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Examining Perceptions of Public Service Workers on Performance Management System (PMS) in Zambia's Public Sector

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Abstract

This mixed-methods research examined perceptions of public service workers on the implementation of the Performance Management System (PMS) in selected Zambian government ministries, namely Finance, Energy, and Health. Data collection involved focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires administered to 120 civil servants across the selected ministries. The findings reveal that most public service workers perceive the PMS as ineffective and unable to achieve its intended objectives. These perceptions are largely shaped by limited feedback mechanisms, perceived unfairness in performance evaluations, lack of transparency, and absence of meaningful rewards. Furthermore, the

system is associated with fear and mistrust among employees, compounded by weak managerial commitment, inadequate training, and poor organizational support. Overall, the study concludes that while the PMS was introduced to enhance efficiency, accountability, and service delivery within the Zambian public sector, its implementation remains constrained by significant structural, managerial, and cultural challenges. The study recommends strengthening leadership capacity, improving feedback mechanisms, ensuring fairness and transparency in evaluations, and aligning PMS outcomes with tangible incentives to enhance its effectiveness.

Keywords: Performance Management System, Perceptions of Public Service Workers, Zambian Public Sector, Human Resource Management, Key Performance Indicator

1. Introduction

Performance Management Systems (PMS) have become a crucial tool for governments worldwide to enhance public service delivery and achieve development goals (Bryson, 2018) ^[4]. In the context of Zambia's public sector, PMS aims to improve accountability, transparency, and efficiency in government ministries (Mukonoweshuro, 2015) ^[26]. The concept of PMS is rooted in the idea of managing performance through clear objectives, measurable outcomes, and continuous feedback (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020) ^[2]. According to the World Bank (2019) ^[34], effective PMS can help governments achieve better outcomes, increase productivity, and respond to citizens' needs.

However, implementing PMS in public sectors, particularly in developing countries like Zambia, faces challenges such as inadequate training, unclear operational systems, and limited management buy-in (Khan & Khandaker, 2016). These challenges can lead to poor performance, inefficiencies, and a lack of accountability, ultimately affecting the delivery of public services (Agyemang, 2017) ^[1]. Recent studies have also highlighted specific disablers in PMS implementation in Zambia's public sector, including lack of commitment from top management and inadequate resources (Phiri *et al.*, 2021) ^[31].

In Zambia, the government has introduced various initiatives to strengthen PMS, including the Public Service Management (PSM) reforms (GRZ, 2014) ^[12]. The PSM reforms aim to improve public service delivery, enhance accountability, and increase transparency in government operations. Despite these efforts, concerns persist about the efficacy of PMS in driving performance and improving public service delivery (Mukonoweshuro, 2015; Banda, 2026) ^[26, 3]. Studies have shown that PMS implementation in Zambia's public sector is often hampered by inadequate resources, lack of staff training, and poor communication (Chilundo & Ndonga, 2018) ^[10].

This study examines perceptions of public service workers on PMS implementation in selected Zambian government ministries, identifying gaps and opportunities for improvement. The study focuses on the Ministries of Finance, Energy, and Health, which are critical to Zambia's development agenda. By exploring the perceptions of public service workers, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of PMS implementation in Zambia's public sector and inform policy and practice.

2. Literature Review

Managing organizations is about managing the performance of people who work in organizations. The South Australian Government Guide to Performance for the State indicates that governments require a result-driven public sector where staff know what is expected of them and how they will be supported (South Australian Government, 2015) [33]. This approach recognizes that results are achieved through teams and there is a need to have appropriate incentives in place.

Research has shown that Performance Management Systems (PMS) can improve government performance if well implemented (Osmini, 2012) [29]. However, many government employees do not clearly understand Results-Based Management Systems, which could be due to lack of training and feedback from management (Phiri *et al.*, 2021) [31]. Planning, communication, and feedback are critical elements for the success of PMS in an organization.

The concept of performance management is a relatively new phenomenon in the African public sector (Olufemi, 2014) [28]. Since the 1960s, when many nations in this region acquired independence, the focus of the new administrations was on reforming the public sector. Performance management was introduced to support the reform efforts in Africa.

Studies have shown that employees often have negative feelings about performance management, feeling that the system manipulates them without rewarding their efforts (Buchner, 2007 [5]; Khan & Khandaker, 2016). However, if well implemented, PMS can motivate employees to be more productive (DeNisis & Pritchard, 2006) [11]. Attitudes toward performance management affect employee performance in organizations.

In Zimbabwe, performance appraisal is viewed with mixed feelings, mostly negative (Matiza, 2001) [25]. Mandishona (2003) [23] indicates that organizational survival and good service delivery depend on how employees perceive the whole system. There should be a win-win situation between the employer and employees.

