

# The Manager-Subordinate Conflict Pertaining to Performance Appraisal Process in the Department of Home Affairs in Tshwane Area

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**Abstract:** The paper explored the reasons for manager-subordinate conflicts or disagreements in relation to performance appraisal in the Department of Home Affairs in Tshwane area. A broader comprehension of the reasons for manager-subordinate conflicts in relation to performance appraisal is necessary in order to identify viable solutions for improving workplace relations and morale. The leader-member exchange theory was used to explain manager-subordinate conflict. In order to attain the aim of this article, a qualitative research design was utilised, whereby semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. In this regard, a sample of twenty-five research participants was selected from five offices of the Department of Home Affairs in Tshwane area using a purposive sampling. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyse data obtained through interviews and observations. The major findings of the article indicate that performance bonuses and biased ratings are the sources of conflicts or disagreements between managers and subordinates in relation to performance appraisals. Therefore, it is recommended that the National Department of Home Affairs should ensure that managers, supervisors and operational staff members undergo training and development to ensure an effective performance appraisal process. In addition, managers and supervisors must be afforded training opportunities relating to conflict management skills to resolve manager-subordinate conflict in the workplace.

**Keywords:** Appraisal, Management, Performance appraisal, Performance

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## 1. Introduction

Performance appraisal forms an important feature of performance management system which became popular in the 1950's and was alternatively referred to as merit rating (Armstrong, 2015; Radebe 2015). In contrast, Getnet, Jebena and Tsegaye (2014) argue that the "history of performance appraisal process can be traced back thousands of years." The process of performance appraisal came as a result of the introduction of the performance management and development system. Longenecker, Liverpool and Wilson (1988) argue that performance appraisal system is a critical component of the performance management system. Similarly, Sudin (2011) maintains that performance appraisal is an important human resource practice and tool for dealing with training and development. In addition, Thurston and McNall (2010) maintain that performance appraisal is a practical tool for employee motivation and development. However, performance appraisal process could be more tedious for managers and subordinates being evaluated given the requirement to document the performance of

each employee (Lin & Kellough, 2015). In addition, the notion of too much time being spent on performance appraisal could be attributed to longer periods required for the completion of forms and this created a negative assumption that the system is irrelevant (Armstrong, 2015).

Nkuna (2015) found that approximately 59% of immigration officers in the Department of Home Affairs do not consider performance ratings awarded to them during the performance appraisal process as a true reflection of their own performance. Further, Nkuna (2015) discovered that about 59% immigration officers held a view that they are deliberately awarded an average performance rating score of three (3) by their managers or supervisors. Unfortunately, the immigration officers do not seem to be aware of channels to follow in order to report disputes concerning performance appraisal ratings when conflicts erupt. In support of Nkuna's (2015) findings, Lin and Kelloguh (2019) state that performance appraisal processes are plagued by erroneous judgements of managers and supervisors; such judgements may result in flawed performance

assessments. Therefore, the aim of this study was to explore manager-subordinate conflicts or disagreements in relation to performance appraisal in the Department of Home Affairs (hereafter referred to as DHA) in Tshwane area. The overarching question for this study is, what are the reasons for manager-subordinate conflicts pertaining to performance appraisal in the DHA in Tshwane area?

The theoretical framework that is applied to understand performance appraisal process in relation to manager-subordinates conflict is explained. The methodology utilised for the purpose of this study is described, explained and justified succinctly, thus, clarifying data collection, sampling and analysis. The finding of this study could be useful to human resource practitioners in the public and private sector. At the same time, researchers interested in human capital studies could benefit from the finding of this study.

## 2. Theoretical Framework: Leader-Member Exchange Theory

Liden, Sparrowe and Wayne (1997) point out that the leader-member exchange theory came into being in 1970 to give meaning to the social exchange theory and to fully understand the leader-member relationship. The leader-member exchange theory indicates that supervisors are not consistent in the way in which they interact with their subordinates, which leads to their categorisation into "relatively high and low quality members" (Pichler, 2012). In fact, the leader-member exchange theory deals with the importance of the relationship between leaders and their subordinates that should contribute immensely towards creating a better working environment (Van Breukelen, Schyns & Blanc, 2006). The leader-member exchange theory focuses on the two-way relationship (dyadic relationship) between supervisors and subordinates (Rowe & Guerrero, 2013). The theory postulates that leaders develop an exchange with each of their subordinates, and that the quality of these leader-member exchange (LMX) relationships influences subordinates' responsibility, decision influence, access to resources and performance. Rowe and Guerrero (2013) point out that the relationship that a leader develops with each subordinate is commonly known as a vertical dyadic relationship and is subdivided into in-groups and out-group relationships. This suggests that group relationships are characterised by mutual trust, respect, liking and reciprocal

influence, which develop only when leaders and followers come together for a common goal.

