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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON SERVICE DELIVERY

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Performance management within the Public Service in Namibia was announced in 2006, but it took almost eight years to be attended with all permanent secretaries signing for it only in 2014 in front of the Prime Minister. Since performance management started with permanent secretaries, the need to find out the preparedness of employees and the perceived effective implementation of performance management prompted the carrying out of this study. A study was carried out to investigate the perceptions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs employees towards performance management and its impact on service delivery. The study focused on investigating how employees perceived the effectiveness of performance management in public service delivery. The study will benefit the Ministry of Foreign Affairs considering the complaints often poor service delivery often made against public servants. Using the quantitative research methodology, the study surveyed a sample of 80 employees who were randomly selected using the systematic random sampling strategy. The data from questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics. The study found that employees had positive perceptions towards performance management. The study found out that performance management was described as enhancing a link between organisational objectives and employee key responsibilities that promote effective communication and identification of training needs. Finally, the study also found that there are current barriers which could negatively affect the implementation of performance management. Inadequate skills and know-how of the process of performance management by both employees and management could affect the successful implementation of performance management. In conclusion, the study established that weak commitment to performance management by top management could negatively affect the implementation of performance management. These identified barriers led the study to recommend hands on performance management training for both employees and managerial staff. The study further suggested pilot testing the programme and making use of external specialists.

INTRODUCTION

Although performance management as a strategic management tool has a long history dating back to the 1800s, it is primarily in the last two decades that public sector performance management has received much attention (Bohn, 2010:2). The process of managing people has become more formalised and specialised through implementing performance management to ensure effective and efficient public service delivery. It is a common feature that most newly independent states experience challenges in running the public service machinery because of deprivation of key decision-making authority by the colonial masters. Namibia is one of the newly independent states which experienced challenges in public service delivery and the government introduced performance management in 2006. However, since then, performance management has been put on hold with indications that it was going to be implemented soon. This study intended to find out from employee perspectives on what they think about performance appraisal and whether the performance management would

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improve service delivery in the public service. This chapter presents the background to the study, the research statement, research questions and objectives, the significance and the limitations of the study.

Research Objectives

The research objectives are:

- To assess the awareness and preparedness of employees in implementing performance management in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
- To determine employees' perceptions on the effective implementation of performance management;
- To establish the possible challenges that may be encountered in implementing performance management within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and
- To make recommendations for improving performance management to enhance quality service delivery.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organisations depend on their human resources to achieve competitive edge over their competitors and performance management has been implemented to ensure that human resources discharge their responsibilities to their maximum. This chapter reviews and discusses the role of performance management in organisations. The chapter first defines the concept performance management and then briefly outlines the history of performance management. The next part discusses selected theories of performance management. The last section of the literature review discusses the benefits and limitations of performance management.

The Concept of Performance Management

Employee Performance Management is a process for establishing a shared workforce understanding about what is to be achieved at an organisational level (Nel, Van Dyk, Haasbroek, Schultz, Sono and Werner, 2005:475). It is about aligning the organizational objectives with the employees' agreed standards, skills, competency requirements, development plans and the delivery of results. The emphasis is on improvement, learning and development in order to achieve the overall business strategy and to create a high performance workforce (Bohn, 2010:5). Performance management is also defined by Heslin, Carson and Walle (2010:2) as, "all the initiatives managers undertake to guide and motivate high performance".

Such initiatives have traditionally focused on providing formal performance appraisals, rewards, and recognition for high performance, as well as taking remedial action to address performance deficiencies. Performance management can also facilitate adaptability and continually improving performance in rapidly changing contemporary workplaces (Nel *et al.*, 2005:475). Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk and Schenk (2008) supported by Agarwal (2011) noted that there is often confusion between the concepts performance management and performance appraisal. Swanepoel *et al.* (2008:369) defined performance appraisal as, "a systematic process by means of which the job relevant strengths and weaknesses of employees

are identified, observed, measured, recorded and developed." According to this definition, identification refers to singling out employee strengths and weaknesses. Through the performance cycle, the employee is continuously observed. Nel *et al.* (2005:475) stated that observation helps to monitor performance so that accurate rating is done. If any performance deficiencies are observed, performance appraisal further comes up with training needs. It is evident from this outline of the process of performance appraisal that it is a process of employee development. Performance appraisal, employee appraisal, performance review, or career development are all methods by which the job performance of an employee is evaluated generally in terms of quality, quantity, cost, and time typically by the corresponding manager or supervisor (Swanepoel *et al.*, 2008:370). The concept of performance appraisal shows that it is part of performance management (Agarwal, 2011). In this study performance appraisal was taken as an element of the performance management process.

History of Performance Management

Performance management systems, in various forms, have been employed for nearly two millennia (Huprich, 2008:1). In the third century AD, the Chinese were not only using performance appraisal systems but were critiquing each other's biases in their evaluations of their employees. However, Armstrong (2009:10) notes that during the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century, factory managers became aware of the importance of their employees' performance on their production. The development of the philosophy of performance management systems has been attributed to researchers and philosophers such as Peter Drucker and Douglas McGregor, who developed ideas of management by objectives (MBOs) and employee motivation (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012:225). Spreigel reported in 1962 that by the early 1960s more than 60% of American organisations had a performance management system. The system's popularity stemmed from the Army's implementation of a performance management system for its officers. Since then, performance management kept on evolving and came in Taylor's pioneering Time and Motion studies which culminated in the famous scientific management model (Weber, 2008).

Swanepoel *et al.* (2008:6) noted that in Taylor's view, the task of factory management was to determine the best way for the worker to do the job, to provide the proper tools and training, and to provide incentives for good performance. It is clear from Taylor's organisation that the concept of performance management was already being practised. Taylor's theory postulated that hard work was supposed to be rewarded to motivate the employee (Armstrong, 2009:10). The theory resulted in the acknowledgement of the role of supervisors and emphasised the importance of controlling and training employees to equip them with the necessary skills (Mello, 2008:429). In an effort to reward high performers, performance appraisal was introduced and rating was based on achievement of key responsibilities (Armstrong, 2009:10). Management by Objectives (MBO) and performance rating were implemented to complement each other. However Marchington and Wilkinson (2012:225) noted that after realising the weaknesses of performance rating and MBO,

performance management was introduced. According to Armstrong (2009:10), performance management was found to be a holistic employee improvement programme since it is a continuous process focused on developing the employee as opposed to performance appraisal (Armstrong, 2009:10).

Benefits of Performance Management

Provided performance management is implemented correctly with specific objectives tied to the strategic and operational plan, organisational performance outcomes will likely increase very quickly (Agarwal, 2011). For example, if the CEO asked for a 3% increase in gross margin, this objective would be cascaded down to every department, team and individual who can influence the increase in gross margin. Those who are successful at achieving this objective will get a favorable review while those that could not will get an unfavorable performance evaluation in the absence of extenuating circumstances (Agarwal, 2011). The process of performance management therefore drives organisational performance outcomes. Employees who achieve the organisational goals are rewarded with favourable reviews and bonuses in line with their performance and contribution to the organisation (Lichielo, 2009).

Heinrich (2013:16) contended that performance management creates an environment where the employee and manager communicate more frequently and agree on changed objectives to suit continuing changes in conditions and priorities. Sharing similar views, Bohn (2010:2) described communication as an inclusive and collaborative process, which ensures that the employee has input and does not feel she/he has wasted the year. The employee works towards specific objectives that are in line with departmental goals. If the organisation is using a performance management product that has a performance diary, both the manager and employee attend the review meeting with copies of their performance diary notes. This contains content from the performance period to be reviewed. Given that both have a record of previous performance, the employee and the supervisor will find it easy to agree on present performance (Bohn, 2010:2).