Effective performance management allows continuous improvement, promotes learning and professional development, and facilitates engagement and rewarding for employees (Phiri, *et al.*, 2026). In Zambia, reforms like the Public Sector Reform Programme (PSRP) and Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) were introduced to improve public service delivery (GRZ, 2014) [12].

Research in Zambia has shown that PMS implementation faces challenges such as inadequate training, unclear operational systems, and limited management buy-in (Phiri *et al.*, 2021; Mukonoweshuro, 2015) [31, 26]. These challenges can lead to poor performance, inefficiencies, and a lack of accountability, ultimately affecting the delivery of public services.

3. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to examine perceptions of public service workers on the implementation of Performance Management System (PMS) in selected Zambian government ministries, namely Finance, Energy, and Health. The methodology is outlined below.

3.1 Research Design

A convergent parallel design was used, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of PMS implementation in the selected ministries.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling

The study population comprised public service workers in the selected ministries. A sample of 120 civil servants was selected using stratified random sampling, ensuring representation across various departments and levels of seniority.

3.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires. The instruments were designed to capture perceptions on PMS implementation, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

3.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and themes related to PMS implementation.

4. Results and Discussion

This study examined perceptions of public service workers on the implementation of Performance Management System (PMS) in selected Zambian government ministries. The results are presented below, integrating quantitative and qualitative findings.

4.1 Public service workers awareness of the Performance Management systems in selected Zambian ministries

The participants were asked if they were aware of the current performance management system in Zambia. Figure 5.1 revealed that 70% of the participants were aware of the current performance management system. 30% of the participants were not aware of the current performance management systems.

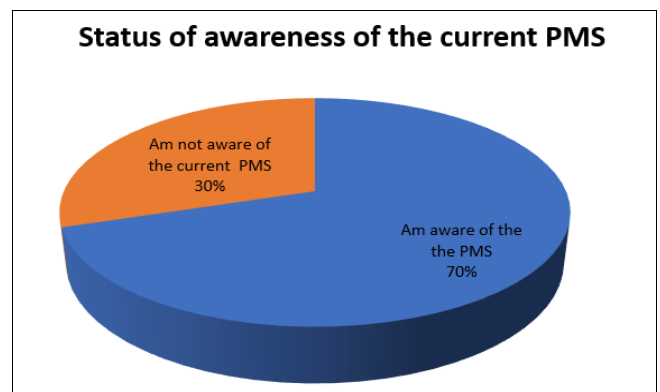


Fig 5.1: Status of awareness of the current Performance management system

The findings reveal that the majority of public servants are aware of the current performance management system in Zambian ministries. These findings are similar to the to Phiri's (2021) ^[30] study that revealed that a lot of public servants are aware of the current performance management system in Zambia. This demonstrates that the government has done tremendous work in sensitizing the public servants about the performance management system in Zambia. One principle of the disciplinary code and procedures for public servants in Zambia demands human resource departments in all ministries to sensitize all civil servants on the code of conduct and also the values and systems in the public service. In their study titled 'Assessing Performance Management System and Impact on Public Service Delivery in Lusaka's Public Hospitals: Challenges and Prospects' Bwalya and Sichoongwe (2025) ^[6] revealed that most health personnel were aware of the performance management system in Zambia. This demonstrates that most service servants are aware of the current performance management and only a few new public servants were not aware as they were still under orientation.

The participants were asked if they knew about the confidential report system that was used in the public service before the introduction of the Annual performance appraisal system. Key informant 3 stated that:

'Yes am aware the confidential report system, but I must mention that it was not a good tool for lower level staff in the public service as it demotivated a few and only favored those close and royal to their superiors'.

Phiri, Simui and Masait (2021) ^[31] argue that It is important to note however that the Annual Confidential Report was not objective as it was based on the supervisors' personal observations and perceptions about an individual and the appraisee did not have access and input in the process. This made it to be one sided. Kamfwa (2016) ^[14] further explains that the Annual Confidential Report was not based on work planning and targets setting and, therefore, it had no baselines for performance delivery.

The participants were asked if they understood the current performance management system in Zambia. Figure 5.2 revealed that 86.7% of participants understood the performance management system while 13.3% did not understand performance management system. This is depicted in Figure 5.2 below.