The theory promotes positive employment experiences and institutional effectiveness. Leader-member exchange focuses on increasing institutional success by creating positive relations between the leader and subordinate. According to Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang and Chen (2005) leaders are expected to provide rewards to their followers who satisfy institutional expectations, whereas followers at the same time have the responsibility to decline assigned roles that are difficult to fulfil. Leaders and their subordinates should negotiate rewards or recognition which is equivalent to their performance (Howell & Merenda, 1999). The leader-member exchange theory is hugely related to support and creating an atmosphere where subordinates increase their levels of job performance (Liden *et al.*, 2006). According to Ross (2015) high quality leader-member exchange is concerned with increased subordinates' satisfaction level, autonomy and productivity, and decreased turnover intentions, increased benefits and quicker promotion rates, whereas low quality relationships are associated with negative work outcomes, including low job satisfaction and commitment, greater feelings of unfairness, lower performance and higher stress. As a result, the leader-member exchange theory assumes that leaders ought to treat followers in a collective way, thus as a group. It is clear that the leader member theory supports healthy working relationships between managers and their subordinates and demands that tensions should be minimised. In this sense, manager-subordinate conflicts relating to performance appraisals would be minimal in an environment where there is healthy working relations among employees and their supervisors.

## 3. Performance Appraisal

The extant research on performance appraisal reveals that conflicts related to performance appraisal could be attributed to a number of factors. Some of the factors that could lead to conflict are discussed below.

### 3.1 Unclear Performance Standards

The main problem associated with performance appraisal process is inconsistent performance standards which employees may find difficult to define or understand (Nel, Van Dyk, Haasbroek,

Schultz, Sono & Werner, 2004). According to Liff (2011) performance standards are the key component of the appraisal plan which needs to be aligned with institutional goals. In addition, performance standards are the key tasks or objectives of the department which are expected to be achieved by employees (Tyson & York 1996). Kirkpatrick (2006) states that standards of performance have to be clarified to make employees aware of what is expected of them. Mathis and Jackson (2003) state that realistic, measurable and clearly understood performance standards benefit both institutions and employees. In essence, performance standards have to be clearly defined and communicated to all employees but also be based on job-related requirements (Nankervis, Compton & McCarthy, 1992). Furthermore, Lussier (2003) maintains that a manager has to ensure that employees have to know what the standards are and clarify them in order to minimise disagreements over performance during formal performance appraisals. In other words, after the work has been performed, the supervisor appraises the performance followed by a collective effort of both the supervisor and the employee who then reviews work performance against established performance standards. Moreover, performance standards determine whether or not the objectives are achieved.

### **3.2 Lack of Objectivity**

Performance appraisal lacks objectivity in terms of the rating scale method which makes factors such as attitudes, loyalty and personality difficult to measure (Bekele, Shigutu & Tesay, 2014). According to Pattanayak (2001), the fact that there is a lack of objectivity, makes appraisal difficult to measure as well. Moreover, absence of clear goals and objectives could be attributed to the inability of public managers to make institutional goals known to all employees (Manyaka & Sebola, 2012). Objectives ought to be made clear during the planning phase in order to ensure that employees understand what is expected of them (Republic of South Africa, 2007a). This could assist to prevent confusion regarding what needs to be measured and to what effect.

### **3.3 Rater's Bias**

Rater's bias is the inaccurate distortion of a measurement (Werther & Davis, 1996). Rater's bias is reflected in instances where raters intentionally amend the rating scores of unfavoured employees

and give higher ratings to friends (Bekele *et al.*, 2014). Stone (2008) argues that rater bias results in unfair and inaccurate ratings. In addition, the distortion of a particular rating is sometimes influenced by hatred towards a particular group of people (Mathis & Jackson, 2003). Worth noting, effective performance appraisal should be free from any form of bias to reduce any unfairness (Ahmad & Bujang, 2013). In Pattanayak's (2001) view, raters could be biased and have a negative perception about a person to be rated because of that person's sex, colour, caste, religion, age, style of clothing and political view.