Where there is a well-structured Performance Management System that is effectively communicated, both the employee and the manager enter the process with better levels of confidence as there are rules that clearly stipulate what is being assessed (Heinrich, 2013:16). Employees are assessed on achievement of objectives that have been clearly identified and agreed to. Managers have a better framework to assess an employee's performance as they are familiar with the criteria to assess the employee. As observed by Lichielo (2009:13), the outcome is that both individuals have an informed decision and focus on achievement of both personal and business objectives, not on issues that are irrelevant. Heinrich (2013:16) observes that where performance reviews happen more frequently, the discussion centres on performance of objectives rather than being dominated by the employees' needs. The needs of the business are discussed more frequently to achieve specific performance outcomes (Sharpe, 2012). This means both the employee and manager communicate more effectively and achieve better outcomes. Emotionally charged discussions tend to be displaced by

business focused discussions on achievement of objective outcomes (Bohn, 2010). Agarwal (2011) noted that objectives can be adjusted and modified to suit changing business conditions by conducting more frequent reviews. This dramatically increases the probability that the objectives are relevant and are able to be acted upon during the performance period. By conducting frequent performance reviews, visibility is increased dramatically. Areas of non-performance receive much more focus and attention and problems can be acted upon much quicker. Lichielo (2009) observed that most Performance Management Systems provide reporting as to who has or has not achieved their objectives (departments and individuals). Adjustments to objectives or strategy can then be made to ensure that the intended outcomes are achieved. Alternately, expectations can be modified as appropriate. By reviewing more frequently, all managers and employees start to plan and execute to reflect on objectives. This results in better resource management and enables managers to work on the business, not in the business (Lichielo, 2009).

Bohn (2010) and Agarwal (2011) noted that given that most Performance Management Systems require managers and employees to commit to a development plan, employees experience real personal development and become more engaged with the organisation. They feel part of the organisation and start to understand that they and the organisation are interdependent. Thus, the organisation is developing the employee and the employee is working towards developing the organisation by achieving its goals (Agarwal, 2011). In addition, Lichielo (2009) observed that the majority of Performance Management Systems are able to provide graphical compliance reports. Therefore, the setting of objectives and development plans for employees can no longer be ignored. Employees see real planning, are involved in setting meaningful objectives and have input into personal development plans which benefit both themselves and the organization. The result of employee participation results in an engaged workforce who are extremely committed to achieving real outcomes for the organisation (Lichielo, 2009).

Swanepoel *et al*. (2008:370) contended that that performance management information is used for administrative and employee development purposes. For administrative purpose, information generated by performance appraisal is used for placement, promotions and human resource planning. For professional development purposes, the information is used for identifying strengths and weaknesses and then reinforcing strengths and attending to weaknesses through coming up with training needs. Commenting on performance management as a motivating factor for employees to perform outstandingly, Williams (2002:12) is of the opinion that an effective Performance Management System can help an employee reach their full potential and this is positive for both the employee and manager. A good manager takes pride in watching an employee grow and develop professionally. Therefore, Mello (2008:429) stated that organisations should take a global look at their Performance Management System and have very objective goals that are tied to strategic initiatives and the performance management process. Successful organizations have learned the secret to this and while not always perfect, a constant striving to improve the performance management process can help organisations reach their vision (Mello,

2008:429). Performance management creates positive attitudes among employees towards the programme, enhances the achievement of organisational goals and creates healthy relationship between the employee and the supervisors.

Limitations of Performance Management

However, there are many reputable sources, researchers, management commentators and psychometricians who have expressed doubts about the validity and reliability of the performance management (Nel *et al.*, 2005:483; Swanepoel *et al.*, 2008:474; Bednarz, 2014:5). Some have even suggested that the process is so inherently flawed that it may be impossible to perfect it (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2012). While the use of performance rating is endorsed, there are many different opinions on how and when to apply it. There are authorities, for instance, who believe that performance management has many important employee development uses, but disrepute any attempt to link the process to reward outcomes such as pay rises and promotions (Williams, 2002). There is a belief that such human weaknesses of bias, leniency and strictness may affect final performance ratings hence employees may develop negative attitudes towards performance management (Kartz, 1995:38 cited in Nel *et al.* 2005:477). Swanepoel *et al.* (2008:380) noted that incidents of judgmental bias of performance can happen because supervisors may not be experts in carrying out such tasks.

Sprenkle cited in Nel *et al.* (2005:474) noted that inherent limitations in performance management have led to its failure in many organisations. Inadequate training by both managers and subordinates has been observed as the most critical barrier to successful implementation of performance management (Rajendran, 2012). According to Nel *et al.* (2005:474), if performance management is introduced before managers are adequately trained, managers may seek favours among staff members and by doing so violate the ethics of performance management and as a result goals are difficult to express precisely and leaders do not set the example. These difficulties as observed by Swanepoel *et al.*, (2008:474) have resulted in organisations setting performance management and failing to implement the plans in time. This could be the case with the Namibian Public Service performance Management set in 2006 and up to now not yet implemented.

Bednarz (2014:5) observed that performance management activities can put pressure on time which results in doing some processes as not expected, for example, because of other management commitments a performance review may fail and this may compromise the process. There is therefore need for the supervisors to give it time since it becomes one of the key deliverables of the manager. Bednarz (2014) also raised the issue of keeping notes and accurate records of employee behaviour and performance. Such records will help during reviews and final rating. Expressing similar views, Oberoi and Rajgarhia (2012:8) noted that it is common that people struggle with memory, so it is critical to document to help the manager and the employee refer to past events of the performance management process. These limitations may compromise the successful implementation of performance management and also lead to resistance by the employees.

Strategies to Improve on Effectiveness of Performance Management

Human resources determine the success of failure of performance management and Erasmus, Loedolff, Mda and Nel (2010:2) suggested that the solution lies in continuous training. Training is viewed as task-oriented improvement programmes meant to develop skills, attitudes and behaviour which will enable the employee to achieve the goals of the organisation (Erasmus *et al.*, 2010:2). Considering that some of the performance management programmes take years to be implemented, training which employees receive the time the programmes are to be introduced become obsolete because of time lapse. Oberoi and Rajgarhia (2012:8) supported continuous training as a way of keeping abreast with any changes.

While performance management is viewed as a tool which can be a source of an organisation competitiveness, research results on its implementation and effectiveness in organisations are not impressive, for example a study which found that out of 450 organisations less than 5% of the employees and managers were satisfied by performance management. Teijlingen and Hundley (2010) suggested that large programmes such as performance management covering the whole country be pilot tested. Pilot studies can give advance warning about what barriers performance management may meet. The barriers can then be addressed before full scale roll out of the performance management programme (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2010:1). Employees in the public service in most cases make the largest group of employees and introducing performance management at once and may mean large amounts of money lost if it fails. The suggestion of pilot testing performance management may save money, time and failure frustration.

Looking at the challenges of implementing performance management and reducing the chances of failure, Lotich (2013) suggested the use of external consultants to kick start the programme and run it until the managers are used to the programme. According to Lotich (2013) external consultants as specialists with no political alliances, will bring in new ideas which may shake up the current organisational culture and will focus on their contract agreement. Looking at the public service and its size in terms of workforce numbers, hiring external consultants may balloon the wage bill. While noting the positive role of external consultants, Lotich (2013) feels that because of being outsiders it may take time to learn and fit into the culture of the organisation and when they leave, the gap created may be difficult to fill. For these reasons, Oberoi and Rajgarhia (2012:8) suggested training and using internal staff to run performance management would be beneficial to the system.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Rationale for Research Methodology

This was a descriptive study in which an assessment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs employees' perceptions on performance management and its impact on service delivery was undertaken. This design was suitable as the study wanted

to describe employee perceptions and the impact of such on service delivery. Quantitative research approach has been used as the aim was to gauge views and opinions of the employees in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through a survey; which was apt to collect data from numerous respondents quickly and in the most cost effective manner.