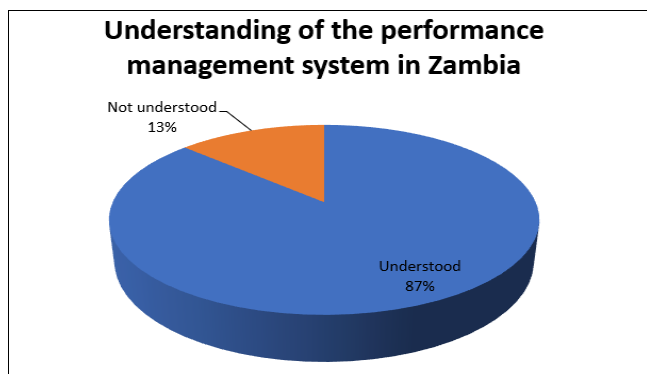


Fig 5.2: Understanding of the performance management systems in Zambia

The findings reveal that the majority of participants understood the performance management system in Zambia. The results mean that the participants understood what performance management system was in their line of duty, hence their contribution to this study was significant. These findings are similar to the findings from Bwalya and Sichoongwe's (2025) ^[6] study which revealed that the majority of health workers understood the performance management system. These findings are supported by Lutwama, Roos, and Dolamo (2013) who also found that most public servants understood the facets and context of performance management system, these included performance management planning, performance designing, performance reviewing, coaching, staff training and development, and rewards and recognition. However, ShamiZhingha (2020) findings contrast these findings. According to Shamizhingha (2020) found that while employees in Zambian public institutions were aware of the performance management system, many did not understand the criteria used to evaluate their performance. This lack of clarity was attributed to weak communication, limited employee participation in the system's implementation, and inadequate evaluation procedures.

The respondents were asked on when performance management appraisals were conducted in the public services. The findings revealed that performance appraisals at the end of the year in most public institutions. Key informant 1 stated that:

'The public service introduced the Annual performance appraisal system, which demands public servants to be appraised yearly based on key performance indicators'.

The findings established that the Performance Management appraisals are conducted at the end of the year. However, the minority stated that it was conducted during the hiring or transferring of employees. In the Zambian public service when a new employee in on probation before they are confirmed, they are appraised by their supervisors. This is meant to improve their performance. The results of the study are in tandem with Makombo *et al.*, (2024) who revealed that effective performance appraisal systems are found to significantly enhance employee motivation and job satisfaction, leading to improved service delivery. Makombo *et al.*, (2024) study also established that Performance Management appraisals are conducted during the midyear review in some government agencies. This assertion was also supported Chikumbi and Simwinga (2018) ^[9] who argued that performance appraisals should be routine and not yearly to ensure employees meet their monthly and quarterly targets. If the annual PMS was continued, it would mean that employees would only get serious with the targets towards the end of the month since they know that appraisal was near. If appraisals are to be quarterly, the employees would work hard every quarter thereby improving the overall performance of the organization.

The participants were asked to highlight reasons for implementing a Performance Management System (PMS) in their institutions. The Figure 5.3 revealed that 28.9% of participants indicated that the PMS served the purposes of identifying training and development needs, as well as

facilitating decisions regarding Promotions, transfers, and terminations. Additionally, 14.5% of participants stated that the PMS was aimed at identifying barriers to performance management. However, 8.4% reported that the PMS was intended for retention purposes while 6% indicated that it was used for reward allocation. Furthermore, 2.4% noted that it was designed to clarify employees' job requirements and 1.2% mentioned that it was intended as part of a motivation strategy. This is shown in Figure 5.3 below.

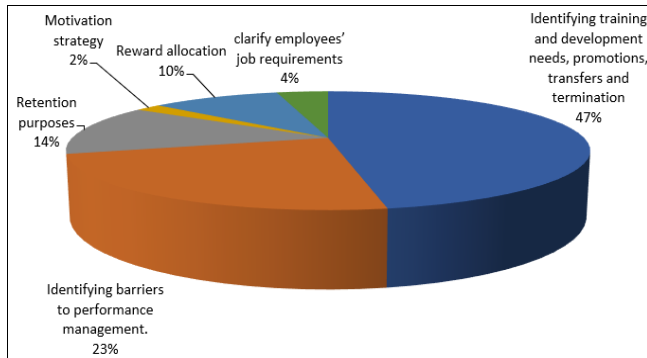


Fig 5.3: Reasons for implementing a Performance Management System (PMS) in their institutions

The findings suggest that performance management system in Zambia is implemented to identify training needs assessment and provided clear guidance to employees pertaining to what is expected from them from their respective institutions. These findings are similar to the findings by Bwalya and Sichoongwe (2025) [6] who suggested that the primary rationale for implementing a Performance Management System within the health sector in Lusaka was to identify training and development needs and to facilitate promotion, transfer, and termination decisions. Key informant 2 stated that:

'The performance management system is implemented to provide clear guidance on what is expected from civil servants and ensure that personnel values are aligned with the institutions values'.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that performance management in Zambia is carried out for a number of reasons, including identifying training and development needs, supporting decisions related to promotions, transfers, and terminations, identifying barriers to effective performance, promoting employee retention, allocating rewards, clarifying employees' job requirements, and enhancing employee motivation. Therefore, the Performance Management System (PMS) functions as a multifaceted management tool aimed at improving employee performance, supporting human resource decisions, and strengthening organisational effectiveness.