### **3.4 Inappropriate Performance Measurement Instrument**

The management of performance starts with the development of the performance measuring instrument (Erasmus, Swanepoel, Schenk, Van der Westhuizen & Wessels, 2011). Besides enhancing employee performance, the performance measurement instrument is useful in the evaluation of training programmes (Radebe, 2015). Therefore, there are numerous problems with regard to performance appraisals which render the performance appraisal instrument inaccurate. These problems include a limited discussion on performance appraisal and all the other techniques that compose the entire performance appraisal process (Daley, 1992). Managers with positive attitudes should ensure that performance ratings are accurate and have to provide support to employees (Du Plessis, 2015). In this regard, the accuracy of the performance appraisal is determined by whether its practices accurately reflect an employee's job performance (Harrington & Lee, 2015). Performance appraisal is characterised by dissatisfaction on the part of both the employer and employees and as a result, most employees view it as inaccurate, unfair and political (Shrivastava & Purang, 2011). An inaccurate performance appraisal instrument is more likely to assess a performance dimension incorrectly (Coetzee & Schreuder, 2014).

### **3.5 Central Tendency**

Central tendency is committed when an average rating is given to all employees (Mathis & Jackson, 2003). According to Lin and Kellough (2015), managers could find it difficult to evaluate or appraise their subordinates' performance, particularly if they do not have sufficient information regarding the

performance of the subordinates. The reason why they opt for central tendency occurs when they are not familiar with the work of their subordinates or if they have limited supervisory ability (Nel *et al.*, 2004). In this regard, raters put their marks at the centre of the rating sheet which is sometimes accompanied by recommendations by the human resources department to request a written justification of extremely higher or lower ratings (Werther & Davis, 1996). Stone (2008) contends that a satisfactory performance rating could be perceived as negative, which could affect the employee's commitment and as a result it does not serve any purpose in terms of reward, training and development. In contrast, appraisers are required to provide reasons for both poor and outstanding performance rather than subjecting employees to a normative rating or assessment (Pattanayak, 2001:91). In other words, managers' inclination to rate all or most of the employees or interviewees as average, demoralises good performers. In this regard, the disadvantage of the central tendency is that even poor performers are found to be benefiting from this kind of an approach although they do not qualify for such average rating.

### 3.6 Halo Effect

The halo effect occurs in instances where a manager gives higher ratings and scores in one area where optimum performance is achieved by a particular employee (Mathis & Jackson, 2003:57). Mcguire (2014) maintains that employees who are supported usually have higher levels of employee commitment and have higher performance levels. In this sense, high scores that supervisors give to employees can be attributed to the nature of friendship between themselves and their subordinates that creates the reluctance to punish under-performers (Boachie-Mensah & Seidu, 2012). Furthermore, an average work performance of a particular employee can be replaced by a higher rating, should that employee show an outstanding performance in any sporting activity (Pattanayak, 2001). The replacement of a particular rating from low to high should be based on a factor, for example, neatness which is used in an institutional performance appraisal system (Mondy & Noe, 1996). The fact that employees are liked or disliked by their appraisers may have a detrimental effect on their assessment (Torrington *et al.*, 2009). Essentially, the manager tries to be consistent by generalising and gives one higher rating for a deserving employee known to every employee.

### 3.7 Horn Effect

The managers tend to generalise the negative performance of one employee by giving same negative rating to all employees (DeNisi & Griffin, 2016). Therefore, if managers generalise the positive performance of one employee, they could be tempted to apply the "pass-one-pass-all" approach when they reward employees and thus disregard the developmental purpose performance appraisal (Manyaka & Sebola, 2012).

