

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE FACTORS AFFECTING THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF AN EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM WITHIN STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA,
MPUMALANGA**

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Abstract

A performance management system (PMS) is the core of any people management process within an organisation. Organisations exist to perform and if employees do not perform, it is unlikely that organisations will survive. When people perform at their peak level, an organisation can be propelled to compete and create influence. The overall aim of performance management is to establish a high performance culture in which individuals and teams take responsibility for the continuous improvement of business processes and for their own skills and contributions within a framework provided by effective leadership.

The aim of this study was to investigate and establish the factors affecting the implementation of the employee PMS within Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), Mpumalanga. For the purpose of this study, a quantitative research methodological approach was used. The survey research strategy, which involved the use of a questionnaire, was employed to collect the primary data from employees within Stats SA, Mpumalanga. The participants were sampled through a probability sampling technique that involved simple random sampling. From a target population of 80, 66 respondents were sampled and a 77% response rate was achieved.

This study was significant in that it provided valuable theoretical insight to Stats SA's provincial management. The results of the study revealed that the racial profile in the organisation is not reflective of the provincial population demographics. The study revealed that, collectively, 92% of the employees are involved in planning their individual performance. In addition, 86.3% the employees agreed that their performance plans are aligned to organisational priorities. The study revealed that 39% of the employees are not obtaining on-going and honest performance feedback from their supervisors. The study also indicated that 41.2% of the respondents disagreed that the distribution of performance rewards is fair and transparent and 33.3% of the participants indicated that exceptional performance is not recognised by the organisation. The study established that 88% of the participants are objective in their performance ratings and do not misrepresent their actual performance in order to increase the likelihood of them receiving monetary bonuses. Approximately 74.5% of the participants also revealed that they would accept other forms of

performance recognition other than monetary rewards. Collectively, 62.8% of the participants agreed that staff members lack positive attitudes towards performance management. Management was reported to be putting less priority on the implementation of the PMS within Stats SA.

The study concluded with specific recommendations that the management should consider in order to enhance the effectiveness of the PMS and its implementation within Stats SA. Areas of future research were recommended in order to address the limitations associated with this study.

Key Words: Employee Performance; Management System; Statistics; Factors; Quantitative Research

Introduction

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) is a national government department and has footprints in all nine provinces in South Africa. Its mandate is derived from the Statistics Act (Act No. 6 of 1999) with its main responsibilities involving the collection, analysis and dissemination of official statistics in order to assist all organs of state and the private sector to make evidence-based decisions. The Stats SA Mpumalanga Provincial Office is based in Nelspruit and is spread across five district offices (Nelspruit, Thulamahashe, Siyabuswa, Witbank and Ermelo).

Effective individual performance management is fundamental to the successful achievement of organisational goals (Pulakos, 2004:1-9). This notion is further supported by Robbins (1998:565), who suggests that performance evaluations provide input towards making important decisions such as promotions, transfers, identifying training and development needs as well as the basis for reward allocations.

This study investigates the factors that affect the effective implementation of the employee performance management system (PMS) within Stats SA, Mpumalanga. As performance is an important aspect for organisational success, Stats SA needs to ensure that all performance bottlenecks are identified and removed.

Background to the Problem

Until 2003, Stats SA did not have an approved policy for performance management. Prior to this, the administration of the PMS was, arguably, a compliance exercise. The coordination of the system was centralised at the head office in Pretoria. When the process was fully decentralised to the Provincial Offices in 2008, there were no vigorous and concerted efforts towards educating employees and managers on the bottom line aims and objectives of the adopted PMS.

Since 2011, the Human Resources Management unit has received grievances and complaints from users with allegations that the PMS does not favour all employees. Managers are perceived as the primary beneficiaries of the current PMS, whereas the lower ranked employees appear to experience some issues with the system. Contrary to the perspectives of lower ranked staff, managers shift the blame to the approach adopted in implementing the PMS.

Robbins (1999:633-634) suggests that an employee's evaluation is likely to be distorted when a number of problems creep into the process. Challenges are continually creeping into the Stats SA's

PMS, and, its reliability, as a result, is becoming increasingly compromised. Consequently, this threatens the continued service delivery and integrity of processes and procedures within Stats SA.

Objectives of the Study

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To assess the level of employee involvement, understanding and ownership of the performance management planning processes.
- To assess the extent of performance management feedback provided to employees.
- To evaluate the extent to which the performance assessments and outcomes are catered towards the achievement of monetary rewards.
- To determine the extent to which continuous employee development and employee coaching are included in the implementation of the performance management system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Performance Management

Performance management is the practice of connecting the long-term strategy of an organisation to its day-to-day performance by specifying measurable objectives at all levels and monitoring performance against those objectives. Performance management, therefore, is the day-to-day management of employees in terms of the goals of the organisation (Schultz, 2003:74).

Dessler (2008:322) defines performance appraisal as any procedure that involves (i) setting work standards, (ii) assessing the employee's actual performance relative to those standards, and (iii) providing feedback to the employee with the aim of motivating him or her to eliminate performance deficiencies or to continue to improve performance. In addition, Jenkins (2000) suggest that performance management is a mandated process in which, for a specified period of time, an employee's work or components of an employee's work, behaviours or traits are individually rated, judged or described by a rater and the results are maintained by the organisation.

Aims of Performance Management

Kumari (2012:78) indicates that the overall aim of performance management is to establish a high performance culture in which individuals and teams take responsibility for the continuous improvement of business processes and their own skills and contributions within a framework provided by effective leadership. According to Kumari (2012:78), the primary aims of a PMS are:

- Empowering, motivating and rewarding employees to do their best;
- Focusing employees' tasks on the right things and doing them correctly; and
- Proactively managing and resourcing performance against agreed accountabilities and objectives.

Defining Performance Management Goals

Starzmann (2007:4) indicates that when considering individual performance within organisations, it is important to focus on two fundamental principles. Firstly, performance management, in an organisational context, is ultimately all about increasing organisational performance. Second, organisational performance is comprised of the performance of the individuals who make up organisations. This indicates that top management must, therefore, clearly set, define and champion

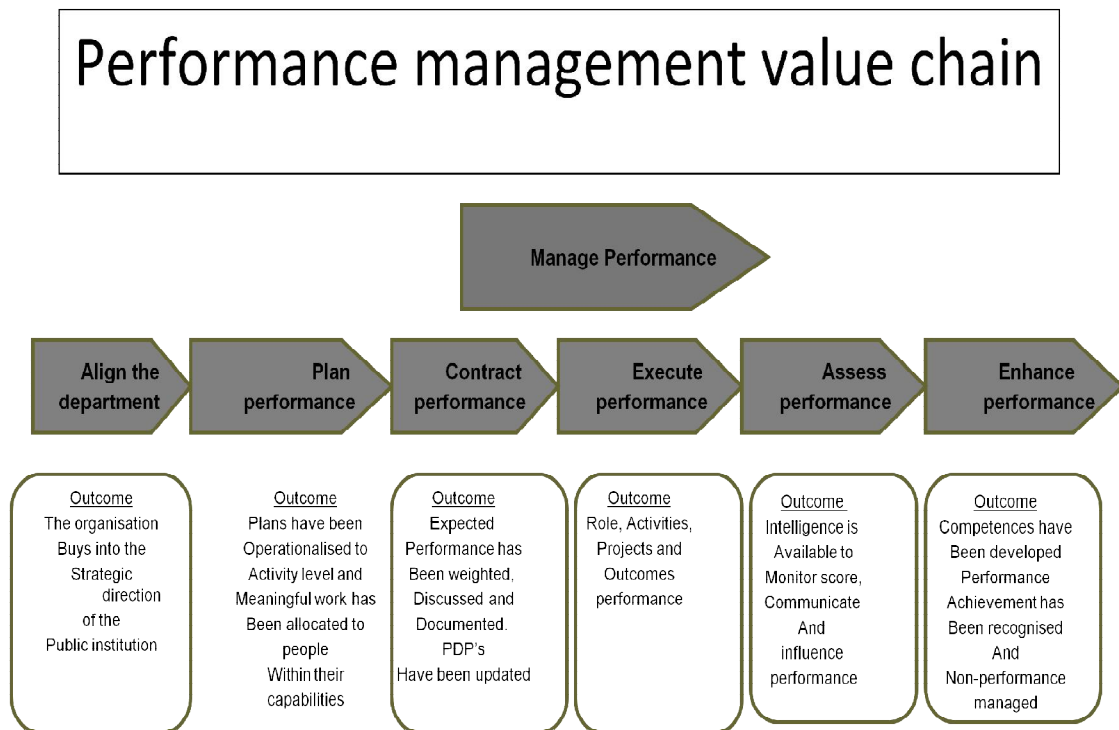
a PMS so that individuals understand how their respective efforts add up to the global ‘picture’ of an organisation.

It is observed that human resources professionals and line managers generally struggle with the concept of how to link individual performance with organisational success. Thus, an organisational PMS may be used sparingly or possibly redesigned without ever yielding its desired goal of helping the organisation to continuously enhance its performance.

Overview of Statistics South Africa’s Performance Management Value Chain

Figure 2.1 depicts Stats SA’s performance management value chain. Considering the objectives included in this study and to provide contextual information, it was necessary to review Stats SA’s current PMS and attempt to draw parallels with other typical performance management processes and systems as well as alternative implementation approaches.

Figure 2.1: Stats SA’s Performance Management Value Chain.

