On Appraisal, Feedback Provided, Documentation Complete

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	13.705	30.194		.454	.652
	Feedback Provided	-9.042	8.788	-.332	-1.029	.309
	Documentation Complete	5.667	11.777	.218	.481	.633
	Manager Trained On Appraisal	1.682	9.528	.066	.177	.861
	Bias Reported	-5.068	5.327	-.149	-.952	.347
	Appeals Filed Last 3years	4.125	3.766	.207	1.095	.279

a. Dependent Variable: Productivity Change

The regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of specific appraisal limitations on employee productivity, focusing on feedback provision, documentation completeness, manager training on appraisal, reported bias, and appeals filed in the last three years. The overall model explained only a small portion of the variance in productivity change and was not statistically significant ($F(5,44) = 0.573$, $p = .720$). This indicated that, collectively, these factors did not have a strong or measurable impact on employee productivity within the Ministry of Home Affairs. The findings suggested that other unexamined variables, such as organizational culture, employee motivation, or resource availability, may have a greater influence on productivity outcomes than these specific appraisal limitations.

At the individual factor level, none of the predictors reached statistical significance, with all p-values exceeding .27. Among the variables, feedback provision demonstrated the strongest negative relationship with productivity change ($B = -9.042$, $\beta = -0.332$, $p = .309$), suggesting a trend where insufficient or poorly delivered feedback could potentially hinder productivity. Similarly, reported bias exhibited a negative, albeit non-significant, association with productivity change ($B = -5.068$, $\beta = -0.149$, $p = .347$), highlighting that perceived unfairness in appraisals might affect employee performance. These findings underscored the importance of transparent and consistent performance evaluation processes, even if the statistical evidence in this study was limited.

Conversely, documentation completeness ($B = 5.667$, $\beta = 0.218$, $p = .633$) and appeals filed ($B = 4.125$, $\beta = 0.207$, $p = .279$) showed small positive but non-significant associations with productivity change, indicating a potential minor benefit when appraisal records were thorough and employees could raise concerns through formal appeals. Manager training on appraisal had the weakest effect overall ($B = 1.682$, $\beta = 0.066$, $p = .861$), suggesting that training alone may not translate into measurable productivity improvements without other supporting mechanisms. Overall, the results indicated that while appraisal limitations had some influence on productivity, the effects were minimal, emphasizing the need for holistic approaches that integrate feedback quality, fair evaluation, and organizational support to enhance employee performance.

4.5 Discussions

4.5.1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study sample was predominantly male (64.0%) compared to female respondents (36.0%), reflecting a gender imbalance in the Ministry workforce. The largest age group was 30–39 years (40.0%), followed by 40–49 years (24.0%). In terms of educational attainment, almost half (48.0%) held a Bachelor's degree, with smaller proportions having Diplomas (28.0%), Certificates (12.0%), and Master's degrees (12.0%). Work experience varied, though over one-third (36.0%) had served between 8–15 years, highlighting a mix of institutional knowledge and emerging talent. Operational-level employees formed the majority (60.0%), with supervisory (26.0%) and managerial staff (14.0%) comprising the rest, aligning with typical organizational pyramids. Departmental distribution showed the largest representation from Immigration (24.0%) and Registration (20.0%), with smaller groups in HR, Finance, IT, Logistics, and other units. Employment was predominantly permanent (84.0%).

4.5.2: the effects of performance appraisal on employee productivity

The study revealed distinct patterns in the use of performance appraisal methods within the Ministry of Home Affairs, demonstrating a clear preference for structured approaches. The rating scale method emerged as the most widely adopted, with 30.0% of respondents indicating its use. This method, which

involves evaluating employees against predefined criteria, was particularly valued for its simplicity, consistency, and comparability across staff members. Respondents noted that the rating scale provided clear benchmarks for performance assessment and allowed managers to monitor progress systematically. Its widespread use suggests that the Ministry prioritized standardized assessment tools to maintain fairness and clarity in evaluating employee output and aligning it with organizational expectations.