### 3.8 The Recency Effect

The recency effect is the use of subjective performance measures based on the employee's most recent actions which plays a role during rating (Werther & Davis, 1996). A job well done could be replaced by any poor or average performance for the entire year (Kirkpatrick, 2006). This means that raters are influenced by the employee perception of performance to make a decision (Nel *et al.*, 2004). The manager exaggerates the employees' latest behaviours because they comply with institutional rules and policies only during appraisal periods. They could also come to work earlier and leave late for a specific purpose (Stone, 2008). Similarly, Pattanayak (2001) maintains that the manager forgets about the employee's disturbing behaviour that was so problematic throughout the year. In other words, managers are expected to be vigilant for this type of behaviour by ensuring that there is a real dramatic improvement in all the levels of performance, because after a good rating has been allocated, chances are that the employee's performance could deteriorate to zero improvement. Likewise, the recency effect does not promote freedom of expression because employees who openly give their views are often victimised.

### 3.9 Contrast Error

Contrast error is the tendency of the manager to rate an employee determined by how another employee has been rated, rather than against performance standards (Mathis & Jackson, 2003). According to Erasmus *et al.* (2011) an average performers receive poor ratings should they be found to be second best performers. The contrast error places managers in an awkward position, particularly when subordinates start to raise some contentious issues about performance appraisal criteria (Kirkpatrick, 2006). In this regard, performance should rather



be measured against performance standards as opposed to subjective and inconsistent rating.

#### 4. Research Design, Methods and Procedures

The philosophical perspective of this study is interpretivism, which is the approach to qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Henning (2004) confirms that an interpretivist framework underlies a qualitative approach. In fact, interpretivist research is concerned primarily with the question of the trustworthiness of the qualitative data (Loseke, 2013). This research adopted a qualitative research design. In this regard, Paile (2012:44) asserts that qualitative research design seeks to understand both human and social interaction from the perspectives of insiders and participants' interaction. A case study design was chosen, which is essential to explore the manager-subordinate disagreement or conflict in relation to performance appraisal. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were utilised as data collection method. Further, the study used the purposive sampling approach. A sample of twenty-five (25) employees (operational staff members, managers and supervisors) was drawn from the Akasia Regional office, Pretoria Regional office (Byron Place), Mamelodi Medium office, Ga-Rankuwa (Odi) district office and Soshanguve North Medium office. This sample of twenty-five (25) employees was comprised of fifteen (15) were operational staff members or subordinates, five (5) were managers and five (5) supervisors. Inductive content analysis was applied to analyse data collected through interviews.

#### 5. Results and Discussion

This section presents the opinions of research participants regarding the sources of conflicts or disagreements between managers and subordinates in relation to performance appraisal and their responses were aligned in terms of the following subthemes.

##### 5.1 Inconsistent Measurement of Performance

The findings indicate that some participants are of the view that performance measurement is inconsistent. Such inconsistencies happen when employees perform tasks that are not linked to the key performance areas (KPA), which managers

and supervisors do not recognise when appraising employees' performance. Since the key performance areas reflect the key actions and activities that aim at ensuring an effective performance, these key performance areas should be included in the work plan of a particular employee (Erasmus *et al.*, 2011). This view was supported by the findings of Radebe (2015), which revealed that managers believed that the performance appraisal process was not effectively implemented, due to the absence of a mutual setting of performance criteria and objectives. Moreover, it is important that both managers and supervisors should apply a uniform standard during the performance appraisal process, with the right measurement tool. In relation to the issue of inconsistency of the performance appraisal process in the Department of Home Affairs, participants demonstrated that inconsistency can be perceived when there are no reported changes in terms of ratings. In this regard, some participants commented as follows:

*"It can't be consistent if it changes now and then because if you check, a person can get what we call the performance bonus or the incentives ... like okay take it, today they give you maybe so much ... it is not stable if others may get it this year but next year they won't get it. These kind of ratings are not being consistent because they change now and then because of the work which we are doing in the Department. We are doing the same work at the same position why next year you won't get it, you are supposed to get it because you are doing the same job at the same time at the same level. There are supposed to be changes, it is not consistent and stable". (Operational staff member 1).*

*"According to my knowledge about this performance appraisal process, it is not consistent, based on the fact that when you assess employees, say for instance you assess 14 employees. At the end of the day the performance appraisal moderation committee will come back and say to you there is no money. That's where the challenges are, as supervisors will tell you the money must cater for all the offices, actually not only one office. That's our challenge and that is why I say it is not consistent" (Supervisor 1).*

Public sector institutions are vested with the responsibility of arranging their basic requirements in line with each performance measurement instrument (Erasmus *et al.*, 2011). Similarly, the performance

measuring instrument should provide personal details such as the period in which the review is undertaken, surname, job title, comments by senior public sector manager, actual performance appraisal, scoring, and provision for training and development for it to be consistent.