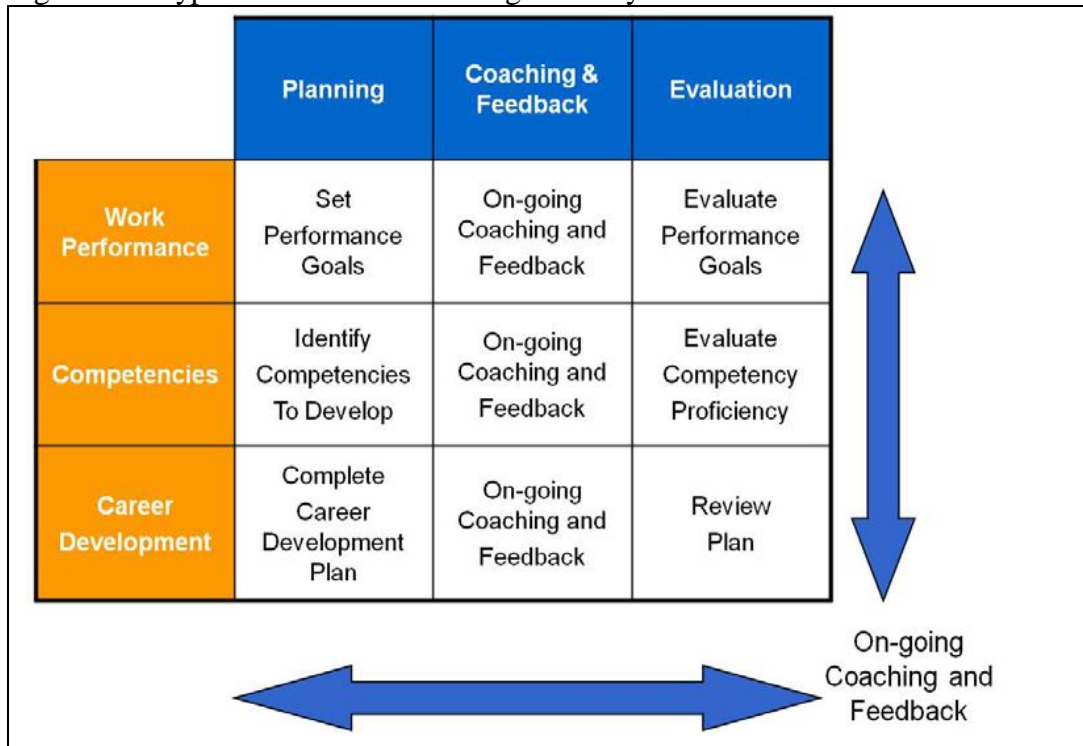


Source: Stats SA (2003:16).

Overview and Definition of a Performance Management System

A PMS is a systematic process that formally documents the goals and objectives of each employee, which typically has a built-in review process (Pulakos, 2004:3). Figure 2.2 depicts a common form of a PMS. The purpose of a PMS should be determined by considering organisational needs, organisational culture and systems’ integration with other human resources management systems. Effective PMS’s have a well-articulated process for accomplishing evaluation activities, with defined roles and timelines for both managers and employees.

Figure 2.2: Typical Performance Management System.



Source: Pulakos (2011:150).

Potential Problems during the Implementation of a Performance Management System

Robbins (1998:476) suggests that although organisations may seek to make the performance evaluation process free from personal bias, prejudice and idiosyncrasies, a number of potential problems may begin to develop as part of the PMS process. The following are some potential triggers of problems during the implementation of a PMS:

- Single criterion – Where employees are evaluated on a single job criterion and where successful performances on that job require good performance on a number of criteria. Employees tend to emphasise the single criterion in the execution of other job-related factors;
- Leniency error – A tendency to evaluate a set of employees too high (positive) or too low (negative);
- Halo error – An evaluator's tendency to let the assessment of an individual on one trait influence his or her evaluation of that person on other traits;
- Similarity error – When evaluators rate other people with special consideration to those qualities that they perceive in themselves;
- Low differentiation – An evaluator's ability to evaluate objectively and accurately is impeded by social differentiation; and
- Forcing information to match non-performance criteria – A formal evaluation is initiated and occurs following a decision as to how the individual has been performing.

Pre-requisites of an Effective Performance Management System

Markus (2004:4) concludes that simply adopting a new system, new templates and new procedures is not enough to make performance management effective. He indicates that any successful PMS must satisfy the following pre-requisites:

- Clear purpose – Organisations must have a clear idea of critical success factors as well as a performance management culture, meaning and emphasis on individual accountability and results;
- Business performance management culture – Reviewing the performance of individuals is meaningless if performance is not monitored within an organisation. A business performance management culture means that senior management values and insists on the measurement of the business factors that are critical to the success of an organisation;
- Alignment – Ensuring that the efforts of every individual are aligned with the organisation and that each individual understands the importance of their contributions;
- Fairness – Perceptions of fairness are based on comparisons. The key factor for ensuring that employees consider that the compensation they receive is fair and that procedural justice is followed is making employees feel that the method used to determine relative pay is fair;
- Meaning – Many decisions about career development are made on an ad-hoc basis rather than on merit. A PMS must be seen to accomplish its purpose, to communicate expectations, reward top performance and address skills and knowledge gaps;
- Commitment – There must be commitment to performance management from all levels, senior management and general employees; and
- System integrity – A mechanism for ensuring that the system is working should be put in place. This means ensuring that the PMS is being used according to the defined procedures and with the correct frequency.

Twelve Steps for Successfully Implementing a Performance Management System

Markus (2004:6-13) recommends that the following steps be considered in order to ensure successful implementation of a PMS:

- Step 1 – Check that strategy and values are clear: An organisation must publish and promote clear values to every employee;
- Step 2 – Outline organisational objectives: Employees must be aware of how their role contributes to the achievement of these objectives;
- Step 3 – Update job descriptions: Job description forms an integral part of performance management as it provides a basis for performance planning. The quality of job descriptions is critical in ensuring that the activities and the expectations are clearly defined;
- Step 4 – Ensure everyone has a current job description: Over time, employees drift away from their original understanding of the requirements, which may result in some critical aspects of their job being overlooked;
- Step 5 – Performance Planning: It is well established that employees with goals outperform those without goals. The best way to manage goals is within an individual performance plan. Employees and managers should suggest, discuss and agree on objectives on a joint basis to ensure that they are realistic, that there is total commitment and appropriate resourcing;
- Step 6 – Plan for feedback: There must be a regular but informal process for observing performance. The PMS should provide a communication channel whereby barriers to performance can be identified early, and, as a result, minimised or removed quickly.

Performance feedback should be linked to individual capability development so that, where gaps are identified, plans can be made for individual development;

- Step 7 – Have a clear methodology to deal with poor performance: If poor performance is not confronted it continues and spreads. A manager's role is to create a work environment that enables employees to perform well and to identify and correct skill and knowledge gaps. It is vital that managers have a diagnostic system for analysing the causes of poor performance, with a focus on initially identifying and eliminating environmental factors;
- Step 8 – Plan to align the consequences: There must be a transparent and systematic method for differentially rewarding top performers if they are not to be disheartened. Sometimes, with the best of intentions, incentives (positive reinforcement) become disincentives (for example, if the process of awarding incentives is not fair);
- Step 9 – Evaluation: Accurate evaluation of individual performance depends on two key factors: (i) ample and objective performance data and (ii) a sound methodology for evaluating it. In organisations where performance appraisal is completed annually, there is usually no objective performance data;
- Step 10 – Evaluation process: To gain employees' confidence, the review process must be open and transparent with strict adherence to clear evaluation criteria. Reliance on memory alone is likely to result in inaccurate and biased assessments. Employees should have the opportunity to rate themselves and to make comments on their review based to each of their preferences and perspectives;
- Step 11 – Implementation: This involves educating employees and managers about the importance of performance management. This requires that employees understand all of the key concepts, best practices and terminology. If employees and managers are to use the system effectively, they must clearly see the personal benefits. For employees, an effective system means clearer expectations, feedback and recognition based on actual results. For managers, it means that their area of responsibility will have fewer employee problems, better employee satisfaction and retention rates, improved staff productivity and performance and better business results; and
- Step 12 - Ensuring the integrity of the performance management process: There must be a strategy for monitoring the performance management process itself in order to ensure that managers and employees use it appropriately. This means regular inspection of the level of performance management activity, the amount of dialogue and recording of objective performance data and subjective feedback. It involves ensuring the quality of job descriptions and the alignment of objectives and making certain that performance reviews are conducted as scheduled and according to procedures and the quality of comments and ratings therein.

Employee Performance Evaluation

Peterson (2000:1) indicates that an employee evaluation is a tool used by managers and human resources departments to review an employee's performance during a set period of time. Performance evaluations can have a positive impact on all aspects of an organisation if properly used to coach and reward employees. Hanna and Brusoe (1997:66) suggest that a workforce can be constantly improved if employee performance is regularly evaluated and monitored. Karol (1996) considers performance management to include a communication event scheduled between a manager and an employee, primarily for the purpose of evaluating an employee's past job performance and discussing relevant areas for future job performance.

Job Performance Evaluation Process

Companies should be concerned about their employees' performance at work, which is expected to directly affect organisational performance. Existing literature and practices have ample methods for performance evaluation. Woods (1998:25) notes that, recently, organisations in the United States have been shifting away from the use of collaborative evaluation approaches in which managers and employees participate together in the goal-setting process (for an example, management by objectives – MBOs – and behaviourally anchored rating scales – BARS) to more traditional approaches, such as graphic or numeric rating scales based on scoring criteria.

Performance Evaluation Methods

An effective PMS should have a clearly defined performance management evaluation technique. Robbins (1998:370) suggests the following performance evaluation techniques:

- Written essays – Writing a narrative describing an employee's strengths, weaknesses, past performance, potential and suggestions for improvements;
- Critical incidents – An evaluation focuses attention on behaviours that are key to making the difference between executing a job effectively and executing a job ineffectively;
- Graphic rating scales – An evaluation method whereby the evaluator rates performance factors on an incremental scale;
- Behavioural anchored rating scales – An evaluation method whereby actual job related behaviour is rated along a continuum;
- Group order ranking – An evaluation method that places employees into a particular classification, such as quartiles;
- Individual ranking – An evaluation method that assigns employees ranks, from best to worst based, based on a comparative order of performance;
- Paired comparison – An evaluation method that compares each employee with every other employee and assigns a summary ranking based on the number of superior scores that an employee achieves.

Rewarding Good Performance and Types Performance Rewards

Rewards in an employee's work life may be described as all of the tools available to the employer that may be used to attract, motivate and retain employees. Simons (2000:123) indicates that rewards (especially pay) can become predictors of future behaviours and outcomes. Bonner and Sprinkle (2002:303) indicates that linking monetary incentives to performance goals increases the intensity and duration of managers' efforts towards the rewarded indicator, which, in turn, is considered to lead to improvements in company performance.

The 2012-2013 US Report on Talent Management and Rewards Survey (2012:4-5) attempts to address the reasons for the difficulties companies experience in attempting to attract top talent. The findings note that an employer's misconceptions about what attracts employees are a significant problem for companies. Organisations that do not offer what employees want have a harder time attracting with strong potential and the critical skills the companies need.

Informal rewards are often overlooked in lieu of formal reward programs. However, when asked, employees often have heightened morale and are more motivated by spontaneous, consistent and

sincere personal appreciation of the employee's efforts than simply by money. Informal rewards, when delivered correctly and consistently, may have the potential to improve both the organisational performance within Stats SA and the overall moral of the employees.