The findings also revealed performance management in Zambia is meant to assess the performance of Directors. The findings contrast with those of Chansa (2020), who found that performance-based contracts (PBC) were supported by strong political commitment, a comprehensive policy and legal framework, and collaborative planning and implementation involving key stakeholders. Performance management should be performance based. Bwalya and Sichoongwe (2025) [6] revealed that the decentralization of health service delivery also played an important role in

facilitating the effectiveness of the system. The study further revealed that antenatal care (ANC) coverage increased among both lower and upper wealth groups during the PBC period, but declined after the PBC programme ended. Additionally, the proportion of women delivering in health facilities rose during the PBC era, particularly among rural and low-income populations. These findings suggest that performance management systems should be closely linked to employee performance in order to achieve improved outcomes.

4.2 Perception of the current performance management system

Participants were asked to indicate their perceptions regarding whether the performance management system in Zambia has been a success or a failure. In all the semi-interviews and focus group discussion it was clear by the participants that the implementation of the performance management system was failing in the Zambian public service. In support of participants' claim that the implementation of the performance management system was failing in the Zambian public service, the actual views from the participants in all the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion are given below:

The implementation of the performance management system in our ministry has been a total failure, (Public service worker; 30).

For me, the implementation of the performance management system in the Zambian public service has not been in good faith thus its failure to bring out the desired fruits (Public service worker; 16)

During the Focus Group Discussion, the above claims were also observed as indicated by the following interview excerpts;

In most of these ministries their performance management system has failed completely (FGD: 01; Pt: 03).

Similarly, in another focus group discussion held with the participants from the Zambian public service it was indicated that:

The implementation of the performance management system in the Zambia public service is one of the main programmes introduced by government to bring back efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of service to the public but it has indeed failed (FGD: 06; Pt: 3).

Based on the findings from the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, it can be observed that the current Performance Management System (PMS) in the Zambian public service is largely perceived as unsuccessful by the majority of participants. Most respondents indicated that the system has failed to achieve its intended objective of improving efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. In Zimbabwe, performance appraisal is viewed with mixed feelings; mostly negative (Matiza, 2001) [25]. Mandishona (2003) [23] indicates that organizational survival and good service delivery depend on how employees perceive the whole system. There should be a win-win situation between the employer and employees.

In addition to the above, participants in this study were asked to indicate the reasons they thought could be attributed to the failure in the implementation of the performance management system in the Zambian public service. Their responses are shown by the excerpts below; Among the reasons given by the participants in the Semi-structured interviews and Focus Group Discussion included: lack of feedback from the appraisal as a major reason for the failing implementation of Performance Management System in the Zambian public service. According to the participants' view, most of them demonstrated that they had been appraised but have never received any feedback. The actual views of participants were as follows:

This performance management system is just for formality. I say so because, ever since I was appraised, I have never received any feedback on my strengths and weaknesses (Public service worker, 01).

Similarly, in the focus group discussions it was indicated that:

Feedback in any given situation is important in that it prevents the loss of confidence in the system. In this case we are not given any feedback with regard to PMS therefore we have lost confidence. ((FGD: 05; Pt: 05).

The study reveals several factors contributing to this perceived failure. A major issue identified is lack of feedback after performance appraisals, which has reduced employees' confidence in the system and made the appraisal process appear merely procedural rather than developmental. These research findings are in agreement with the study done by Ramataboe (2015) whose purpose was to establish the effectiveness of service delivery in the Ministry of Social Development in Lesotho through the implementation of the performance management system. In this study it was revealed that among the challenges in the implementation of the PMS included lack of feedback. In addition, the research findings are also in agreement with the study done by Kuhil and Michael (2018) whose research study aim was assessing the practices and challenges of employee performance management system (EPMS) at Commercial bank of Ethiopia. Among the results was lack of regular feedback. In Zambia, Kafwa's (2016) study that was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Annual Performance Appraisal System (APAS) in improving performance in selected Ministries of the Zambian Civil Service revealed that there were inconsistencies in feedback provision in the concerned Ministries.