Target Population

Population is defined as individuals in the universe who possess specific characteristics which are of interest to the researcher (De Vos *et al*., 2009:193). In this study, the population was made up 320 employees working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Windhoek. The employees qualified and were suitable to be respondents because they were adults making it ethical to involve them in research with their consent and they were mature enough with the ability to evaluate the Public Service Performance Management System. The employees were rich sources of data since they directly experienced the introduction of the Performance Management System in the Public Service of Namibia.

Sampling Strategy

There are basically two types of sampling, namely; probability and non-probability sampling (Maree, 2011:172). In probability sampling, each element in the population has a known non-zero chance of being selected while in non-probability sampling the odds of selecting a particular element are not known (De Vos, *et al*., 2009:201). A sample is thus studied in order to understand the population from which it was drawn (De Vos, *et al*., 2009:194). A sample of 80 employees was selected using systematic random sampling. Stocker (1985) cited in De Vos *et al*. (2009:196) suggested 25% sample representation for a population of 320. Then using systematic random sampling the sample was selected as follows:

Total population size   = 320
Sample size (25% of 320)   = 80
Systematic random selection = Total population/sample size
                                         = 320/80
                                         = 4 (4th employee in the register was chosen)

The measure of a respondent's opinions on how strongly he/she agrees or disagrees to a particular phenomenon (Maree, 2011:166) was determined within the ambit of the study.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. While data analysis of Likert scales depends on the type of data collected and the research questions, Hall (2012) and Mogey (2012) agreed that the agree/disagree questions are best analysed using descriptive statistics. However, Hall (2012) and Mogey (2012) hinted that a common mistake of calculating a numerical average, or mean value of the coded responses may occur. The mean value was not a valid method for analysing Likert scale data, which are ordinal in nature. In this study, data was tabulated according to frequency response for each item and then categorised as totals of agree and disagree.

Excel was used to display data spreadsheets and draw tables and graphs. The data analysis plan presented data in graphs.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted in one ministry of the public service and the results cannot be generalised to the whole public service in Namibia. Since the study used the employees as respondents, feelings of being assessed may affect responses. To reduce this effect, employees were told that the study is not assessing the employees but the performance management instrument.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Data Presentation, Discussion, Analysis and Interpretation

Findings are presented question by question and after presentation, the findings are discussed, analysed and interpretation is made.

Employees' Awareness of Key Result Areas

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed, disagreed or were neutral on the awareness of their key result areas. The strongly agreed and agreed responses were added to come up with positive response while the strongly disagreed and disagreed were added to come up with negative response and the neutral responses were presented as indicated by the respondents. The results are shown in Figure 4.1.
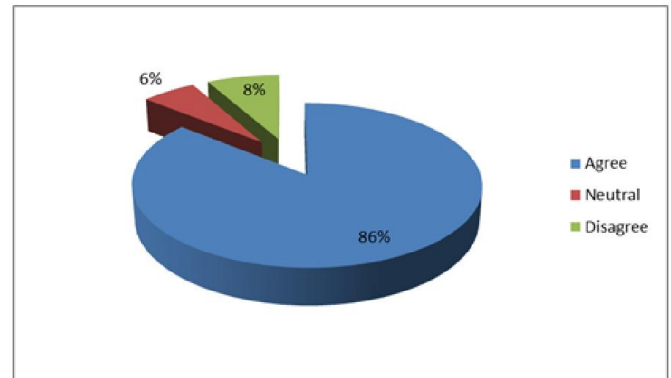

Figure 4.1. Employees' Awareness of Key Result Areas

As illustrated on Figure 4.1, majority of the respondents (86%) indicated that they were aware of their key result areas while 8% indicated that they were not aware of their key result areas. The remaining 6% of the respondents expressed neutrality to this question. As 86% of the respondents indicated that they were aware of their key result areas, these results show without doubt that the majority of the employees were well informed of their work expectations. As stated in the Performance Management System for the Public Service of Namibia, Principles and Framework (PMS) (2005:48), employees need to be well versed in their key responsibilities and related competencies. Key responsibilities and competencies make the basic information for drawing up Personal Development Plans (PDP) (Performance Management System for the Public Service of Namibia,

Principles and Framework, 2005:65). Commenting on importance of employees being aware of their key result areas Oberoi and Rajgarhia (2012:1) stated that it facilitates drawing PDPs which are in line with the organisational goals which according to performance management process are prerequisite to formulation of realistic performance management plans (Hall, 2005:8). Therefore, in this study the fact that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs were aware of their key responsibilities implies that drawing up personal development plans would be easy and this would facilitate the first stage of the performance management process; that of developing personal development plans.

Employees' Ability to Devise SMART Objectives

The respondents were asked to indicate whether they could devise SMART objectives. SMART objectives would enable showing the intended performance. The following results in Figure 4.2 were obtained.
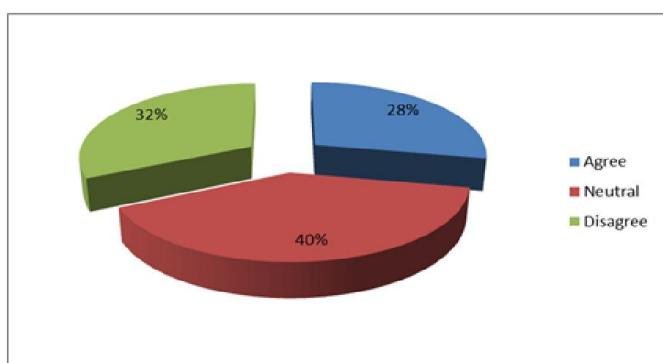

Figure 4.2. Employees' Ability to Devise Smart Objectives

In Figure 4.2, (40%) of the respondents indicated neutrality to the question on the ability to draw SMART objectives. The remaining, 32% indicated that they could not devise SMART objectives while 28% indicated that they were able to devise SMART objectives. The results showed that neutral received the highest rating of 40% as compared to 32% disagree and 28% agree. Since neutral was the highest rated, it could be an indication that the employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were not aware of what SMART objectives are. Therefore, this number 40% combined with 32% who indicated they could not formulate SMART objectives, which means that the majority (60%) of the employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs were unable to formulate objectives according to SMART guidelines. SMART objectives are renowned for producing specific objectives which can be objectively evaluated (University of Florida, 2010:5). Supporting drawing up objectives following SMART guidelines, Rajendran (2012:2) points out that specific statement of intent makes it easier to track performance, loopholes and any barriers which may affect the achievement of such goals. The implications of results on this part of the study imply that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs needed some training on how to state goals according to SMART guidelines.

Employees' Awareness of Performance Standards

The question required the respondents to state whether they were able to identify and state work standards they are

supposed to meet. The results shown in Figure 4.3 were obtained.
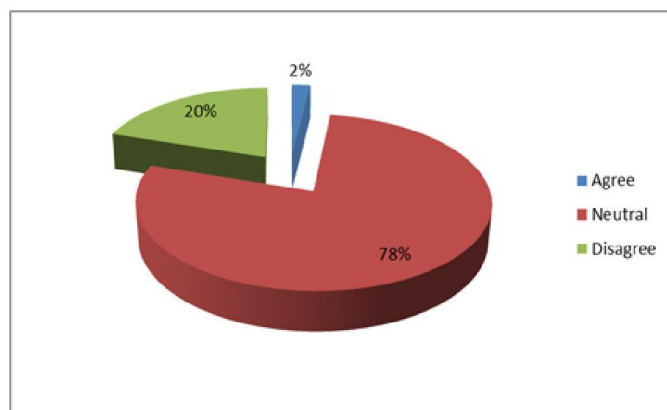

Figure 4.3. Employees' Awareness of Performance Standards

Figure 4.3 illustrates that an overwhelming majority (78%) expressed neutrality to awareness about the standards they are supposed to meet in their work areas. Twenty percent indicated that they were not aware of the work standards they are supposed to meet in their work areas while 2% indicated that they were aware of standards they are supposed to meet. The fact that the majority of the respondents could neither agree nor disagree could mean that they were not aware of standards expected of them. Explaining the importance of standards in performance management, Greese (2010) described performance standards as critical since they show level of performance. Expressing the challenges of stating standards, Kartz (1995:38) cited in Nel *et al.* (2005:477) noted that standards in public service delivery may be difficult to specify and this could explain why the majority of the employees remained neutral on whether employees were aware of their work standards. The implication of the findings is that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs needed assistance to define performance standards.