Objectives of the Reward System

Reward systems have the capacity to influence at least six factors, which, in turn, may impact an organisation's effectiveness:

- Attraction and Retention – Research on job choice, career choice and turnover suggests that the kind and level of rewards an organisation offers influences who is attracted to work for an organisation and who will continue to work for it (Mobley, 1982:1). Overall, organisations that give the most rewards tend to attract and retain the most people (Gerhart and Milkovich, 1992);
- Motivation of Performance – When specific conditions exist, reward systems appear to motivate performance (Gerhart and Milkovich, 1992). Important rewards must be perceived as coinciding in a timely manner to effective performance;
- Skills and Knowledge – Just as pay systems can motivate performance; they can also motivate learning and development. Individuals are motivated to learn and develop are rewarded by the growth that they receive because of it;
- Culture – Reward systems are one feature of organisations that contributes to their overall culture. Depending upon how reward systems are developed, administered and managed, they can cause the culture of an organisation to vary quite widely;
- Reinforce and Define Structure – The reward system of an organisation can reinforce and define an organisation's structure (Lawler, 1990:11). Often, this impact of a reward system is not fully considered in the design of reward systems. As a result, their impact on the structure of an organisation is unintentional; and
- Cost – Reward systems are often a significant cost factor. Employees' salaries alone may represent over 50% of organisation's operating costs. Thus, it is important that the designing of a reward system focuses on how high the costs should be and how they will vary as a function of an organisation's ability to provide the rewards.

Performance Management Emerging Trends

Benson, Lawler and McDermott (2012:23) indicate that the following trends are now prevalent in organisations that have a strategic perspective of performance management:

- Transparent feedback;
- Reinforcement – 'praise' buttons built into the system;
- More planning upfront – segment goals and remove obstacles that deter progress;
- Systematic/scientific approach to performance management – performance management scorecard for human resources and managers; and
- Manager training for creating and setting actionable performance goals, reinforcement strategies (praise) and building pride (intrinsic motivation and engagement).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Methodology

Quantitative methodology was used to obtain the primary data. According to Dawson (2009:16), researchers should avoid thinking that quantitative research is 'better' than qualitative research. He

indicates that they are simply different approaches and both have their strengths and weaknesses. Quantitative research methods are normally preferred due to the strength of yielding data that are projectable to a larger population and its ability to translate data into easily quantifiable charts and graphs. This research method involves the use of standardised measures so that the varying perspectives and experiences of people can be categorised into a limited number of predetermined response categories (Patton, 2001:14).

Research Strategies

The strength of a research design depends on the clarity of the research question and the extent to which the variables of interest are articulated (Anne, 2012:11). According to Van Wyk (2011:4), research design is the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problems to the pertinent and achievable empirical research. In other words, the research design articulates what data is required, what methods are going to be used to collect and analyse the data and how these aspects will answer the research question. The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables the researcher to answer the initial questions as unambiguously as possible. Research design is not related to any particular method of collecting data or any particular type of data. Any research design can, in principle, use any type of data collection method and can either use quantitative or qualitative data.

According to Kritsonis (2009:2) there are five types of research designs, namely:

- Correlational;
- Exploratory;
- Descriptive;
- Explanatory; and
- Causal-comparative research designs.

Sample Size

Dawson (2009:48) emphasises that, in quantitative research, it is possible to generalise the results to the whole target population if the sample is carefully chosen and reflects the sample. Castillo (2009:1) also indicates that the concept of a sample arises from the inability of a researcher to test all the individuals in a given population. The sample, therefore, must be representative of the population from which it was drawn and it must have a good size to warrant statistical analysis. At the time of this study, 80 permanent officials were employed within Stats SA, Mpumalanga. For this study, a total of 66 participants were chosen in line with the sampling guideline as reflected in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Table for Determining Sample Size from a Given Population.

N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320

50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10 000	370
150	108	750	254	15 000	375
160	113	800	260	20 000	377
170	118	850	265	30 000	379
180	123	900	269	40 000	380
190	127	950	274	50 000	381
200	132	1000	278	75 000	382
210	136	1100	285	1 000 000	384

Sources: Adapted from Sekaran (1992:253).

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of a study involve matters and occurrences that arise in a study that are often outside of the researcher’s control (Simon and Goes, 2013:69, 80). They limit the extent, breadth, and develop of a study and sometimes affect the end result and conclusions that can be drawn.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Biographic Information

Figure 4.1: Race Group of Respondents.

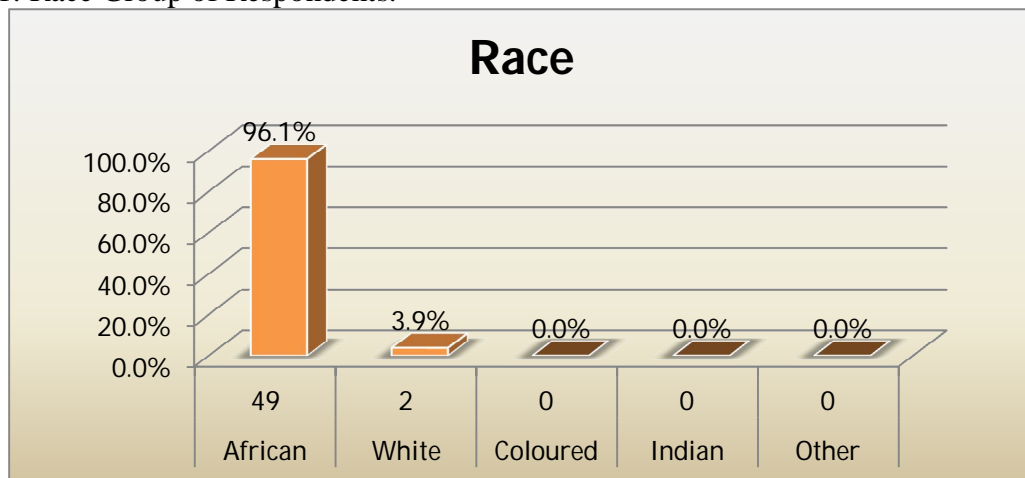
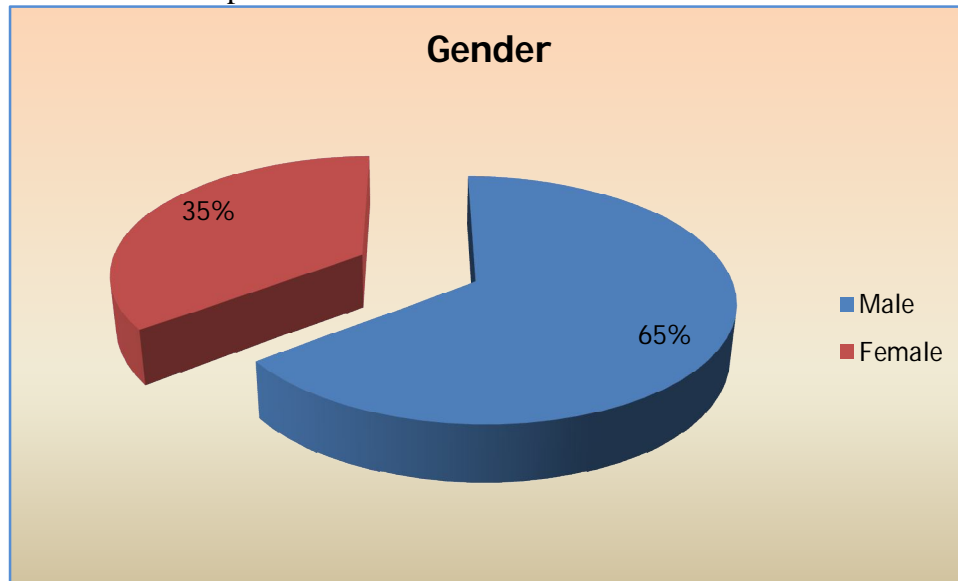


Figure 4.1 reveals that 96.1% of the respondents were African and 3.9% were White. There were no participants from any of the other racial groups. The general population distribution within the Mpumalanga Province is comprised of 92% Africans, 6.8% Whites, 0.8% Indians and 0.8% Coloureds (Stats SA, 2007: 25). The 96.1% African respondents in this study are in line and consistent with the racial composition of employees within Stats SA in Mpumalanga in which Africans are the majority. However, given the findings of the study, it can be deduced that the provincial population distribution is not reflected at the workplace in Stats SA, Mpumalanga. Management should take corrective action with the Indian and White profile in order to benefit from a diverse workforce. Mclaren (2009:1) indicates that top innovators of technology have operated with diverse workforces since the 1980s, and, now, many major corporations see diversity as a basic feature of their hiring policies. Workplace diversity comprises many elements including race, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, age, educational levels and socioeconomic status.

Figure 4.2: Gender of the Respondents.



Presently, Stats SA, Mpumalanga has 80 permanent staff members with 38 (47.5%) being female and 42 (52.5%) being male (see attached employment equity profile in Appendix D). Figure 4.2 indicates that 65% of the respondents were male and 35% were females. The response rate is in line with the gender profile of Stats, Mpumalanga, where males are the majority. Overall, Stats SA's Mpumalanga gender profile is fairly balanced (see attached Appendix D).

Figure 4.3: Rank of the Respondents.

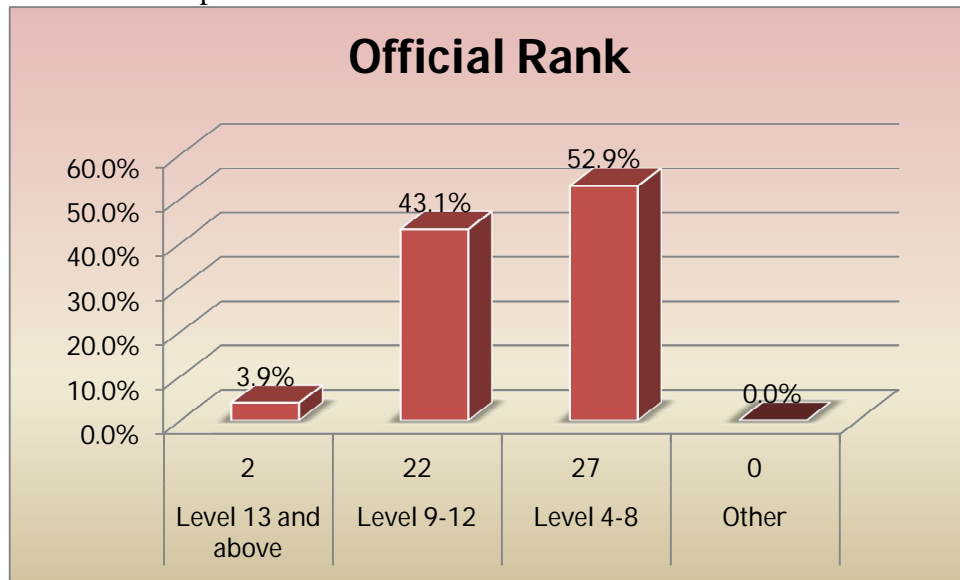


Figure 4.3 reveals that 52.9% of the respondents were employees at salary level 4-8, 43.1% were at the supervisory, middle management or team leader level (level 9-12), and 3.9% were employees from top management level, such as Directors and Chief Directors (level 13 and above). The core business of Stats SA is largely fieldwork operations wherein a large pool of employees at entry salary level six is employed. Employees at salary level 9-12 also comprise professionals and technicians. There are currently 12 posts between salary ranges 6 and 12 that are not filled. The gaps created by these vacancies may necessitate that other employees carry the workload and in return expect to be compensated through the PMS. Failure to compensate may lead to disgruntlements, which may ultimately lead to poor implementation of the PMS.