The Management by Objectives (MBO) approach was the second most commonly used method, cited by 24.0% of respondents. This method focuses on setting specific, measurable goals that link individual performance directly to organizational objectives. Employees who experienced MBO emphasized that goal-setting enhanced focus, accountability, and clarity in their daily tasks. The approach encouraged employees to take ownership of their responsibilities and align their efforts with broader departmental and organizational targets. The moderate adoption of MBO highlighted the Ministry's interest in goal-driven performance, reflecting a shift toward results-oriented management practices that aim to improve productivity through clear performance expectations.

Other appraisal methods were used less frequently, with 360-degree feedback reported by 16.0% of respondents. This method involved gathering performance input from multiple sources, including peers, subordinates, and supervisors, to provide a comprehensive view of an employee's performance. Its moderate adoption suggests that the Ministry recognized the benefits of multi-source evaluations, particularly in capturing interpersonal and collaborative skills, but had not fully institutionalized this approach. Self-assessment accounted for 12.0% of usage, allowing employees to reflect on their own performance and identify areas for improvement. While self-assessment encouraged personal accountability, its limited application indicates that it was not considered a primary performance evaluation tool.

The least frequently used methods were narrative assessments (10.0%) and checklists (8.0%), which offer qualitative insights and task-specific tracking, respectively. Their low usage suggests that employees and managers preferred structured, quantitative, and objective appraisal methods over more subjective or descriptive evaluations. The minimal adoption of these qualitative approaches may also reflect challenges in standardization, potential bias, and the additional effort required for documentation and review. Overall, the findings demonstrated that structured appraisal methods dominated within the Ministry, with a strong emphasis on clarity, objectivity, and alignment with organizational goals, highlighting the Ministry's focus on enhancing employee productivity through systematic performance management practices.

4.5.2 Frequency of Performance Appraisals

The study revealed that annual performance appraisals were the most common practice within the Ministry of Home Affairs, with 60.0% of respondents indicating that they underwent evaluations once a year. Annual appraisals offered the advantage of comprehensive review, allowing supervisors to consider employee performance over an extended period. This approach provided opportunities for in-depth reflection on achievements, challenges, and goal attainment. Respondents, however, noted that receiving feedback only once a year sometimes delayed their ability to address performance gaps promptly, which could hinder continuous improvement and limit responsiveness to evolving work demands.

Semi-annual appraisals were reported by 28.0% of respondents, indicating a moderate adoption of more frequent evaluations. This system allowed employees to receive feedback twice a year, providing a balance between reflection and timely performance intervention. Employees under semi-annual appraisals reported that more frequent reviews helped them monitor their progress toward set targets and facilitated

adjustments in their work approach. Supervisors were also able to provide timely support and guidance, enhancing motivation and reinforcing accountability throughout the year.

Quarterly performance appraisals were the least common, at 12.0%, suggesting that continuous performance monitoring had not yet been fully institutionalized. Employees who experienced quarterly evaluations highlighted that this frequency allowed for immediate feedback, quick correction of mistakes, and accelerated personal and professional development. Although resource-intensive for supervisors, quarterly appraisals were seen as a tool to foster continuous improvement, increase engagement, and promote a culture of consistent performance review within departments.

The findings demonstrated a clear preference for less frequent but structured evaluations, with annual and semi-annual appraisals dominating. While these approaches provided systematic performance assessment and alignment with organizational goals, the limited adoption of quarterly appraisals indicated that continuous monitoring and rapid feedback mechanisms were still underutilized. The Ministry appeared to prioritize structured evaluation intervals while balancing administrative feasibility, reflecting a gradual shift toward performance management practices that could optimize employee productivity over time.