Employees' Ability to Rate their Performance Objectively

The question required respondents to indicate whether they were able to rate their performance objectively. The results shown in Figure 4.4 were found.
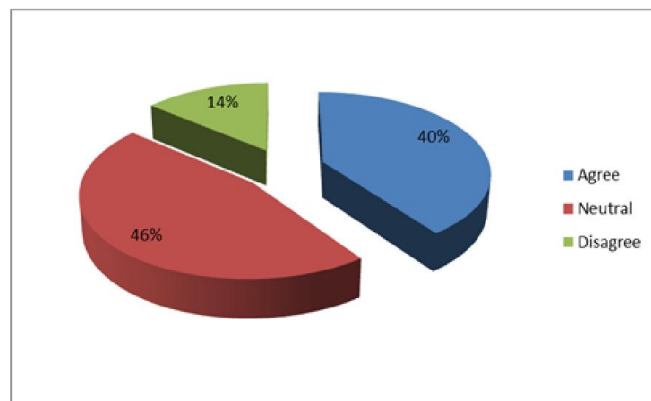

Figure 4.4. Employees' Ability to Rate their Performance Objectively

As shown in Figure 4.4, 46% remained neutral while 40% of the respondents agreed that they could rate their performance objectively. Fourteen percent indicated that they could not rate their performance objectively. The results of 46% of the respondents expressed neutrality and 40% presents almost equal numbers. However, 46% expressing neutral with 14% indicating disagreement cast doubt on the ability of employees being able to rate their performance objectively. This could be a signal that objectively self-rating of employees is viewed by the majority of the employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs as challenging. Cascio (1995:291) cited in Nel *et al.* (2005:479) noted that self-appraisals tend to be more lenient and biased thus making them to be not very useful in performance management. The mutual dialogue approach would produce authentic results as compared to individual rating (Oberoi and Rajgarhia, 2012:4). Making contributions on the same issue of objectively self-rating, Sharpe (2012:2) pointed out that as long as records for reviews are kept, there will not be any challenge in coming up with an objective rating. However, the final rating will be a product of all the ratings made during the cycle of performance management. Therefore, as raised by Bohn (2010), it is always important to keep every single record in all activities so that it can be used later in the process of performance management.

Training on Performance Management

Respondents were asked to express whether they had received adequate training on performance management. The results in Figure 4.5 were obtained.
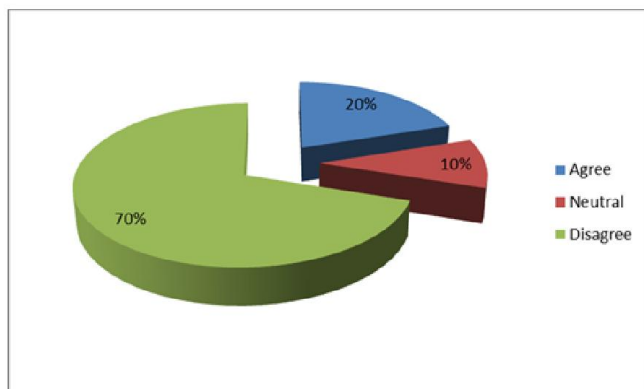

Figure 4.5. Training on Performance Management

In Figure 4.5, the majority (70%) of the respondents indicated that they were not adequately trained on performance management. The remaining, 20% indicated that they were adequately trained on performance management and only 10% expressed neutrality. The results indicated that the majority of the employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs had not received adequate training on performance management. Adequate training is viewed as a critical requirement before rolling out a new programme (Agarwal, 2010:4). Sounding similar views, Bohn (2010) noted that if training needs are not adequately addressed, the new programme may be resisted because employees may fear to venture into the unknown. Also, the fact that performance management has some rewards tied to it, Sharpe (2012) feels that employees will not take a programme involving bread and butter issues lightly. These arguments

justify the need for thorough training before rolling out performance management. Workers of Ministry of Foreign Affairs may not feel safe to venture into the unknown and this could result in resistance to performance management.

Performance Management Focus on Organisational Goals

The question required respondents to express their perceptions on whether performance management would increase employee focus on organisational goals. The results in Figure 4.6 were obtained.
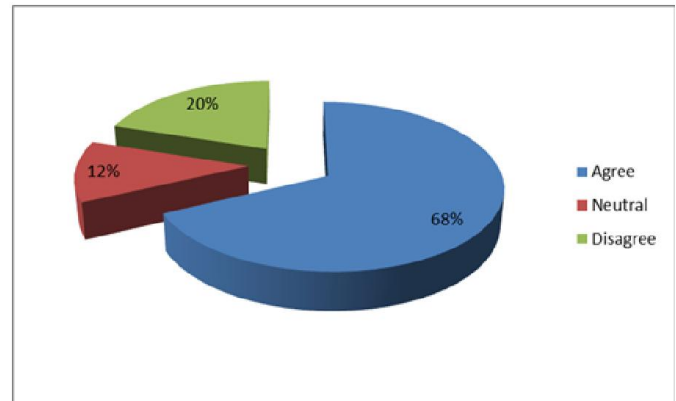

Figure 4.6. Performance Management Focus on Organisational Goals

Figure 4.6 shows that the majority (68%) of the respondents were of the opinion that performance management would enhance focus on organisation objectives, 20% refuted this and 12% of the respondents remained neutral. Results indicated that performance management would enhance focus on organisational goals. These results suggest that performance management would lead to accomplishment of organisational goals as every employee would be focused on the specific responsibilities which contribute to organisation's deliverables. Commenting on the link between performance management and organisation's deliverables, the PMS (2005:31) states that performance management would link with the organisation strategic plan hence it becomes a vehicle of achieving organisation objectives. Similar views are expressed by Swanepoel *et al.* (2008:375) who state that performance management focuses on harnessing human and material resources to achieve organisational objectives. The implication of the results is that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs viewed performance management as a necessary programme.

Effect of Performance Management on Employee Accountability

The question required respondents to express their opinions on whether performance management would have an effect on employee accountability. Figure 4.7 shows the results obtained. In Figure 4.7, (40%) of the respondents were neutral to the question on whether performance management would enhance employee accountability, while 32% disagreed with the statement and the remaining 28% were of the opinion that performance management would enhance employee accountability.
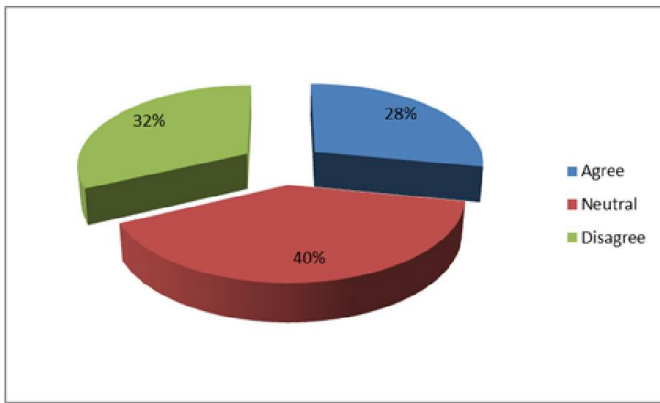
Figure 4.7. Effect of Performance Management on Employee Accountability

The fact that most of employees were neutral, it implies that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs were not aware of the link between performance management and accountability. The 32% who disagreed would fall in the same group as the respondents that were neutral. The results therefore indicate that the most of the employees were of the opinion that performance management will not enhance employee accountability. Contradicting this view, Swanepoel *et al.* (2008:392) pointed out that performance management makes every employee accountable to a set of organisation objectives. This view implies that every employee has a set of objectives he/she is responsible for and monitors achievement of these objectives. In support, Hall (2005) echoed similar view and pointed out that performance management shares organisational goals among employees and every employee become accountable to his/her objectives. According to these result, performance management made employees responsible as each work to meet set objectives.