The participants observed during the semi-structured interview and focus group discussion that, lack of commitment on the implementation of the Performance Management System posed a challenge for the public service workers. Some participants indicated lack of commitment from top management whereas other participants indicated lack of commitment from employees (junior officers). With regard to lack of commitment from top management, the actual views of the participants were as follows;

You know that top management is the vision carrier of the Ministry's goals and aspiration but there is total

lack of commitment on the part of top management on the implementation of the Performance Management System and this is why it is failing in this ministry. (Public service worker, 02).

This view seemed to have been supported by another participant in the focus group discussion who felt that lack of commitment from top management on the implementation of Performance Management System was a challenge. The actual views of the participant were as follow;

As long as top management is unwillingly and uncommitted on the implementation of the performance management system then anything can happen (FGD: 10; Pt: 03).

The above views were also indicated by another participant when he said:

We do not have meetings with top management where we can discuss PMS. This shows how uncommitted management is towards PMS (FGD: 08; Pt: 01).

Lack of commitment from both top management and junior officers has weakened the implementation process, as leadership support and employee cooperation are essential for the success of any performance management initiative. The findings of this research resonated well with research carried out by Kanchebele (2012) ^[15] who did an investigation of the main impediments to the institutionalization of the APAS in the Zambia Public Service. In her study, Kanchebele revealed that several years had passed since the launch of the APAS, and the government has done very little in ensuring that Civil Servants create a sense of ownership and commitment towards it. This study totally agrees with Kanchebele's findings, supervisors and top management in the Zambia Civil Service had not created ownership and commitment to the whole process of the APAS flow process. That therefore, had trickled down to the junior officers who views and feel that the APAS was just a share waste of time and did not add value to their jobs (Tembo, 2018).

Other participants revealed that junior officers were also not committed to the implementation of the performance management system. This is illustrated in the following excerpts;

Junior officers are sometimes problematic in that as long as they do not see any clear and reliable gains in the implementation of the performance management system they will always oppose it and be uncooperative (Public service worker,59).

Mate (2006) ^[24] revealed 50% of the respondent said sanctions were never applied to underperforming officers. 73.3 % supported the applications of sanctions for poor performance, while, 89.4 % were of the view that poor performers be sent for training and skills development. Kanchebele (2012) ^[15] also revealed that, APAS has no sanctions attached to it, there is no punishment given for non-compliance. This is because it had no legal framework backing it. Therefore, on-performers go unpunished. The two studies above collaborated well with this study. There is

very little that had happened to institutionalize sanction for underperformance. At times is because they employee do not know what is expected from them. They do not have clear job description. The above views were made much stronger when another participant in the focus group discussion expressed her thoughts in the following way;

Some jobs have no clear job description, making it difficult to develop key performance indicators. It is there just to frustrate us as junior officers (FGD: 03; Pt: 06).

Kumfwa (2016) revealed that there are other reasons for the ineffective individual performance. One of the reasons given, was lack of job Descriptions. In almost all the three (3) Ministries, a good number of officers did not have job descriptions. For those who had, they were either outdated or not conforming to the job. As a result of that, an appraisal cannot be genuinely conducted because part 2 of the APAS requires to fill in the Key Result Areas (KRA) and the Principal Accountabilities (PA). The KRAs and PAs are only found on the job description. Therefore, minus that the appraisal would be incomplete.

The participants further observed that, lack of resources was a challenge that affected the implementation of the Performance Management System. In regard to this reason two responses from staff were obtained namely; lack of adequate funding and lack of time. For respondents who indicated during the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions that lack of adequate funding by government to various departments posed a challenge on the implementation of the performance management system their actual words are given below;

The implementation of the performance management system needs money and as you may be aware that government is not providing adequate funding to the three government ministries as such programmes usually suffer as they are not printer (Public service worker; 56).

Similarly, it was revealed by another participant during the focus group discussion that government has been disbursing little funds to various ministries that could not cater for all the programmes and this really affected the implementation of several programmes including performance management system. This is illustrated by the following interview excerpt;

Performance Management System is expensive and needs a lot of researches with this economy it being a challenge to conduct Performance Management System (FGD: 04; Pt: 04).

These findings are supported by Kumfywa (2016) who revealed that in some cases, the allocation of funds by the Ministry of Finance was not based on planned activities and performance of Ministries. Other participants indicated during the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions that lack of adequate time posed a challenge on the implementations of the performance management system. The following were the actual words of the respondents supporting the response;

It requires a lot of time to undertake regular appraisal processes (Public service worker; 29).

Similarly, it was revealed by another participant during the focus group discussion that lack of time really affected the implementation of performance management system in most government ministries. This is illustrated by the following interview excerpt;

The performance management system requires a lot of time to be implemented effectively and efficiently (FGD: 05; Pt: 04).