4.5.3 To examine the effects of performance appraisal on employee productivity

The study examined the effects of different performance appraisal types on employee productivity within the Ministry of Home Affairs. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences in productivity change across the various appraisal methods. The results indicated no significant differences, with $F(5,44) = 0.327$ and a p-value of 0.894. This suggested that, overall, the type of appraisal method used—whether Rating Scale, Management by Objectives (MBO), 360-Degree Feedback, Self-Assessment, Narrative, or Checklist—did not significantly influence the overall change in employee productivity as measured in this study.

Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test further supported this finding, revealing no significant differences between any specific pairs of appraisal types. All p-values exceeded 0.88, indicating that the observed variations in productivity change between different methods were statistically negligible. The analysis suggested that while employees experienced productivity changes, these were not strongly determined by the particular appraisal technique employed. This highlights that factors other than appraisal type—such as organizational support, feedback quality, or employee engagement—may have greater influence on productivity outcomes.

The mean productivity change scores showed some variation among appraisal methods. Checklist ($M = 11.00$) and Rating Scale ($M = 10.53$) had the highest average changes, suggesting that structured or systematic appraisal approaches may slightly enhance performance monitoring and task completion. On the other hand, Self-Assessment recorded the lowest mean change ($M = 3.67$), which could indicate that when employees evaluate themselves independently, the effect on actual productivity may be limited. Intermediate values were observed for 360-Degree Appraisal ($M = 8.50$), MBO ($M = 7.67$), and Narrative ($M = 5.40$), reflecting moderate impacts on productivity.

Overall, the findings suggested that while performance appraisal is an important component of performance management, the type of appraisal alone did not substantially affect employee productivity in the Ministry. This indicates that appraisal effectiveness may depend more on implementation quality, consistency, and follow-up actions rather than the specific method employed. The results emphasize the need for comprehensive appraisal systems integrated with feedback, training, and recognition mechanisms to achieve meaningful improvements in productivity.

4.5.4: To ascertain limitations of performance appraisal on employee productivity

The study further sought to ascertain the limitations of performance appraisal and their influence on employee productivity. Regression analysis was employed to determine the extent to which specific appraisal limitations—namely provision of feedback, completeness of documentation, manager training on appraisal, reported bias, and appeals filed within the last three years—affected productivity changes. The overall model was not statistically significant ($F(5,44) = 0.573$, $p = .720$), suggesting that these factors, collectively, explained only a small proportion of the variance in productivity. This indicates that while these limitations exist, they do not individually or collectively have a strong predictive effect on productivity outcomes within the Ministry.

At the individual factor level, none of the predictors reached statistical significance, with all p-values exceeding 0.27. Feedback provision demonstrated the strongest negative relationship ($B = -9.042$, $\beta = -0.332$, $p = .309$), implying a potential trend where reduced or ineffective feedback might be associated with lower employee productivity. Although not statistically significant, this finding aligns with theoretical expectations that timely and constructive feedback is critical for guiding performance improvements and employee engagement. Reported bias also showed a negative, albeit non-significant, effect ($B = -5.068$, $\beta = -0.149$, $p = .347$), suggesting that perceived unfairness in appraisals may negatively influence work outcomes.

Conversely, certain appraisal elements demonstrated small positive associations with productivity. Completeness of documentation ($B = 5.667$, $\beta = 0.218$, $p = .633$) and appeals filed within the last three years ($B = 4.125$, $\beta = 0.207$, $p = .279$) were positively, though insignificantly, linked to productivity change. These results suggest that thorough record-keeping and the ability to challenge appraisal outcomes may provide a sense of transparency and fairness, potentially supporting employee motivation. Manager training on appraisal had the weakest impact ($B = 1.682$, $\beta = 0.066$, $p = .861$), highlighting that formal training alone may not be sufficient to significantly influence productivity without accompanying structural and behavioral support mechanisms.