Effect of Performance Management on Communication

The question required respondents to indicate the effects of performance management on communication between the supervisor and the employee. The respondents were required to indicate whether performance management promotes effective communication or not. The results in Figure 4.8 were obtained.
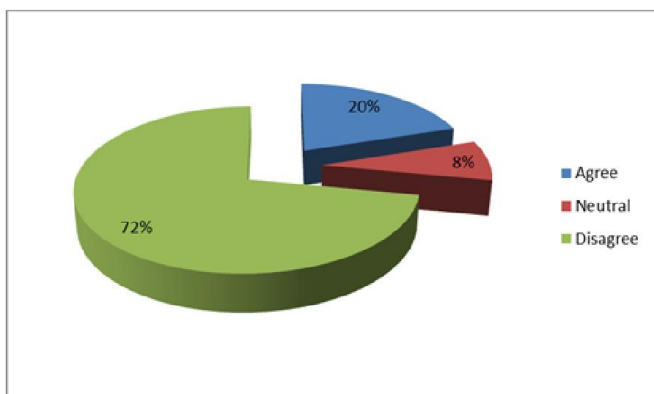

Figure 4.8. Effect of Performance Management on Communication

According to Figure 4.8, the majority (72%) of the respondents were of the opinion that performance management will not enhance communication effectiveness, while 20% agreed that performance management would enhance communication effectiveness. The remaining 8% of the respondents were neutral to this question. These results contradicted one of the key processes of performance management of continuously meeting to reflect and review progress. According to Hall (2005) and Sharpe (2012) during the performance management process, the supervisor and employee meet to review progress and attend to any issues which many affect the achievement goals. These continuous reviews facilitate communication between the employee and supervisor. Noting performance management's contribution to effective communication, Heinrich (2013:16) observed that whatever decisions made; be it changing the course of objectives or deliberating on final rating, the decision is collaboratively made by the employer and employee and the process promotes effective communication. These results could imply that employees are not aware of some of the stages/practices of performance management and training could be implemented to solve the challenges.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Performance Management

The respondents were required to indicate whether performance management shows the strengths and weaknesses of employees and Figure 4.9 shows results obtained on this question.
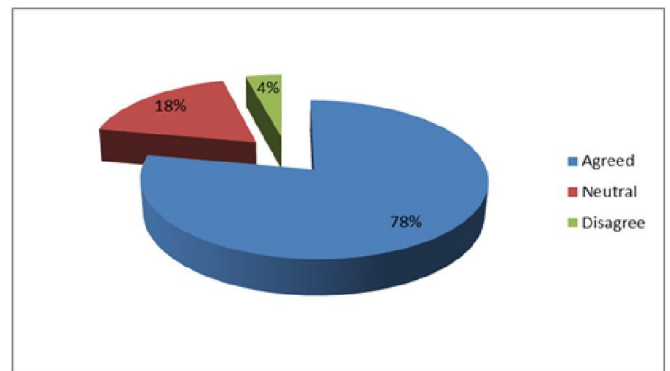

Figure 4.9. Strengths and Weaknesses of Performance Management

Figure 4.9 shows that 78% of the respondents agreed that performance management would show the strength and weaknesses of employees; while 4% disagreed that performance management would show the strengths and weaknesses of employees. The remaining 18% of the respondents were neutral. According to views of the majority, performance management would show strengths and weaknesses. This is true according to Oberoi and Rajgarhia (2012) who described performance management as an evaluative tool which shows the level of objective achievement and the competencies employees display. Also commenting on the link between performance management and level of competency, Agarwal (2011) contends that it shows levels of employee performance, thus making it a performance improvement tool. These results are also in agreement with the main purpose of performance management

that of improving performance through continuous monitoring employee work and taking corrective measures on area of weaknesses (PMS, 2005).

Impact of Performance Management on Service Delivery

The respondents were required to express their perceptions on the impact of performance management on service delivery. Results shown on Figure 4.10 were obtained.
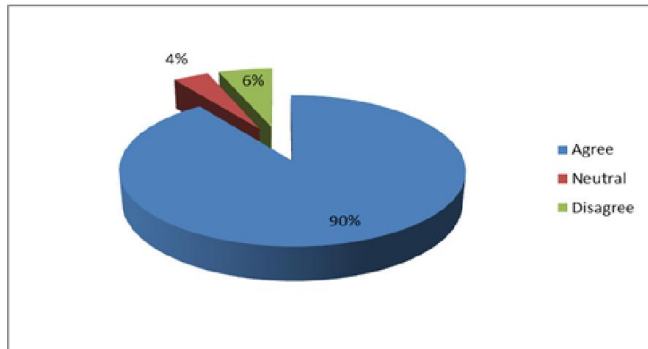

Figure 4.10. Impact of Performance Management on Service Delivery

According to result shown in Figure 4.10, 6% of the respondents were of the opinion that performance management would not improve service delivery, while 90% agreed that performance management would improve service delivery and 4% expressed neutrality to this question. The results show that the majority of the employees were of the opinion that performance management would improve service delivery. These results are in agreement with the overall objective of performance management. According the Performance Management System in the Public Service of Namibia (2005), performance management's major goal is to improve public service delivery through making every employee accountable to his/her areas of responsibility. In support and describing the envisaged benefits of performance management, University of South Florida (2012:1) stated that performance management focuses on the total organisation, harness human and materials resources and deploys them in effective ways to improve service delivery. These results reflect that the aims of performance management are embraced by the majority staff members of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Managers Current Knowledge Levels of Performance Management

The question required the respondents to indicate whether the current knowledge of management on performance was adequate to successfully implement performance management. The results in Figure 4.11 were obtained. As shown in Figure 4.11, (76%) of respondents agreed that inadequate knowledge on performance management will negatively affect the management's implementation of performance management, 16% disagreed and 8% remained neutral. The results showed that the majority of the employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs were of the opinion that the current level of knowledge on performance management among management will affect the programme negatively.
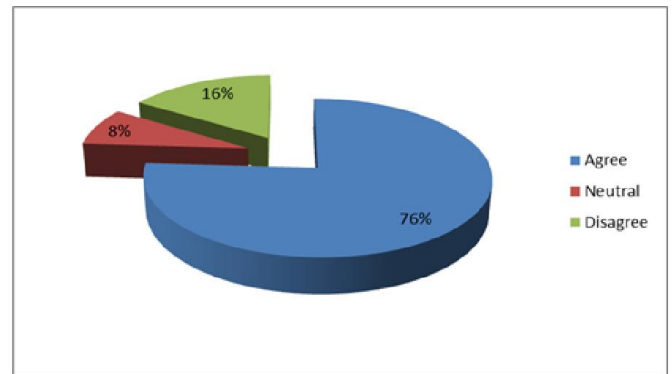

Figure 4.11. Managers Current Knowledge Levels of Performance Management

These results may imply that employees felt that management did not have adequate knowledge on performance management to be implemented successfully. According to Oberoi and Rajgarhia (2012:1), the success of performance management hinges on the abilities of management to articulate and sell the ideas to the employees. In support, Nel *et al.* (2005:477) pointed out that management should fully understand performance management before involving employees. There is a strong belief that once management understands performance management, it will successfully influence and guide employees. This part of the study discovered that employees regarded the current knowledge among management on performance as inadequate to successfully implement the programme. The implications of these findings could be training of management in performance management.