Demographic Information

Figure 4.4: Respondents Office/District Stationing.

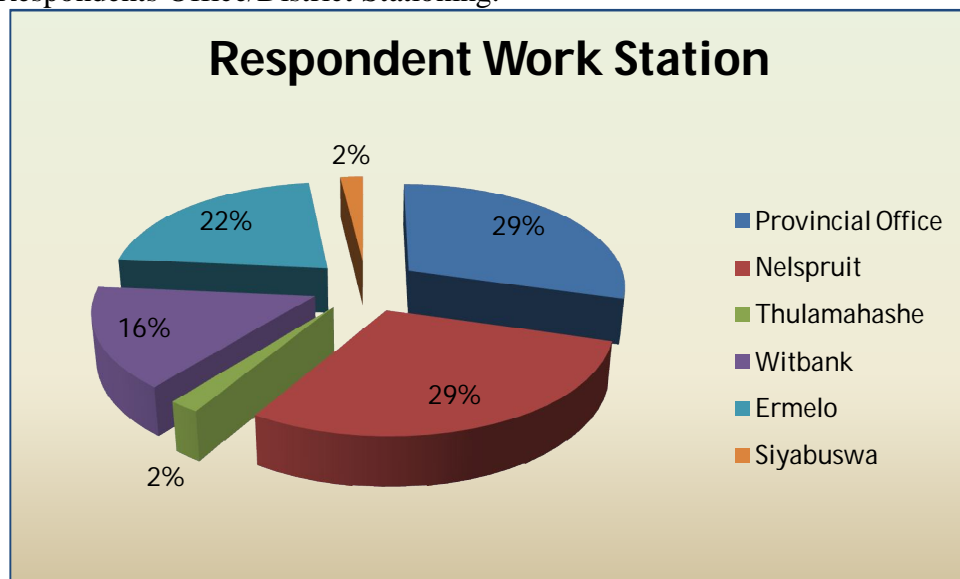
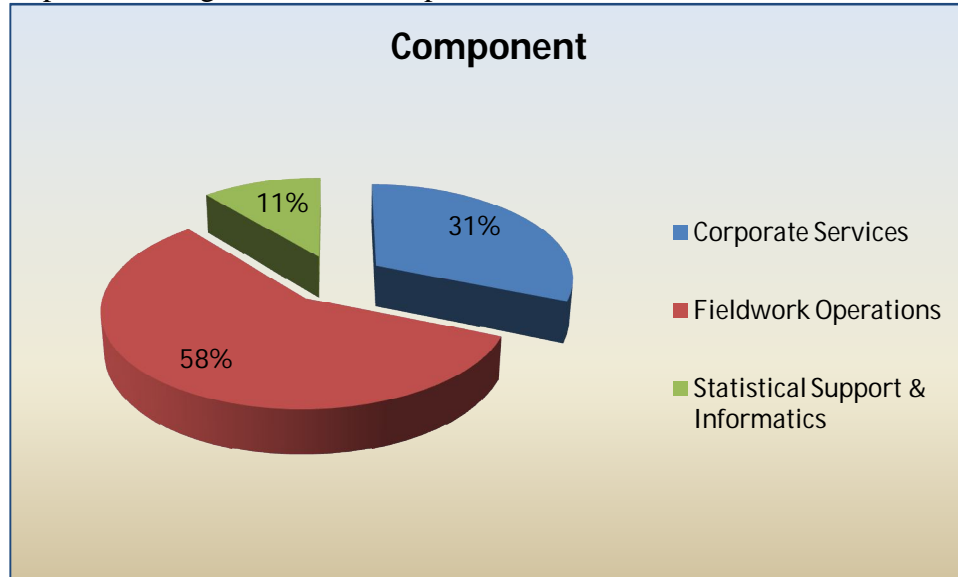


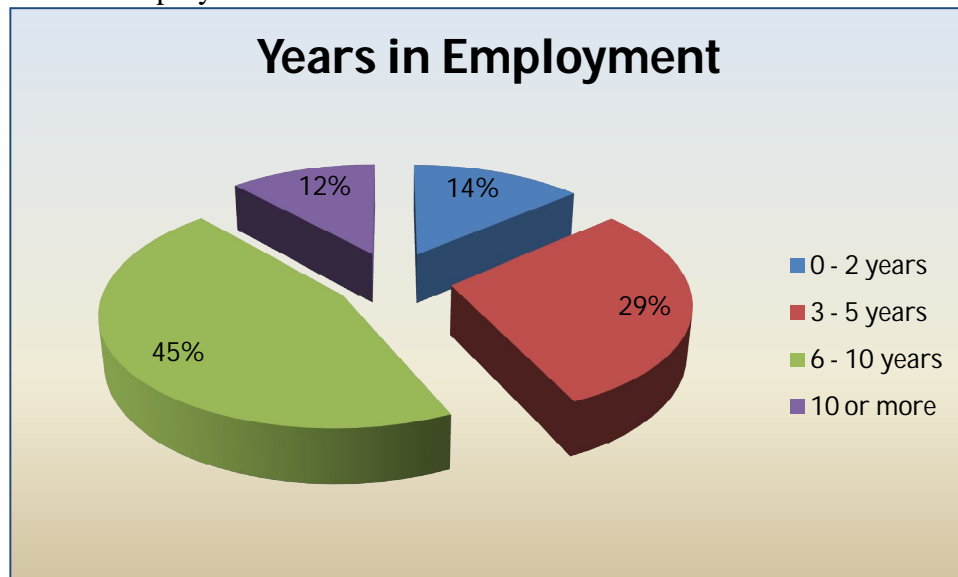
Figure 4.4 shows a higher percentage of respondents (71%) work within in the district offices (Nelspruit, Thulamahashe, Witbank, Ermelo and Siyabuswa). The provincial office contributed to 29% of the officials who participated in the study. There are 5 district offices within Stats SA, Mpumalanga, and it was expected that a higher number of respondents would be from the district offices. The Siyabuswa and Thulamahashe district offices possess the smallest staff compliment as compared to the other three district offices and the response rate achieved was expected.

Figure 4.5: Respondents Organisational Component.



Operations within Stats SA, Mpumalanga have been organised within three work streams or components. Figure 4.5 indicates that 58% of the participants in this study are working within the Fieldwork Operations component, 31% are placed within the Corporate Services component and 11% work within the Statistical Support and Informatics (SSI) department. Fieldwork Operations is the core of Stats SA’s business and it is the biggest component of the three. The Corporate Services is responsible for providing a support service to the core; hence, it is the second biggest component of Stats SA.

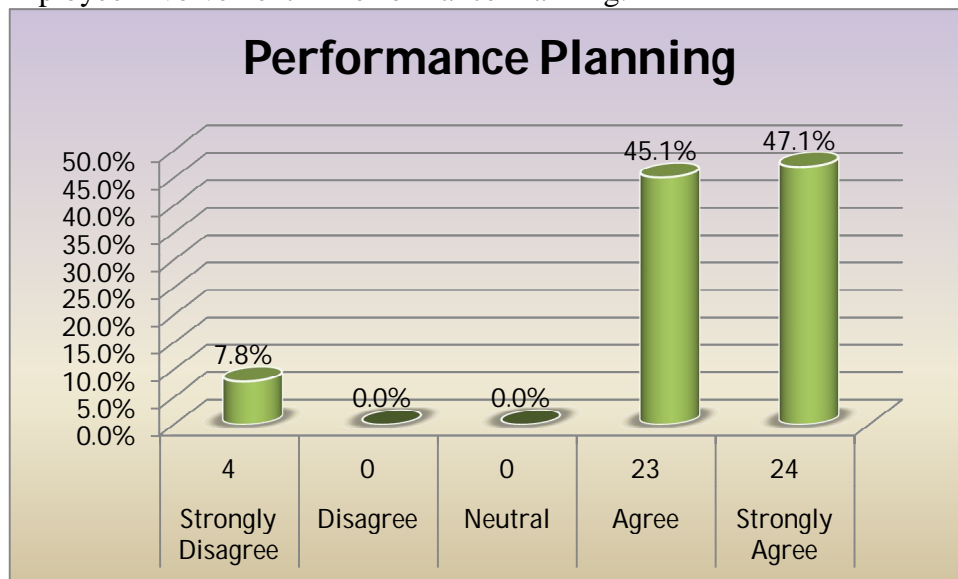
Figure 4.6: Years of Employment within Stats SA.



The findings in Figure 4.6 reveal that most of the respondents (45%) have been employed within Stats SA for 6-10 years, 29% have been employed for 3-5 years, 14% have been employed for 0-2 years and 12% have been employed within Stats SA for 10 or more years. It is evident, based on Figure 4.6, that a significant number of respondents (86%) have been employed within Stats SA for between 3 to 10 years or more. This suggests that most employees within Stats SA, Mpumalanga should be familiar and understand the organisational processes and procedures given the amount of years they have been with the employer. This includes knowledge of the PMS. Stats SA are currently lacking an effective employee retention strategy and it would be interesting to know what retains them. However, this was not part of the objectives of this study. Given that the statistical work performed by Stats SA is highly technical and that there are very few statistical organisations in the market, it is possible that employees have limited career options, and, as a result, are indirectly compelled to stay though they may want to leave.