The findings indicate that limitations in the performance appraisal system, while present, did not have a statistically significant effect on employee productivity. The trends observed suggest that ineffective feedback and perceived bias may have negative implications, whereas systematic documentation and structured appeal processes could support productivity improvements. These results underscore the importance of complementing appraisal systems with consistent follow-up, mentoring, and performance-oriented organizational practices to enhance their effectiveness in boosting employee performance.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study findings indicate that performance appraisal practices within the Ministry show a clear preference for structured and standardized methods. Among the appraisal techniques, the rating scale method was the most widely used, cited by 30.0% of respondents. This preference suggests that the Ministry prioritizes quantifiable and easily comparable evaluation approaches that can be uniformly applied across employees and departments. Rating scales offer measurable indicators for employee performance, reducing subjectivity and ensuring consistency. Their widespread use reflects an emphasis on fairness and objectivity, aligning with best practices in public sector performance management. Such methods provide managers with tools to monitor progress, identify areas for development, and support organizational decision-making processes efficiently.

Management by Objectives (MBO) emerged as the second most common appraisal method, representing 24.0% of the responses. This indicates the Ministry's focus on aligning individual employee objectives with broader organizational goals. Employees engaged in MBO reported that goal-setting improved clarity regarding expected outcomes, motivation, and accountability. The use of MBO reflects an effort to integrate performance evaluation with strategic objectives, ensuring that individual contributions are measured in relation to the Ministry's operational and long-term goals. The findings imply that goal-oriented appraisal methods can facilitate employee engagement, enhance focus, and foster a results-driven culture. MBO emphasizes the importance of measurable objectives, promoting systematic assessment of achievements and encouraging employees to take responsibility for their performance.

360-degree feedback, reported by 16.0% of respondents, was moderately adopted within the Ministry. This method incorporates evaluations from multiple sources, including supervisors, peers, and subordinates, capturing a comprehensive perspective of employee performance. Although not widely used, its adoption suggests a recognition of the value of multi-source assessments, which provide a more holistic understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. The approach supports transparency and accountability while fostering a culture of feedback. However, the lower prevalence may indicate challenges in implementation, such as increased administrative effort, potential resistance from employees, or lack of technical capacity. Despite these challenges, 360-degree feedback remains an effective tool for comprehensive performance evaluation when integrated with other structured appraisal methods.

Other appraisal methods, including self-assessment (12.0%), narrative assessments (10.0%), and checklists (8.0%), were the least frequently used. These techniques provide qualitative depth and allow employees to reflect on their achievements, behaviors, and development needs. The limited use suggests a preference for more objective and standardized methods, which are easier to quantify and compare across the Ministry's workforce. While narrative and self-assessment methods encourage individual reflection and personal accountability, their low adoption may indicate managerial preference for simpler, more administratively efficient tools. The findings highlight a tension between qualitative appraisal benefits and operational practicality, suggesting that balancing structured and reflective methods could enhance employee development and engagement without overburdening the evaluation process.

Appraisal frequency analysis revealed that annual reviews are the most commonly practiced, representing 60.0% of respondents. Annual appraisals provide managers with an opportunity to assess long-term performance trends and deliver comprehensive feedback. However, some employees expressed concern that receiving feedback only once per year slowed their ability to make timely improvements. Semi-annual appraisals, reported by 28.0% of respondents, offer more frequent evaluation cycles, enabling quicker adjustments to performance and the provision of timely developmental support. Quarterly appraisals were the least common, accounting for 12.0% of responses, reflecting limited adoption of continuous monitoring. These findings highlight the need to balance the depth of annual evaluations with the responsiveness of more frequent review cycles.

Statistical analysis, including ANOVA and Tukey's HSD post-hoc comparisons, revealed no significant differences in productivity changes across various appraisal types. All p-values exceeded .88, indicating that the type of appraisal method alone did not substantially influence productivity outcomes. Although mean productivity scores varied slightly, Checklist ($M = 11.00$) and Rating Scale ($M = 10.53$) recorded the highest changes, while Self-Assessment ($M = 3.67$) had the lowest. Intermediate means were observed for 360-degree feedback ($M = 8.50$), MBO ($M = 7.67$), and Narrative assessments ($M = 5.40$). This

suggests that productivity is influenced more by factors beyond the appraisal method, including employee motivation, management practices, and organizational culture, rather than the appraisal technique in isolation.