Employees' Current Knowledge on Performance Management

The question required the respondents to indicate whether the current knowledge which employees have on performance management was adequate to successfully support the implementation of performance management and Figure 4.12 illustrates the results obtained on this question.
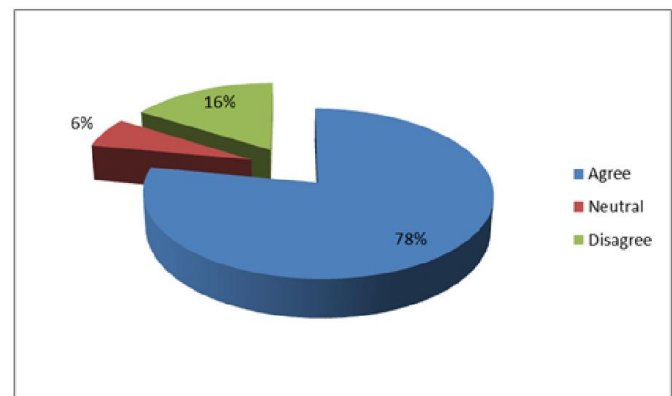

Figure 4.12. Employees' Current Knowledge on Performance Management

In Figure 4.12, the majority (78%) of the respondents were of the opinion that current knowledge employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs have on performance management could not

support an effective performance management system. The remaining 16% felt that the current knowledge employees on performance management could support successful performance management while 6% were neutral. Similar to the preceding question, the majority of the respondents regarded the current knowledge on performance among employees as inadequate to successfully implement the programme. Taking performance management as a new programme, Bednarz (2014) noted that one of the determinants of success of any project is convincing the affected and developing a positive mind set. Implementing a programme whose benefits are not understood often leads to resistance. Employees are very sceptical about risk and they will not put their positions and jobs at stake (Bednarz, 2014). These results imply that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs needed more exposure to the subject of performance management before implementing it. The results on this part of the study established that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs felt that they had inadequate knowledge to successfully implement performance management. These results link to the preceding results of inadequate knowledge on performance management among the management. Therefore, it would make sense for management to be trained first and then in turn impart the knowledge and skills to their subordinates.

Resistance to Performance Management

The respondents were asked to express their views on whether employees would resist the introduction of performance management given the current perceptions of the programme. The results shown in Figure 4.13 were obtained.
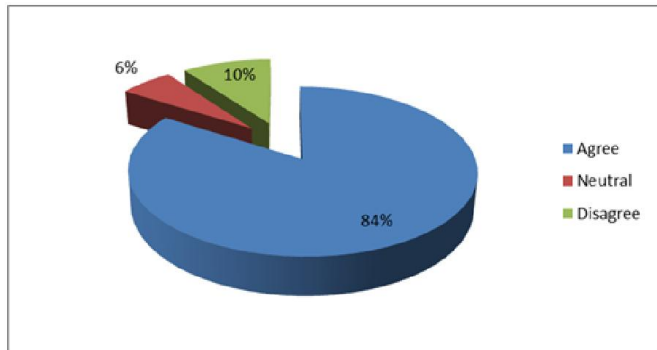

Figure 4.13. Resistance to Performance Management

As shown in Figure 4.13, a very high number (84%) of the respondents were of the opinion that resistance by public service employees could affect the implementation of the programme while 10% felt that nothing like resistance to performance management would affect the programme. The remaining 6% of the respondents were neutral. As shown by these statistics, the majority of respondents were of the opinion that employees would resist the implementation of performance management. Resistance as noted by Sharpe (2012) maybe caused by fear of the unknown, protection of current positions and protect current skills. Viewing from a different angle but similar view, employees resist new programmes if there is hard facts/concrete evidence to show that the programme has succeeded in a similar environment. In addition Hall (2005) notes that once employees doubt the

abilities of their superiors, there is high possibility that the employees will see no significance in the programme. This part of the study established that employees believed that performance management would meet resistance and this will affect the effective implementation of the programme.

Possible Abuse of Performance Management by Management

The respondents were asked to express their views on whether there was a possibility that management would abuse performance management in any way. Figure 4.14 illustrates the results obtained on this question.
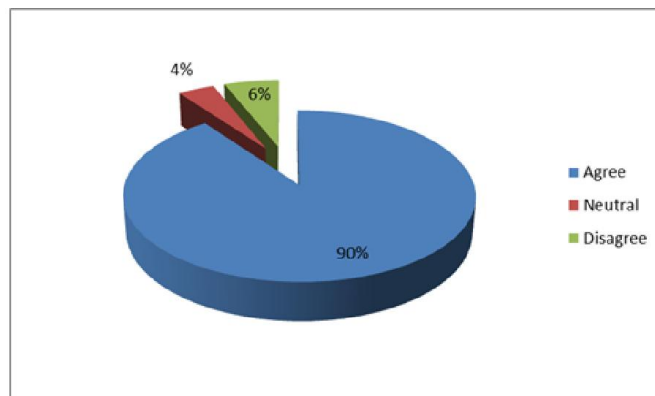

Figure 4.14. Possible Abuse of Performance Management by Management

Figure 4.14 shows that 90% of the respondents were of the opinion that abuse by managerial staff could derail the programme while 6% were of the opinion that no abuse will exist among management and 4% were neutral. The majority of employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs as indicated by the results felt that performance management could be abused by management and these results may imply that employees were not confident with the integrity of their management and there could be possibilities that an act of unethical behaviour had happened before. The mistrust between management and employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs as shown by these results was not health with regard to support for implementation of performance management. Presenting some of the disadvantages of performance management, Nel *et al.* (2005:483) noted that the programme may fail because of some the following unethical behaviours by supervisors. Supervisors may be biased, lenient or strict or may be influenced by politics of patronage. In such cases, performance will not serve its purpose and may even cause conflict. This part of the study learned that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs suspected that unethical behaviour in implementation of the performance management may affect the programme.

Measuring Performance of Services Objectively

The question required the respondents to indicate how they have found the process of measuring services and the results shown in Figure 4.15 were obtained.
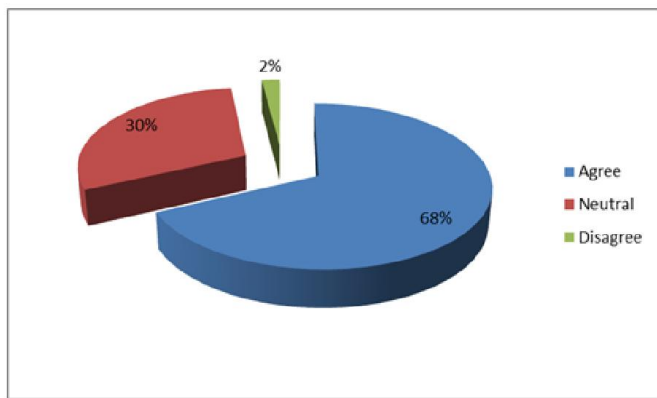
Figure 4.15. Measuring Performance of Services Objectively

According to Figure 4.15, the majority (68%) of the respondents were of the opinion that the challenges of measuring services objectively would compromise the successful implementation of the programme. Thirty percent of the respondents were neutral and 2% expressed that measuring services objectively will not present any challenges. These results show that a sizeable majority were of the opinion that the difficulties of measuring service delivery will affect the effective implementation of performance management. Also, (30%) were neutral on the factor of the difficulties which may be met in measuring services. Being neutral could mean respondents doubted the accurate opinion to take implying they did not know the answer to give. These results are an indication that employees anticipated that the challenges of measuring services will affect the effective implementation of performance management. Nel *et al*. (2005:484) and Oberoi and Rajgarhia (2012:1) agree that rating services may present challenges which can be viewed by those affected as unfair.

As suggested by Hall (2005), the organisation can come up with its own agreed way and which apply to all employees. On this part of the study, the results showed that the difficulties of measuring/rating service objectively will present problems and it could negatively impact on effective implementation of performance management.