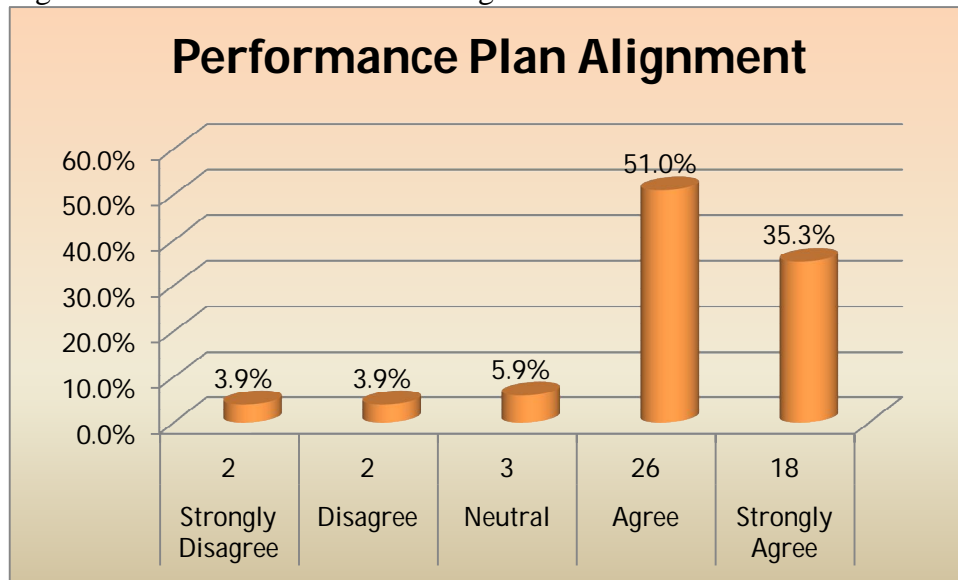
Performance Planning

Figure 4.7: Employee Involvement in Performance Planning.



This study found that a collective 92% of the respondents agreed that they are actively involved in compiling their performance plans / agreements and 7.8% of the participants strongly disagreed that they are actively involved. Performance planning is an integral phase and contributes to the success of a PMS. Therefore, management must ensure that all employees, irrespective of rank, are fully involved in planning their own work. Pomoni (2010:1) indicates that getting employees involved in the planning process helps them to appreciate the organisational goals, what needs to be done, why it needs to be done and how well it should be done.

Figure 4.8: Alignment of Performance Plan to Organisational Priorities.



The findings from this study, as reflected on Figure 4.8, indicate that 86.3% agreed that their performance plans / agreements are aligned to the yearly priorities of the organisation, 7.8% disagreed and 5.9% were neutral. The alignment of individual performance plans to organisational priorities increases organisational effectiveness. The alignment of organisational, team and individual efforts toward the achievement of business goals and organisational success equates to ‘performance’ (Human Capital Institute, 2009:10).

Figure 4.9: Understanding of the Performance Planning Process.

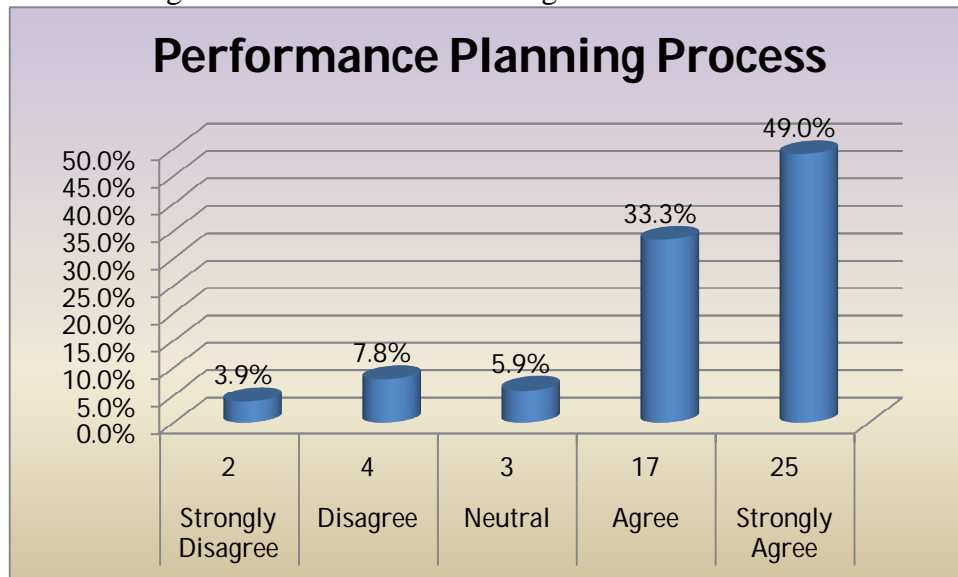


Figure 4.9 reveals that a collective 82.3% of the participants agree that they fully understand the performance planning and compilation process, 11.7% disagreed and 5.9% were neutral. The amount of employees who seem not to understand the performance planning process should be a concerning factor for management. Lack of knowledge of the process may lead to employees drafting the plan only for compliance purposes and not addressing fundamental operational needs. Management should take corrective actions and ensure that all employees are exposed to all performance planning processes. This finding is consistent with the findings in Figure 4.8, in which

5.9% of the participants were neutral, suggesting that they were unsure of whether their performance plan is aligned to the priorities of the organisation.

Figure 4.10: The Performance Plan is not only Compiled for Compliance Purposes but also aligned to Daily Activities.

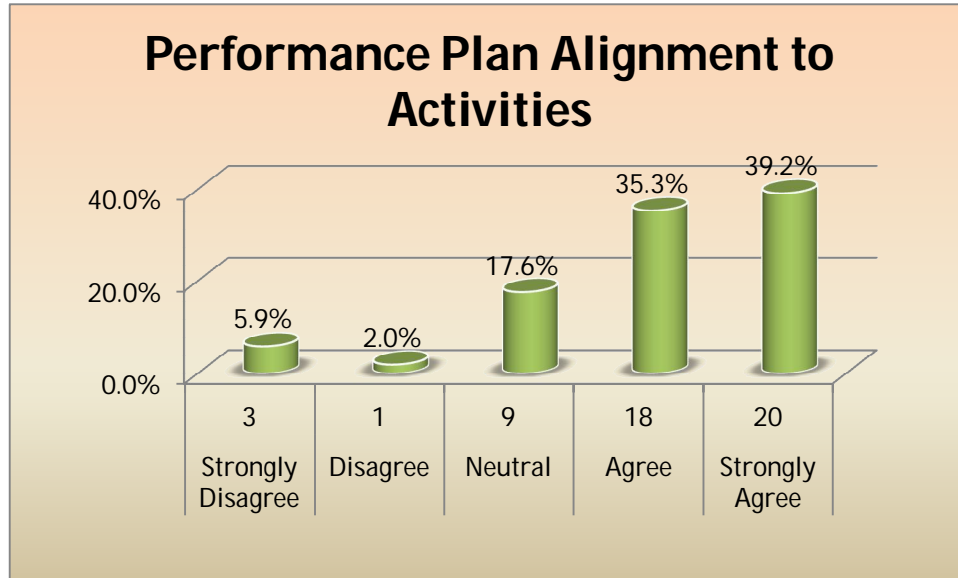
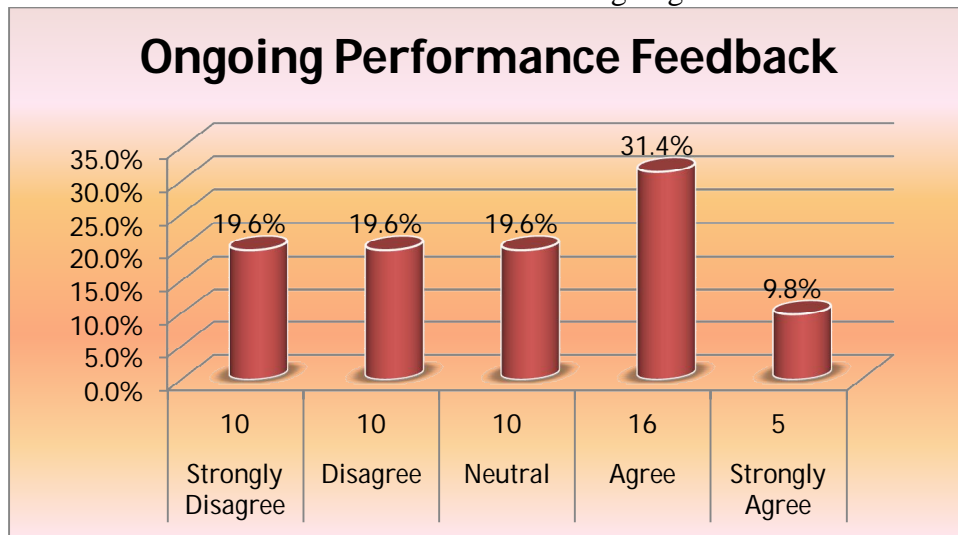


Figure 4.10 reveals that a collective 74.5% of the participants agreed that their performance plans are aligned to their daily activities and that they do not compile the plans for compliance purposes only. In addition, 7.9% disagreed that the day-to-day activities are aligned to their performance plan and 17.6% were neutral. The overall number of participants who disagree and those who were neutral about whether daily activities are aligned to their performance plan is a concern for management. The misalignment of daily activities to the performance plan is bound to create problems and difficulties during performance assessment and evaluation. Management should correctively address this finding since it has a potential to cause conflict between supervisors and subordinates, and, ultimately, compromise the PMS.

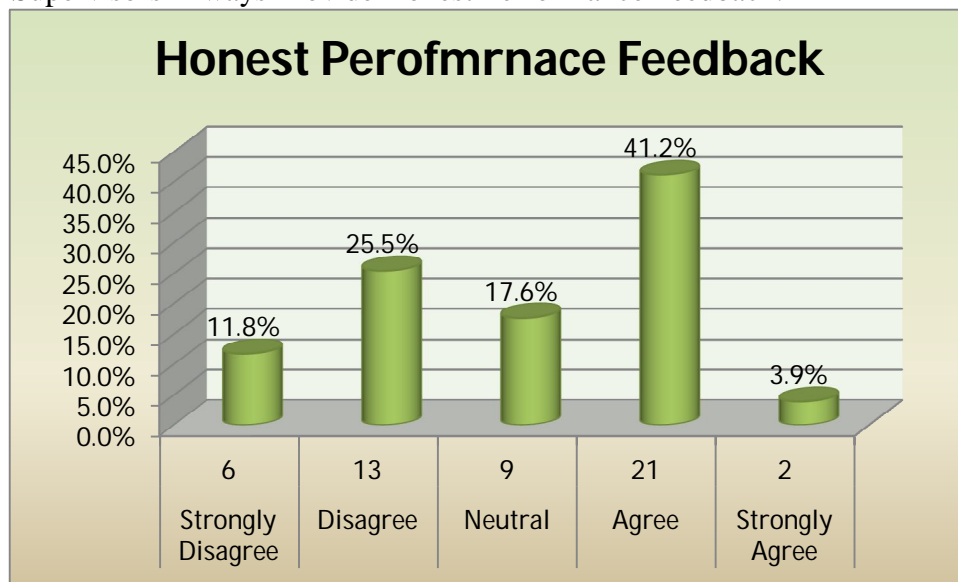
Performance Feedback

Figure 4.11: Formal Performance Feedback Held on an On-going Basis.