This finding is in line with the White's (2015) study in which the participants indicated that they were so busy with their work that they could not find time for regular or consistent reflection. This issue of lack of time was more pronounced in the study conducted by Khan (2012). Khan (2012) the majority of the respondents regarded lack of time as the major barrier to their engagement in reflective practice. The lack of time for the implementation of the performance management could be attributed to many factors. These would be the rigidity of the work environment and workload experienced by public service workers. The working time is allocated in such a way that it does not allow time for the implementation of the performance management.

The participants noted that, failure of the implementation of the performance management system was attributed to leadership style that existed in these Ministries. This was expressed by one participant as follows;

The type of leadership that exists in our Ministry leaves much to be deserved. It is free for all. Anyone can report for work at any time and knock off anytime. With this type of leadership, we do not expect much with regard to the implementation of the Performance Management System, (Public service worker; 13).

Similarly, it was discovered in another semi-structured interview held with public service workers that:

The implementation of Performance Management System will deeply depend on the leadership style adopted by those in position of leadership (Public service worker; 27).

These findings are similar with the Kamfyas (2016) study which revealed that majority of the respondents felt that they the leadership did not involve them in Departmental work plans and hence it was difficult to link the Departmental work plans to their individual work plan. Generally, most respondents felt that Heads of Departments did not ensure that staff members individually identify areas of their contributions to Departmental work plans. Some of the respondents indicated that they did not know work planning and their appraisal was dependent on their daily routine activities. This therefore goes to show that as long as there was no link between the Departmental and individual work plans, then the whole APAS process is short circuited.

The participants during the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions argued that, failure of the implementation of the performance management system in

the Zambian public service was as a result frequent transfer of leaders. This is supported by the following interviews excerpt;

Leaders in this ministry are transferred on a frequent basis. Before one can get acquitted with the operation of the Ministry, he/ she is already transferred and this have advance effects on the implementation of the Performance Management System (Public service worker; 34).

During the focus group discussion held, it was further stated that leaders had no times to settle down as they were constantly changed and this had placed more challenges on the implementation Performance Management System as illustrated in following except.

Usually our bosses are changed from one department to the other. Some bosses do not even know the importance of implementing the Performance Management System, therefore the do not even talk about it all, (FGD.02, Pt.03).

Frequent transfers of leaders have a negative effect on the implementation of the Performance Management System because newly appointed leaders often require time to understand departmental operations and the system itself, which disrupts continuity and weakens consistent supervision and support for the programme. The participants were on the extent to which they trusted their supervisor's performance rating. Figure 5.4 show that 15% stated very great extent. 20% stated to a higher great extent. 30% stated to a moderate extent. 35% stated to a moderate lesser extent.

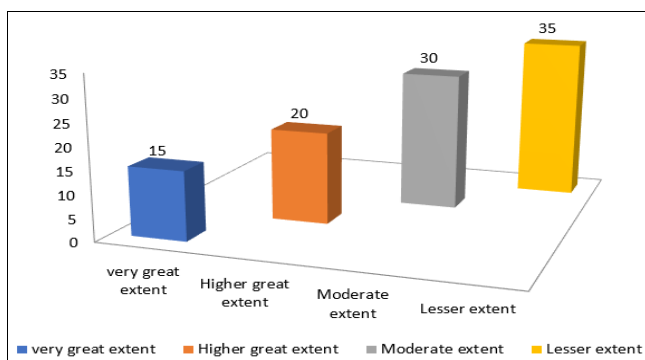


Fig 5.4: Extent to which respondents trust the performance management system

The lack of feedback following performance appraisals may contribute to this low level of trust. Without clear communication on how ratings are determined, employees may feel uncertain and skeptical about the accuracy of the evaluations. Feedback is essential in clarifying expectations and reinforcing transparency, and its absence weakens confidence in supervisors' judgments (Kabwe, Daka, and Lisulo, 2024) [13]. The findings may also be associated with ineffective supervision and inadequate training of supervisors in conducting performance appraisals. Supervisors who lack the necessary skills or commitment may fail to carry out objective and consistent evaluations, thereby reducing employees' trust in the system. The participants noted that, the failure of the implementation of the performance management system in the Zambian public

service was due to lack of trust among the public service workers. The following are some of the actual views of the participant.

I just do not trust the whole programme management system, it is like you are providing by or nation that will work against you (Public service worker; 16).

Similarly, it was revealed by another participant during the focus group discussion that lack of trust really affected the implementation of performance management system in the Zambian public service. This is illustrated by the following interview excerpt;

The development of trust among the co-workers is important in the successful implementation of the performance management system. However, this is lacking in the Zambian public service more especially in our ministry. People are not trusted, (FGD: 07; Pt: 01).