Effects of Time on Implementation

The respondents were required to indicate whether time would not affect the implementation of performance management considering that the working day was already packed with its own activities. Figure 4.16 shows the responses obtained on this question.
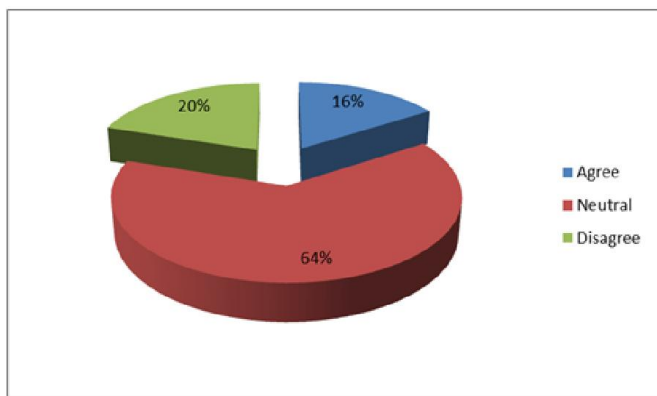

Figure 4.16. Effects of Time on Implementation

On whether time constraint would affect the implementation of performance management, Figure 4.16 shows that the majority 64% of the respondents were neutral while 20% disagreed that time challenges would compromise the successful implementation of performance management. The remaining 16% expressed that time would affect the successful implementation of performance management. The fact that the majority 64% rated this factor neutral could mean that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs were not aware of how performance management activities could consume time. The implication of these results is that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs will need to be trained on time so that minimum disturbances would be experienced in various departments. On the few respondents who indicated that performance management would not be affected, could imply that they took performance management activities as part of work. Noting the time constraint in performance management, Bednarz (2014:5) suggested that employees would meet their supervisors at different times and longer discussions could be given separate time from work. The employees expressed ignorance on whether time would affect the effective implementation of performance management. The implication of these findings is that there is need for proper planning so that time is effectively used to accomplish organisational objectives on performance management.

Management and Employees Need for Training

The respondents were requested to indicate whether training on performance was needed for both supervisors and employees. The results shown in Figure 4.17 were obtained.
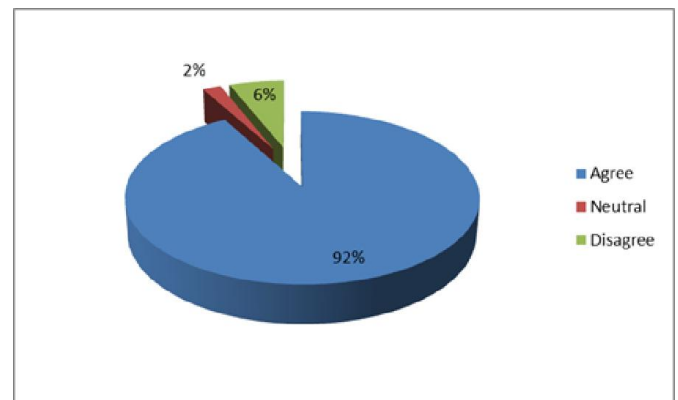

Figure 4.17. Management and Employees Need for Training

As shown in Figure 4.17, an overwhelming majority of (92%) were of the opinion that both employees and management needed more training on the processes of performance management while 6% disagreed and 2% expressed neutrality. The results show an overwhelming support for training both management and employees. These views could be linked to the previous results where employees suggested that the current knowledge on performance management by both management and employees was not adequate to successfully support an effective performance management programme. Agarwal (2011) and Bohn (2010) noted that training in such a situation is critical considered that performance was introduced in 2006 in the public service and seven years down the line the programme has not been fully implement. While

some training has been going on as noted by Nel *et al* (2005:474), failure to implement the programme makes the training obsolete and staff turnover creates gaps. Therefore this would make training a worthwhile suggestion. This part of the study established that it was necessary to train both management and employees on the public service performance management process. In support, Oberoi and Rajgarhia (2012) suggested that training would equip all stakeholders with current needs and requirements for the job. Therefore training was needed before and during implementation of performance management.

Pilot Testing of Performance Management

The respondents were asked to express their views on whether performance management needed pilot testing and the results shown in Figure 4.18 were obtained on this question.
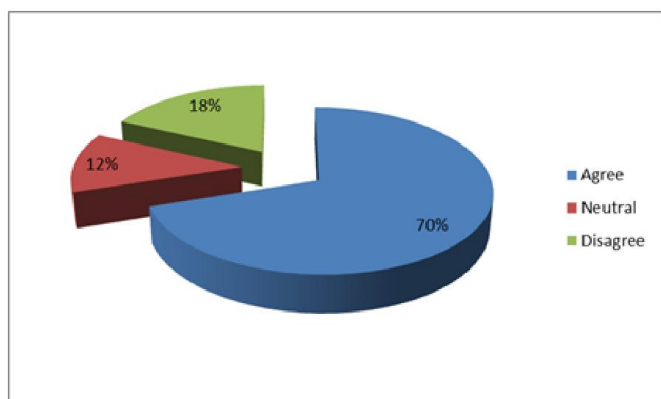

Figure 4.18. Pilot Testing of Performance Management

The majority 70%, as indicated in Figure 4.18 expressed that the programme would need pilot testing. The remaining 18% were of the opinion that performance could be rolled out in full involving all employees while 12% expressed neutrality to this question. The results on this part of the study showed that the majority of employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported pilot testing of performance management. Explaining the importance of pilot testing, Teijlingen and Hundley (2010:1) pointed out that it paves way for successfully implementation of programmes since during the process of pilot testing limitations; loopholes constraints and any other barriers are detected. Pilot testing can save government huge sums of money as pilot test results may lead to complete abandonment of intended programmes. On this part of the study pilot testing was highly supported as a strategy that would facilitate entry into the programme knowing the pros and cons (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2010:1).

Engaging External Consultants

Since the performance management was new and there was knowledge and skills gap on the implementation of the programme, respondents were asked whether it was necessary to hire external consultants. The results shown in Figure 4.19 were obtained. On whether performance management needed the assistance of external consultants, Figure 4.19 shows that the majority (74%) of the respondents supported this idea while 20% did not agree to the use of external consultants in

performance management. The remaining 6% of the respondents were neutral to the issue of bringing in consultants to run and supervise performance management.
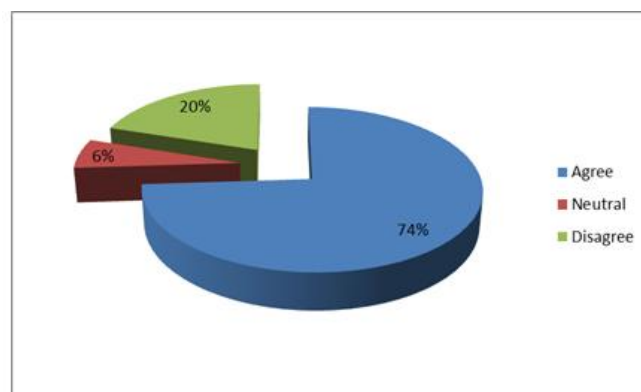

Figure 4.19. Engaging External Consultants

The results of the study shows that the majority of the respondents supported hiring outside/ external consultants to implement performance management in the Public service. This decision by the majority could be linked to the mistrust employees indicated in the study when they expressed possible misuse of performance management by their supervisors. Describing the advantages of external consultancies, Sullivan (2009) notes that employees implement programmes as stated, no bias and external consultants may bring in new ideas. Also alluding to similar opinions Lotich (2013) considers external consultants as the ideal decision to take as they will do the job, acting neutrally with regard to human relations. However, Sullivan (2009) argued that the use of external consultants in performance may present damaging disadvantages. The consultant may not be aware of the culture and traditions of the organisation making him/her an artificial decision maker. Also, the period of stay by external consultants maybe questionable and having consultants doing the work of supervisors may cripple or make supervisor redundant (Sullivan, 2009). Nevertheless this study established that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported the hiring of external consultants to implement performance management.