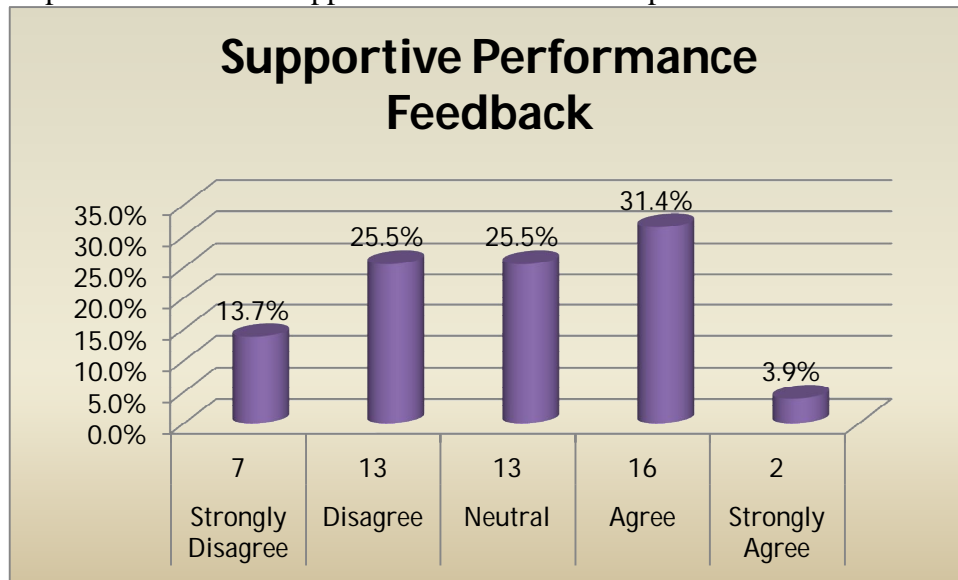
The findings in Figure 4.11 reveal that less than half of the participants 41.2% agreed that they receive on-going performance feedback from their supervisors or managers, 39.2% disagreed and 19.6% were neutral. The overall picture from Figure 4.11 reflects that on-going performance feedback is a challenge within Stats SA, Mpumalanga and management should correct this situation. On-going performance feedback provides an opportunity for employees to gain insight into how they are progressing and also provides developmental opportunities. The lack of effective and on-going performance feedback could be attributed to the fact that most of the officials are assigned fieldwork activities in areas that are far from their offices, which impedes the ability to have continuous face-to-face interactions with supervisors. In other instances, reports are collected telephonically, and, as a result, limit the focus of discussions to key issues that may be affecting the employee.

Figure 4.12: Supervisors Always Provide Honest Performance Feedback.



Honest performance feedback is one of the vital elements of a successful employee performance management process. The absence of honest feedback provides an opportunity for challenges, such as poor performance, poor or low performance standards and a lack of employee development to cultivate. The findings from this study, as reflected on Figure 4.12, indicates that a collective of less than half of the participants 45.1% agreed (41% agreed and 3.9% strongly agreed) that their supervisors or managers provide honest performance feedback, 37.3% disagreed (11.8% strongly disagreed and 2.5% disagreed) and 17.6% were not sure. The 17.6% of the employees who were neutral about the honesty of their supervisors in the provision of performance feedback indicates a need for supervisors to be clearer and avoid ambiguity when providing performance feedback.

Figure 4.13: Supervisor Provides Supportive Feedback that Improves Work Performance.



The findings in Figure 4.13 indicate that 39.2% (13.7% and 25.5%) of participants disagreed to some degree, 35.3% agreed (31.4% and 3.9%) that the kind of performance feedback they receive is supportive and provides personal growth opportunities and 25.5% were neutral. This finding reflects a growing trend of officials who appear unsure about most of the variables associated with performance management feedback. Management should embark on corrective actions to address issues associated with the provision of performance feedback.

Performance Rewards

Figure 4.14: The Distribution of Rewards is fair and transparent.

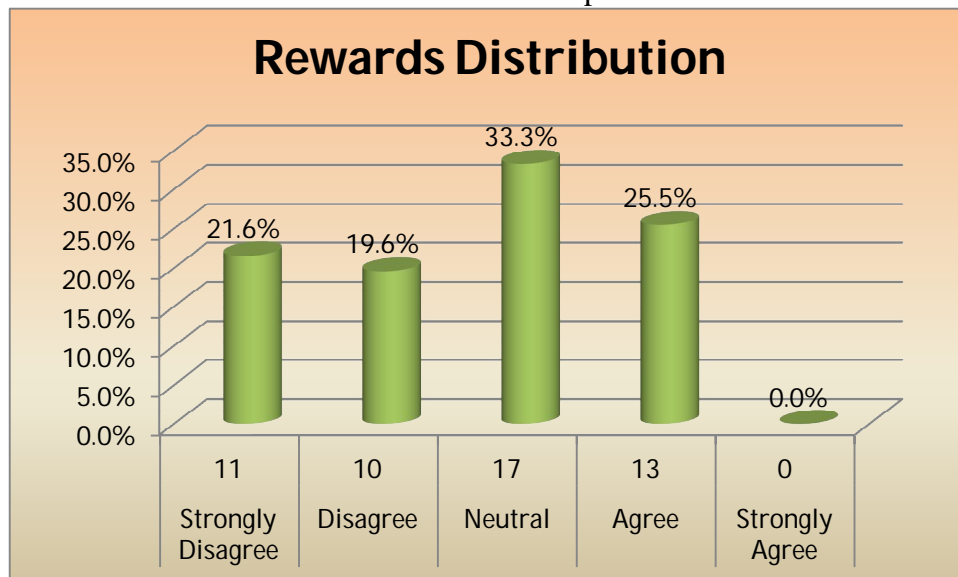


Figure 4.14 reveals that a collective 41.2% disagreed (21.6 % and 19.6%) that the distribution of rewards is fair and transparent, 33.3% were neutral and 25.5% agreed. The perception that performance rewards are not distributed fairly and transparent is a significant finding that management should decisively address. This could cause poor implementation of the PMS, especially when the majority of employees strongly believe that they may not be rewarded fairly for

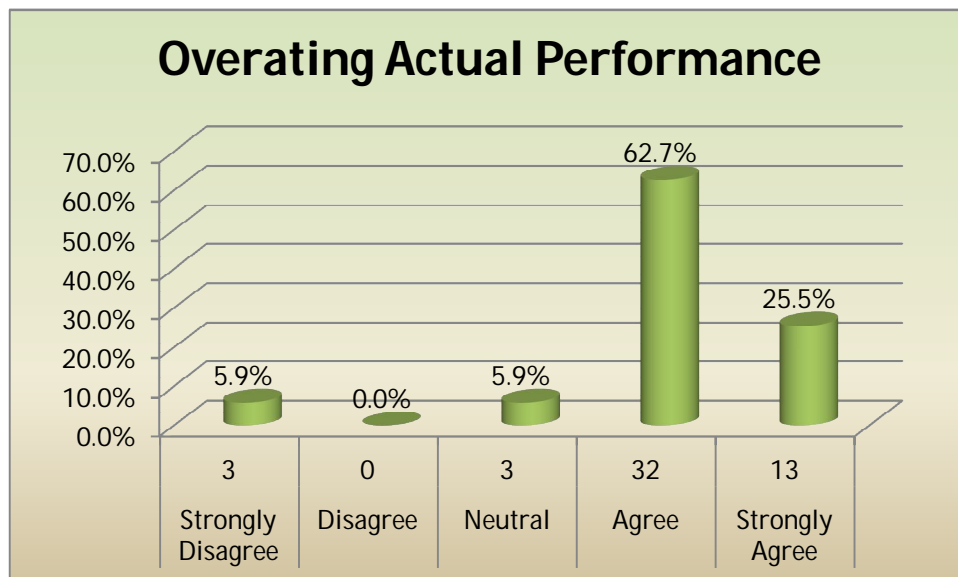
their efforts. The 33.3% of the participants who reported neutral to the question reflects a need for management to provide more information to its employees on how performance rewards are distributed.

Figure 4.15: Exceptional Performance is rewarded in Statistics South Africa, Mpumalanga.



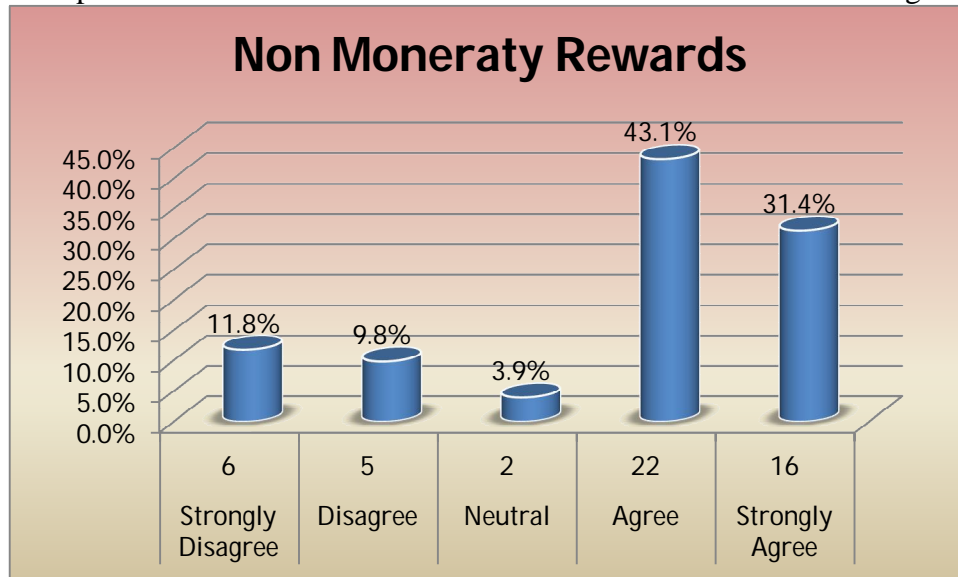
Figure 4.15 reveals a similar trend with the findings in the preceding discussion (Figure 4.14), where a significant number of respondents indicated that performance rewards are not fairly distributed. Figure 4.15 indicates that a collective 33.3% disagreed that exceptional performance is recognised and rewarded in Stats SA Mpumalanga, 35.3% were neutral and 31.4% agreed (21.6% and 9.8%). Stats SA management needs to start to rewarding exceptional performers and consider introducing internal events in which high performers may be publicly recognised in order to deal with the significant number of employees that are unsure of whether exceptional performance is rewarded. Grote (2009:1) argues that when good performance is recognised and appreciated by an organisation, the great majority of employees will not care how disciplinary cases are handled.