The participants observed that, the failure of the implementation of performance management system in the Zambian public service was due to the unfairness that existed in performance appraisal. The following interview excerpts support this response;

It becomes so difficult to effective implementations the performance managements system when it is observed that there is unfairness in the process, (Public service workers; 45).

Additionally, in the focus group discussions, it was revealed that unfairness that existed in the implementation of the performance appraisal system was also the reason that affected the implementation of the performance management system as shown by the actual words from the participants below;

Unfairness in the way the rater conduct the performance managements system will lead to employee's dissatisfaction and this will pose a challenge when, it come to the implementation of the performance management system (FGD, 03: Pt.04).

Tembo (2018) argues that an effective performance appraisal system should also be free of bias with the appraiser being objective and the method of appraisal must be 12 characterized with fairness and equity. It should be transparent in order to give feedback to employees regarding their strengths and weaknesses. Performance Appraisal should also be concerned with establishing a plan for performance improvement.

Further, findings obtained through the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion as to why the performance management system failed was due to lack of constant review processes of performance management system in the Zambian public service. The actual view of the participants from the semi-structured interviews supporting this response is shown below;

A lot have changed in these departments and time is moving faster but the performance management system that is been used is old, it is not aligned to the

changes that have occurred in these departments, therefore, it becomes so difficult to support such an old performance system, (Public service worker; 15).

In the focus group discussion, the above views were also expressed and solidified by one participant who indicated that:

Performance management systems need to be revealed regularly so as to make them compatible with the current state of affairs however, this is not happening. They have remained unrelieved for a longer period of time and have become out of touch with reality, (FGD, 06: Pt: 01).

The participants lamented and attributed failure of the implementation of the performance management system to lack of an affective reward system in the Zambian public service. This was evidenced by the following interview excerpt;

The idea of the performance management system is excellent and constructive, the only issue I have with this system is the lack of a reward system. Yeah you can be appraised by your supervisor but what do you get out of that nothing, (Public service worker; 46).

Tembo (2018) argue that that the performance management system currently under implementation in the Zambian public service is not effective as it does not result in improved performance and does not provide a basis for rewards or sanctions. This therefore, is against the objective of any performance management system and that is to assist in human resource management decisions such as pay and training. Armstrong and Baron (2005) indicated that performance management engages everyone in the organization to improve performance which will consequently result in overall improvement of performance of the whole organization. Additionally, during the focus group discussion, the above idea was expressed by another participant. The actual views by the participant were as follows;

I started work along time ago and I have gone through a number of performance systems but up to now, I have not seen any value in these performance management system and am about to retire (FGD: 06; Pt.03).

The participants noted that, the failure of the implementation of the performance management system was as a result of not undergoing any training on performance management system. For instance, the following interview excerpt indicates the views of one participant;

Lack of training on how to conduct and implementation performance management is a major challenge that usually prevents us from implementing the performance management system, (Public service worker; 33).

In the focus group discussion, the above statement was expressed by another participant as follows; If we were

trained on the performance management system I think we could be implementing it with easier, (FGD, 07: Pt, 05). Similarly, it was observed by one participant that:

We did not have any formal training on the conditionality's of performance management system (FGD, 07: Pt, 01).

This finding is similar to the finding of Kuhil and Michael (2018). In Kuhil and Michael's (2018) study it was revealed that there were limited trainings concerning the purpose, requirements and implications of PM among employees. This was also observed by Ramataboe (2015) that lack of training on performance management i.e. lack of orientation on PM, posed a challenge on the implementation of the performance management system. In addition to the above, Sefali's (2010) study aimed at investigating the impact of the Performance Management System on accountability in the Public Service of Lesotho. The civil service also lacks comprehensive induction, orientation and re-orientation programmes for officers appointed in the new structures (PSMD, 2001). As a result, no significant changes have taken place in terms of the civil service work culture after restructuring and the introduction of the PMP and APAS. New employee's induction is thus, left to the informal channels within organizations thereby creating the risk of them being taught ineffective work processes and attitudes. As Lungu and Daka (2003) put it, any new entrant to an organization should undergo induction training; ideally at an early stage and before some "disgruntled old hand" tells them the "real story" around the organization. "There is no real expense involved in delivering such training in-house, and the bad effects of "negative socialisation" can be avoided".

The participants lamented that, the failure in implementing the performance management system in the Zambian public service was lack of effective coordination. This is evidenced by the views of the participants as illustrated below;

Lack of effective coordination among employees in different ministry poses a challenge in the implementation of the performance management system, (Public service worker; 55).

The above view was also expressed in the focus group discussions as indicated by the following excerpt;

Yeah, you know these government sections and departments are not well covered hence affects the implementation of the performance, (FGD: 08: Pt, 02).