The study examined appraisal limitations and their effect on productivity using regression analysis. The identified limitations—including provision of feedback, completeness of documentation, manager training, reported bias, and appeals filed in the past three years—explained only a small proportion of productivity variance. The overall model was not statistically significant ($F(5,44) = 0.573$, $p = .720$), suggesting that these factors had minimal impact on observed productivity changes. These findings imply that while appraisal limitations exist, they alone cannot account for differences in employee performance, highlighting the need to consider additional contextual and systemic factors when assessing productivity outcomes within public sector institutions.

Feedback provision showed the strongest negative relationship with productivity ($B = -9.042$, $\beta = -0.332$, $p = .309$), although it was not statistically significant. This trend indicates that reduced or ineffective feedback may hinder employee improvement and limit performance gains. Similarly, reported bias demonstrated a negative, though non-significant, relationship ($B = -5.068$, $\beta = -0.149$, $p = .347$). These findings suggest that employees' perceptions of fairness and timely communication play a role in engagement and performance, even if not directly measurable in quantitative analyses. Managers need to ensure that feedback is delivered constructively and consistently to enhance performance and trust in the appraisal system.

Conversely, documentation completeness ($B = 5.667$, $\beta = 0.218$, $p = .633$) and appeals filed within the last three years ($B = 4.125$, $\beta = 0.207$, $p = .279$) showed small positive associations with productivity, though they were not statistically significant. This suggests that having accurate records and opportunities to appeal assessments may contribute slightly to improved outcomes, likely by enhancing transparency and accountability. Manager training on appraisal had the weakest impact overall ($B = 1.682$, $\beta = 0.066$, $p = .861$), indicating that training alone is insufficient to drive measurable productivity changes without complementary organizational support, clear objectives, and ongoing performance management practices.

Overall, the study findings indicate that structured appraisal methods, particularly rating scales and MBO, dominate performance evaluation practices within the Ministry. Although annual appraisals remain the standard, more frequent evaluation cycles, such as semi-annual or quarterly reviews, could provide timely feedback and foster incremental productivity improvements. While quantitative analyses show no statistically significant differences in productivity changes between appraisal types, trends suggest that effective feedback, perception of fairness, and documentation completeness may influence employee engagement and motivation, underscoring the need for a holistic approach to performance management.

The results also highlight the limitations of relying solely on appraisal methods to improve productivity. While appraisal systems provide structure and standardized assessment, they are insufficient to generate measurable performance change without integration into broader management processes. Performance improvement depends on factors such as leadership support, organizational culture, employee motivation, and continuous development initiatives. Addressing these elements alongside structured appraisal methods can enhance effectiveness, ensuring that evaluation processes contribute to both individual and organizational growth. This underscores the importance of linking performance appraisal with comprehensive human resource management strategies.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that while performance appraisal methods are widely utilized and structured, their direct effect on employee productivity is limited. Both rating scale and MBO approaches

are preferred, reflecting a focus on measurable outcomes and goal alignment. The predominance of annual appraisals may delay feedback, suggesting that a combination of annual and more frequent reviews could better support employee development. Statistical analyses indicate that appraisal limitations have minimal measurable impact on productivity, emphasizing the need for integrated strategies that combine feedback, training, engagement, and organizational process improvements. Future performance management initiatives should adopt holistic approaches to enhance public sector productivity effectively.

5.2 Recommendations

1. The study recommends the need to examine the relationship between performance appraisal and employee performance by incorporating both organization structures and processes with the focus of increasing employees' commitment and performance.
2. The supervisors should discuss attainable goals with the employees and there should be regular reviews. Timely feedbacks should be discussed with the individual employees. Those that achieve their targets
3. The performance of the public sector has seemingly been below the expectation of many stakeholders including citizens and this cause for concern from every well-meaning Zambian thus the need to build up on functions of management.

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