Figure 4.16: Over-scoring / Rating Actual Performance to Increase Chances of Attaining Monetary Rewards.



A collective 88.2% of the participants agreed that they will not over-score their actual performance, 5.9% disagreed and 5.9% were neutral. This finding suggests that employees see and understand the value of objectivity in performance assessments. Management should build upon this positive fundamental foundation and create an environment where all employees will not be tempted to engage in unethical behaviour just to increase their chances to undeservedly achieve performance rewards.

Figure 4.17: Acceptance of Non-financial Rewards as Forms of Performance Recognition.



For the past 13 years, Stats SA has been consistently rewarding high performance through the use of once-off monetary performance bonuses. Due to continued cost cutting initiatives by the government, the budget for performance bonuses has steadily declined. This compels the employer to limit the number of beneficiaries to a minimum amount for all qualifying employees. However, Figure 4.17 reveals that a collective 74.5% indicated that they would be happy to receive other forms of rewards instead on money, 21.6% disagreed and 3.9% were neutral. This finding supports the view that money does not answer it all; management should find alternative means to accommodate on-going non-monetary performance awards to recognise high performers. Recognition is an on-going, inherent part of day-to-day experiences. Sometimes just saying ‘thank you’ is enough to motivate employees and it certainly functions as a reward for good performance (Pomoni, 2010:1).

Employee Development and Coaching

Figure 4.18: Performance Reviews used as Means to Identify Strengths and Development Opportunities.

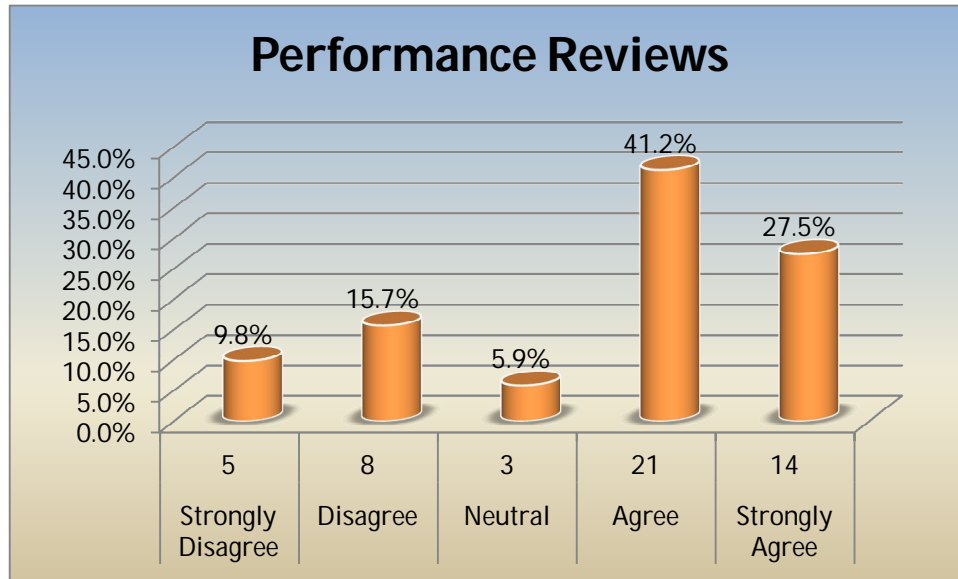


Figure 4.18 reveals that 68.7% agree (41.2% agree and 27.5% strongly agree) that the performance reviews are conducted effectively and promote employee development, 25.5% disagreed (9.8% strongly disagree and 15.7% disagree) and 5.9% were neutral. Stats SA currently has one compulsory bi-annual performance review followed by a final performance evaluation six months later. Therefore, emphasis should be made to ensure that the bi-annual review is effectively conducted, since it is an important component of the final performance evaluation. Although the formal assessment is done bi-annually, management should encourage supervisors to review their subordinate’s performance on an on-going basis. Pomoni (2010:1) indicates that consistent measurement of performance assists organisations to provide on-going feedback to employees and work groups on their progress towards the achievement of their goals.

Figure 4.19: The Individual Development Plan is used as a Coaching Tool to Improve Performance Gaps.

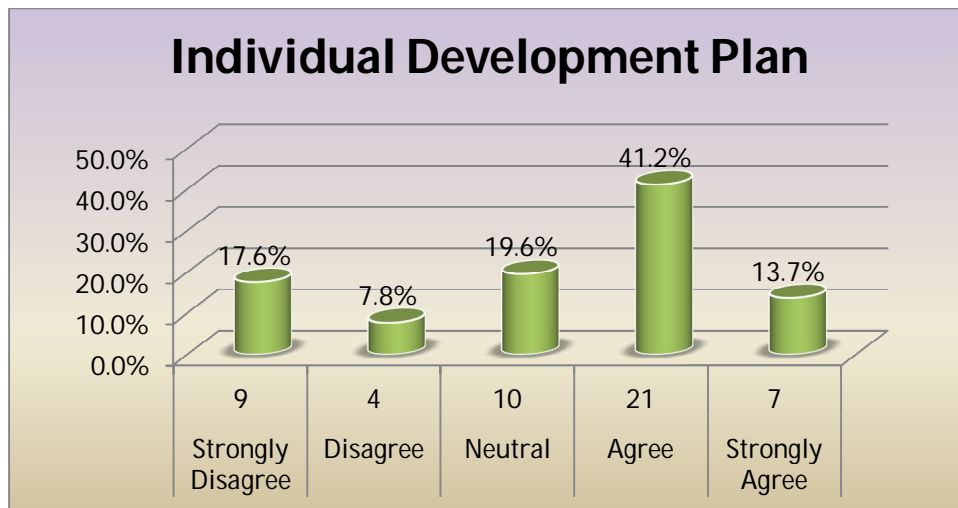
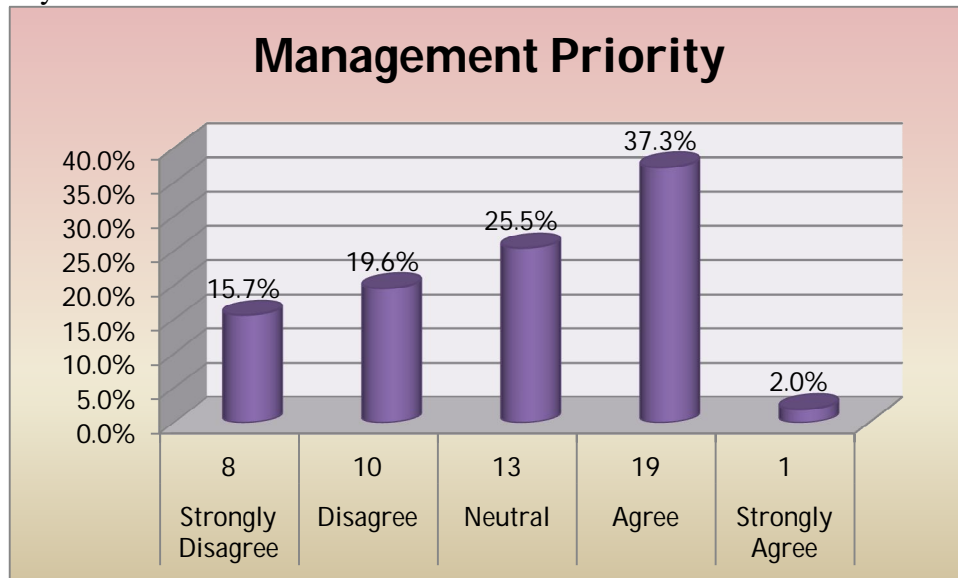


Figure 4.19 reveals that a collective 54.9% of the participants agreed that the IDP is used as a coaching tool to develop their capacity. However, 25.4% disagreed (17.6% and 7.8%) and 19.6% were neutral. The 19.6% who were neutral reflects a need for management to improve developmental efforts and training and the IDP’s of employees needs to be prioritised.

General Perceptions

Figure 4.20: Managers and Supervisors put low Priority on Implementing the Performance Management System.



The findings in Figure 4.20 indicate that a collective 39.3% of participants agreed that management places low priority on the implementation of the PMS, 35.3% disagreed (15.7% and 19.6%) and 25.5% were neutral. Performance management is a managerial function, which is primarily driven by management. However, employees are also role players and share the responsibility of ensuring effective administration of the PMS. Managers need to drive the PMS process throughout the year and not only during official performance review periods. Employees need to be encouraged to also own performance management processes.

Figure 4.21: Staff Members Lack Positive Attitude towards the Performance Management System.

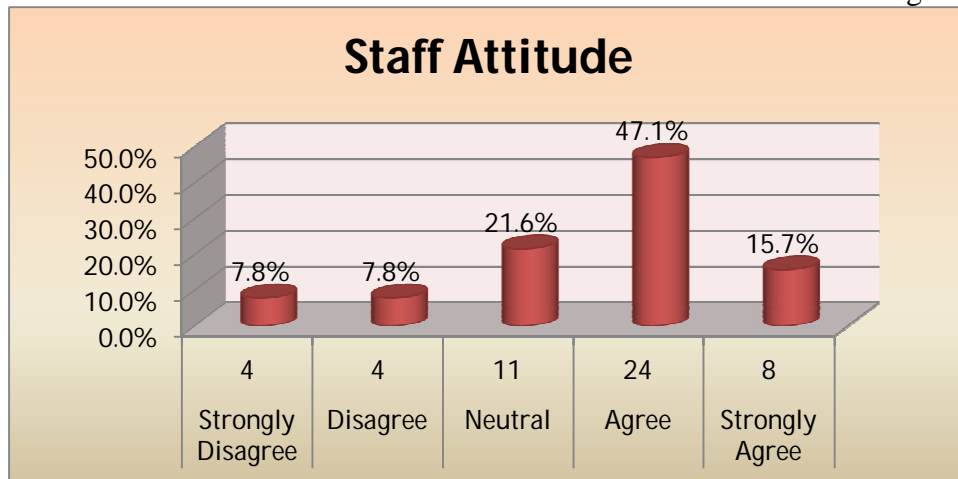


Figure 4.21 indicates that a collective 62.8% agreed that staff members lack positive attitudes towards performance management, 15.6% disagreed (7.8% and 7.8%) and 21.6% were neutral. The

opinion about the employees' lack of positive attitude is detrimental to the organisation if it remains unaddressed. The lack of positive attitudes towards processes that are aimed at ensuring efficiency and achievement of organisational goals is a setback and a strategic risk to the organisation. The attitudes of employees can also be seen in the delays in the submission of performance management documents (for example, it was suggested by one of the participants who works in the human resources section that as far as their records indicate, performance plans, reviews and evaluations have never been submitted or collected on or before the due date set by management). Management should enforce and address the attitude issues and ensure that employees fully understand the purpose and significance of performance management.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from the Study

The findings from the study are discussed under two headings namely: (1) findings from the literature review and (2) findings from the primary research.