The participants observed that, the failure of implementing the performance management system was ineffective supervision in selected ministries. According to the participant views, most of the departments in these selected ministries were not well supervised. The actual views of the participants were as follows;

In most of these departments of the government there is ineffective supervision of workers. Most workers come for work at any given time and knock early (Public service worker; 58).

In the focus group discussion, it also revealed by another participant that:

When we compare how private companies operate with those of government, you will realise that in government, it is business as usually, and lack of effective supervision of workers is more evident in government institutions and this would affect the implementation of performance system (FGD; 09:01).

The participants noted that, the cultural belief was among the challenges in the implementation of the performance management system. According to the participants the organizational work cultural that exist within different departments of various ministries had posed a challenge on the implementation of the performance management system on illustrated below;

It is important to understand the organization work process pose a challenge on the implementation of the performance management system (Pt: 30).

The above view was also expressed during the Focus group discussions as shown below;

The work culture of government workers is bad and poses a challenge on the implementation of the Performance Management System (FGD; 10: Pt; 06).

The principal objective of the PMP was to introduce a culture of work planning and an open appraisal system to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of performance and individual productivity in the Public Service. However, the work culture in the public service is very poor in that supervisor have the lessiz faire kind of work attitude which negatively affects the performance management system. They neither provide guidance on how to develop individual works plans nor make follow up to establish the challenges works are facing in implementing the targets in the work plans. Sililo and Mauzu (2025) [32] argue that culture play a key role in organizational performance, mostly in public institutions which are required to accommodate societal values with institution values. In Zambia, there has been an outcry from the general public over the poor working culture and performance of workers employed in the public service despite the improved condition of services (Waal and Mulimbika, 2017; Mulenga, 2013). For example, on 13th January 2016, His Excellency the President of Zambia, Mr Edgar Chagwa Lungu emphasized on the need to improve the service deliverables in the public sector. Speaking at the launch held of Performance Based Contract System (PBCS), Mr. Lungu stated that despite improved conditions of service for civil servants the public has continued to bemoan the poor working culture and performance exhibited by the public service. Other studies do confirm that public service in Zambia is ineffective and inefficient due to in part the poor working culture and performance of the public servants. In addition, Waal and Mulimbika (2017) explains that the performance of the Zambian governmental sectors has continued to fail in terms of both quantity and quality of services that taxpayers expect from them. To improve the poor working culture and performance of the public workers, the government of the Republic of Zambia since 1977 implementing a number of performance management

systems. Among these performance management systems was the Annual Confidential Reports that was used to appraise individual performance (Kanchebele, 2012) [15]. Kamfwa (2016) [14] indicated that the Annual Confidential Report was passed to the Zambian government by the British Colonial Government and had been using it as the only tool for assessing performance in the public service. It is important to note however that the Annual Confidential Report was not objective as it was based on the supervisor’s “personal observations and perceptions about an individual and the appraiser did not have access and input in the process (Phiri, Simui and Masait, 2021) [31].

The respondents were asked if they current performance management systems translate human resources into economic gain. The respondent in the age group 36 to 48 who were the majority indicated that that it did not translate into economic gains. This is shown in Table 5.1 below;

Table 5.1: Can PMS translate human resources into economic gains

Age Group	Can PMS translate human resources into economic gains	
	Yes	No
18-25	0	5
26-30	1	12
31-35	0	11
36-48	0	45
Above 48	0	8

Overall, the results suggest a strong perception among respondents that the current PMS in Zambia is not effectively converting human resource performance into measurable economic benefits. This may imply challenges in the implementation or effectiveness of the system in linking employee performance to organizational productivity and broader economic outcomes.

5. Conclusion

This chapter presented and analysed the findings on the perception of the Performance Management System (PMS) in the Zambian public service based on data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The findings reveal that the majority of participants perceive the current PMS as ineffective and failing to achieve its intended objectives. Several factors were identified as contributing to this failure, including lack of feedback after appraisals, limited commitment from management and employees, inadequate funding and time, poor leadership styles, frequent transfers of leaders, lack of trust among workers, and fear of negative consequences from the appraisal process.

In addition, issues such as perceived unfairness in performance evaluations, lack of training, absence of an effective reward system, poor coordination, ineffective supervision, and unsupportive organizational work culture were also highlighted as significant barriers to successful implementation. The results further showed that most respondents believe the current PMS does not translate human resource performance into meaningful economic gains. Overall, the findings suggest that although the PMS was introduced to improve efficiency, accountability, and service delivery in the public service, several structural and managerial challenges continue to hinder its effective implementation.

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