Suggestions on Improving Performance Management

The last question required respondents to state any suggestions or anything in their mind about performance management within the Public Service of Namibia. Furthermore, the respondents were requested to suggest ways of enhancing the effective implementation of performance management. The strategies of enhancing effective implementation of performance management were illustrated in Figure 4.20. As shown in Figure 20, the majority of the respondents stated that there was need for training but only when the government becomes serious to implement the programme. The respondents indicated that training employees now was a waste as learned from previous experience when employees have been trained in the past without any implementation of the programme. Pilot testing suggestion received the second highest rating. Pilot testing performance management with a single ministry is explained by Lotich (2013) as necessary to establish in advance any barriers which may affect the project.
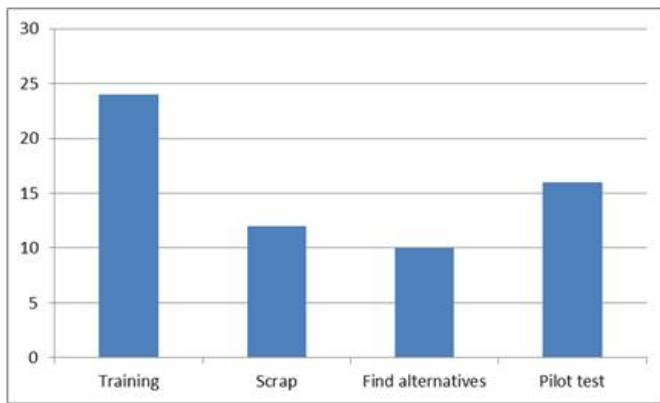
Figure 4.20. Suggestions on Improving Performance Management

Twelve employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs suggested that performance management should be completely scrapped since it has failed to take off for the past 6 years while ten respondents were of the opinion that alternative ways of motivating employees should be sought to replace performance management. These results show that there was need first to pilot test performance management before full scale implementation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Findings from the Study

The findings from the study are discussed under two parts; namely, findings from the secondary research and findings from the primary research.

Findings from Secondary Research (Literature Review)

The following findings were obtained from literature review:

- Performance management is an organisation wide improvement programme which involves linking employee responsibilities with organisational objectives (University of South Florida, 2010:1);
- The success of performance management is dependent on management knowledge, expertise, skills and the relationship with the subordinates (Oberoi and Rajgarhia, 2012:1 and Bednarz, 2014);
- SMART objectives are the hallmark of linking performance with standards (Nel *et al*., 2005:476);
- Continuous training by both management and employees is a requirement for successful performance management (Oberoi and Rajgarhia, 2013:8);
- Continuous reviews and coaching promotes intimate collaborative relationship between supervisors and their subordinates (Nel *et al*., 2005:477);
- Performance management enhances effective service delivery through improved communication and employee accountability of organisational goals (Heinrich, 2013:36); and
- Performance rating in performance management may be affected by human error constraints (Nel *et al*., 2005:483).

Findings from Primary Research

The findings are summarized in line with the following research questions:

Research Question One - What is the preparedness of employees in implementing performance management in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?

The study discovered that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs were aware of their key responsibilities, but expressed difficulties in coming up with specific performance objectives drawn following the SMART guidelines. The study further established that the employees had challenges in identifying and expressing work standards. It was also learned that employees had not received adequate training on performance management. Therefore according to these results the challenges expressed by employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs may be a signal that they are not yet prepared to implement performance management. Employees need more training and practice in stating Smart objectives and linking them to work standards.

Research Question Two - How effective do employees think performance management is on improving service delivery within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?

Employees unanimously agreed that performance management would improve on focus on objectives, it would enhance employee accountability and it would show weaknesses and strengths of individual employees. By meeting these factors, the study established that employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly believed that it would improve service delivery within the public service in Namibia. However, employees doubted whether performance management would enhance effective communication between employees and management. Evidences from literature show that performance management is an interactive process which survives on dialoguing and therefore will definitely improve communication.

Research Question Three - What possible challenges will be met in implementing performance management?

The study discovered that there was a general but strong indication that both the management and employees needed training on performance management. In the open question the majority again suggested training but when the programme is about to kick off. The employees felt that it was a waste of time to train people when there is no certainty that the programme will be implemented. On the same research question the study found out that employees were suspicious that when implemented the managers may abuse the programme through purpose bias and incompetency. The same part also discovered that employees expressed concern over the challenges of measuring services objectively which contributed to ineffectiveness of the programme. The study established that all these challenges expressed by the employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs led to the resistance of performance management.

Research Question Four - What strategies can be implemented to improve performance management to enhance quality service delivery?

The study established that training of both management and employees was indicated as the most important activity. However, training was suggested that it should be done when the government is quite sure that the programme is going to be implemented. The study also strongly recommended pilot testing performance management before rolling it into full scale. The pilot study views were made in view of establishing any barriers before full scale implementation. The issue of introducing external consultants to run the Public Service Performance Management was raised. However, literature on this issue showed more costs than benefits in hiring external consultants to run a full scale performance management programme.

On possible barriers to effective implementation of performance management, the study established that inadequate knowledge of both employees and management could undermine the success of performance management. On strategies to enhance the effective implementation of performance management, the study suggested training of both employees and supervisors pilot testing the programme. In a nutshell, the study learned that employees saw the positive benefits of performance management but felt that because of in adequate knowledge performance management cannot be implemented successfully.

Conclusions on Findings

The study focused on the perceptions of employees with regard to the effective implementation of performance management within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aim of the study was to look at preparedness of employees, the benefits derived, possible barriers and approaches of solving the barriers. Both literature review and primary data confirmed that performance management can enhance effective service delivery. The study discovered that employees lacked adequate perceptions to successfully implement performance management and they have not been adequately trained. Therefore, according to the study, lack of training could compromise the effective implementation of performance management. In view of these findings the following recommendations are made.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered:

- There is need for training of both management and employees on performance management process with emphasis on attitudes and values of the programme. As suggested by Bednarz (2014) the philosophy and attitudes are the driving forces in understanding a programme;
- The option of pilot testing performance management should be considered. Pilot testing the programme with one Ministry may help to find out loopholes before mass rolling the programme (Lotich, 2013). The identified loopholes may pave way for a successful implementation of performance management;

- Managers need training so that they become experts and be exposed to ethical issues. Managers are the driving force of the programme and as stated by Oberoi and Rajgarhia (2012), the manager's ability and general response to the ethics of performance management leads to effective implementation of performance management; and
- The government of Namibia needs to decide and take action on the fate of performance management. Six years down the line without implementation may create an impression that the government is not concerned and employees may not take such programmes seriously even when they become operational. Also, the wastage of training and retraining employees without proceeding with the project.

Conclusion

This report presented a study which was carried out to investigate the perceptions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs employees towards the effective implementation of performance management. The study specifically focused on establishing the preparedness of the employees, their knowledge about the benefits of performance management, possible barriers and how to reduce the impact of the barriers. The survey involved a sample of 80 employees who responded to structured questionnaire. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics. The study established that the employees of Ministry of Foreign Affairs had positive perceptions towards performance management but would experience challenges of implementing the programme. Therefore, according to these results, employees are not prepared and lack of performance management knowledge can lead to resistance and collapse of the programme. The study recommended a rigorous training programme on performance management. The study further suggested pilot testing performance management with a ministry department. The Public Service Commission could also carry out under studies at institutions implementing performance management to learn from them and adapt the programme to the public service.

NOTE: This study was presented by the principal author in 2014 to the Regent Business School, Durban, Republic of South Africa for the award of the Master of Business Administration Degree (MBA). The dissertation was supervised by Simon Hoabeb and edited by Professor Anis Mahomed Karodia for purposes of producing a publishable research article. Kindly note that the entire bibliography is presented and the references applicable to this study are contained within the full bibliography cited.

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