Findings from the Literature Review

The findings from the literature review are as follows:

- Performance management is not a once off event, but rather a day-to-day management of employees relative to achieving the goals of an organisation (Schultz, 2003:74);
- The overall aim of performance management is to establish a high performance culture in which individuals and teams take responsibility for the continuous improvement of business processes and for their own skills and contributions within a framework provided by effective leadership (Kumari, 2012:78);
- Top management must clearly set, define and champion the PMS so that employees understand how their respective efforts add up to the big 'picture' (Starzmann, 2007:4);
- Human resources professionals, as well as line managers, generally struggle with how to link individual performance with organisational success. Thus, an organisational PMS may be used sparingly or even redesigned without ever yielding its desired goal of helping the organisation continuously enhance its performance (Starzmann, 2007:3);
- Although organisations may strive to make the performance evaluation process free from personal bias, prejudice and idiosyncrasies, a number of potential problems may develop at any stage of the process (Robbins, 1998:476);
- The adoption of a new system, new templates and new procedures is not enough to make performance management effective (Markus, 2004:4);
- The literature review revealed that organisations can increase employee commitment, loyalty, and satisfaction by encouraging and guiding employees to developing a self-managed career plan and by clearly communicating the organisation's goals, giving employees growth experiences and helping them to keep their knowledge and skills current (Robbins, 1999:584);
- Effective managers are increasingly being described as coaches rather than bosses and that a supervisor cannot act as judge and jury, but must assume the roles of a coach, facilitator and resource agent (Robbins, 1999:380);
- Managers need to put more emphasis on ensuring that employees participate in the goal setting process, accept their goals and are motivated to work towards those goals (Pulakos, 2011:1);

- Pulakos (2011:1) indicates that effective individual performance planning ensures that an employee's goals are tied to an organisation's strategic direction and corporate objectives;
- Performance reviews can help to communicate perspectives, difficulties and expectations to the seniors and get more support for improving an employee's performance (Miller, 2012:1);
- Time delays in reviewing performance elicit frustration, which can cause suboptimal cognitive processing and inferior performance (Fox and Spector, 1999:915);
- Pulakos and O'Leary (2011:146) report that on-going informal feedback exchanges between managers and employees enhance the effectiveness of performance management;
- The literature revealed that as supervisors and subordinates build up more positive feedback orientations, it is expected that it will be easier to engage in a continuous and constructive dialogue about performance improvement;
- Performance evaluations can have a positive impact on all aspects of the business if properly used to coach and reward employees;
- Rewards can become predictors of future behaviours and outcomes (Simons, 2000:123);
- Employer's misperceptions about what attracts employees is a significant problem, and organisations that do not offer what employees want have a harder time attracting the high potential and critically skilled employees they need (The 2012-2013 US Report on Talent Management and Rewards Survey, 2012:4)
- Informal rewards are often overlooked in lieu of formal reward programs. However, when asked, employees often have heightened morale and are more motivated by spontaneous, consistent and sincere personal appreciation;
- Informal rewards, when delivered correctly and consistently, have the potential to improve both the organisational performance and overall staff morale; and
- Purcell (2003:75) indicates that the untrusting relationship between a supervisor and employee can dent and ultimately spoil the performance management process.

Findings from the Primary Research

The primary research findings are as follows:

- The study indicated that 96.1% of the respondents were African and 3.9% were Whites. The provincial population distribution is not reflected at the workplace and limits the employer to enjoy the benefits associated with a diverse workforce;
- The findings showed that 65% of the respondents were male and 35% were female. However, the overall gender equity in Stats SA, Mpumalanga is fairly balanced;
- The findings indicated that 53% of the respondents were employees at salary level 4-8, 43% were at salary level 9-12 and 4% were at salary level 13 or above. This shows a fair ratio between entry level and supervisory staff members and would contribute towards effective monitoring of work processes;
- A collective 71% of the respondents were based in one of the district offices and 29% were based at the provincial office. This coincides with the core business of Stats SA in which most operations are performed at district office level;
- The results indicated that 58% of the participants were working within the Fieldwork Operations component, 31% were placed within the Corporate Services and 11% were within the SSI component. The 58% of participants from the Fieldwork Operations component are justified given that it is the core function of Stats SA;

- The study indicated that Stats SA has employed a collective 86% of the participants for at least 3 years and that 57% have been with the same employer for 6 to 10 years or more. This presents an opportunity for the employer to benefit from its experienced staff. It also reflects organisational stability and low staff turnover;
- The findings indicated that Stats SA has not achieved full employee participation in performance planning. This should be a cause for concern to management, though a collective 92% of respondents were actively involved;
- The study indicated that a collective 86.3% of the participants' performance plans are aligned to the yearly priorities of the organisation. The reviewed literature suggests that effective alignment can increase organisational effectiveness;
- The results indicated that 39% of participants did not receive honest and on-going performance feedback from their supervisors, which is a concern for management as employees may not know their progress and contributions to the achievement of organisational goals;
- A collective 41.2% of the participants viewed the distribution of performance rewards as unfair and lacking transparency;
- The findings indicated that a collective 33.3% of the participants' exceptional performances are not recognised by Stats SA;
- A collective 88.2% of the participants reported objectively rating their performance and not misrepresenting their performance scores in order to increase their chances of receiving a monetary performance bonus;
- The findings indicated that a collective 74.5% of the participants would accept other forms of performance rewards other than monetary. This finding is supported by Songstad (2012:1), who found that "even a simple letter showing that you have done well, or even an expression of congratulations for the good work would really give a person encouragement to work";
- The results denoted that a collective 39.3% of the participants consider that management put low priority on the implementation of the PMS. This is a concern for management given that performance management is a managerial function; and
- A collective 62.8% of the participants agreed that staff members lack positive attitudes towards performance management.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the recommendations include the following:

Addressing the Racial Disparities

- The racial composition of Stats SA, Mpumalanga indicates that 96.1% were African and 3.9% were White. The other racial groups were not represented. It is recommended that the organisation should align its recruitment to its employment equity plan with consideration to the provincial demographics. The 12 vacant posts provide an opportunity to redress the current situation and enjoy the advantages of having a diverse workforce; and
- The lack of a university in Mpumalanga has and still contributes to the minimal or lack of skilled labour in the province. However, through targeted recruitment Stats SA may be able to attract and recruit candidates from other racial groups.

Ensuring Full Employee Participation during Performance Planning

- The reviewed literature suggests that all employees should participate in the formulation of their performance plan. However, only 92% are currently participating. Therefore, senior management should conduct briefing sessions with all managers and supervisors and explain the significance of dual performance planning. This will ensure that both employees and supervisors own the process and eliminate future disagreements; and
- The human resources section should conduct a performance management workshop to emphasise the importance of employee participation in performance planning.

Enhancing the Effectiveness of Performance Feedback

- Employees that get promoted from within the teams to supervisory positions tend to struggle when dealing or managing their former peers. Therefore, management should firstly call for a meeting and inform all supervisors about this finding and ensure that all new and old supervisors are capacitated through courses such as Assertiveness and Emerging Management Development Courses. This will require management to set aside a budget for this purpose;
- The human resources section should conduct a performance management briefing session to all staff and explain the importance of on-going engagements between a supervisor and employee. This will assist in clarifying and resolving performance gaps; and
- Top management should consider reintroducing the quarterly performance reviews as a means for providing a face-to-face compulsory encounter between a manager/supervisor and a subordinate in order to discuss performance.

Performance Rewards and Recognition

- Management through the assistance of the human resources section to call a meeting or use the annual general meeting to fully explain the rewards system used by the organisation, explain the qualification criteria and expose the budget for that particular performance management cycle.
- Middle managers to conduct sectional meetings to consult with their staff and compile a wish list of various forms of performance recognitions or awards, and
- Inputs gathered from the middle managers to be forwarded to top management for the screening and selection of a short list of short and medium term performance recognition initiatives that can be implemented.
- Top management to encourage sectional managers and introduce quarterly or yearly prize giving ceremonies to recognise exceptional performers.
- Management to publish the organisation's performance reward system or policy and workshop it to all employees through internal meetings.

Staff Attitude and Management Priority to Performance Management

- Top management should introduce a system in which middle managers are expected to report on the initiatives they have implemented to promote and implement the PMS; and
- Management should conduct a mini staff attitude survey in which employees' attitudes towards an organisation's performance management will be tested. The results will then be used to derive strategies and cultivate a positive attitude.

Areas for Further Research

The following areas are suggested for further research:

- A similar study could be extended to the entire Stats SA organisation in all nine provincial offices;
- This study established a significant percentage of employees who have been with the organisation for a period between 6 and 10 years or more. It will be advantageous for Stats SA to understand what factors contribute to their staff retention; and
- A similar study could be conducted to include open-ended questions to probe the factors that affect the implementation of the PMS.

Conclusion

The primary findings assisted the researcher in answering the research questions and achieving the research objectives in this study. In this study, the focus on the key elements of a PMS or cycle was helpful in that key areas to be tested were identified and reviewed. The study concluded that employees are involved in planning their performance and that these plans are aligned to organisational priorities. The findings suggested that employees are not enjoying on-going and honest performance feedback from their supervisors and the literature review indicated that the absence of on-going and honest performance feedback may be detrimental to the employee and ultimately to the work to be achieved. The study established that the employees are objective in their performance ratings and typically do not misrepresent their actual performance. The study further indicated that staff allocations of performance rewards are not fair and transparent, which may explain the negative attitude seen from the employees towards the PMS. Achieving the stated objectives and answering all the research questions have fulfilled the aim of this study.

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