## 5.2 Inaccurate Performance Measuring Instrument

The participants raised numerous concerns regarding the inaccuracy of the performance appraisal instrument. In fact, the participants indicated that they are not able to establish a link between their performance and monetary rewards due to the poor performance rating instrument. Some of the participants expressed their frustrations as follows:

*"It is not accurate, because automatically it is the one standard performance agreement but you find that because you were doing more than what is on your contract and then denied a bonus. Immediately when you are denied a bonus they change your contract to fill all those duties that you were doing that are not on contract, so that with the final assessment you do, they will say 'But these are all your duties that you are supposed to do ...'" (Operational staff member 8).*

The research participants are of the view that there are inaccuracies embedded in the performance appraisal instrument because even if employees go the extra mile, they still do not receive performance incentives. Moreover, the participants mentioned that they would be rated as average performers. Essentially, there should be an ideal performance appraisal instrument, which is described as the type of appraisal that is accurate and seeks to improve an employee's job performance and making administrative decisions (Kondrasuk, 2012).

## 5.3 Perception of Unfairness

The findings of this research indicate that employees of the Department of Home Affairs in Tshwane have less confidence in the performance appraisal process, due to perceptions of unfairness associated with this process. Consistent with the findings, Makhubela, Botha and Swanepoel (2016) state that the degree of employees' perception of fairness in relation to the performance appraisal process determines the extent to which they are likely to contribute towards institutional success. Some of

the participants expressed concerns about favouritism and unfairness, which is noticeable during performance appraisals:

*"I don't think they trust us as supervisors to assess them fairly and objectively because they believe they are doing more than the way we assess them. When we assess them we follow the way the instrument has been designed and you find that is not reflecting what they are doing, so they believe that it is not fair because they are doing more but they are given less (in terms of scores)" (Supervisor 2).*

*"Supervisors are biased in the sense that favouritisms also affect a lot. When they favour you, no matter how you do, they will just say that you are okay. If you are not favoured that makes the whole judgemental process to be wrong, because of when they judge, they judge on their feelings. They don't look at your abilities and your strengths and what you can do. ... the favouritism within the office influences them. If somebody likes them favour you, whatever you do just goes. When they don't favour you, no matter how much you work, the attitude and favouritism makes everything to be not fair" (Operational staff member 10).*

In line with the above responses, it is clear that employees are not content with the manner in which performance appraisals are conducted within the Department of Home Affairs. This could be one among a multitude of reasons why performance appraisals fail in some of the institutions. The more employees perceive their performance appraisal system as fair, the more they reported higher levels of trust and satisfaction with the appraisal system (Harrington & Lee, 2015). Because of favouritism during the performance appraisal process, employees who perform above average are not recognised and this leads to the development of negative perceptions about the entire process. A performance appraisal process should be unbiased, reflect fair judgement about how employees have performed and how they should be treated (Long & Kowang, 2013). Thus, an institution should depend upon the positive employee perceptions of performance appraisal fairness.

## 5.4 Presence of Situational Factors

The research findings reveal that various situational factors such as leadership style, stress and sexual orientation may negatively influence the performance

appraisal process ensuing in conflict between managers and subordinates. Some of the participants hold the view that women tend to be favoured during performance appraisals due to their gender.

*"Yes, if I say leadership styles, there are people who are just leaders. Maybe they are charismatic leaders or they are leaders because other people like them. You end up giving performance bonuses to your friends. If you are the sexiest and like women you will not consider men but end up giving performance bonuses to ladies" Looking down (Operational staff member 1).*

The research participants held a view that stress and leadership style greatly influence the performance appraisal process. In essence, poor leadership style may also result in bias and conflict. Equally important, poor leadership style may also result in poor ratings and prejudice. Further, a stressed manager may fail to afford a junior employee an opportunity to engage on issues affecting his/her performance. Participants echoed their feelings in this regard as follows:

*"Stress can influence the accuracy of the performance appraisal. If I am stressed it is going to affect everything which is around me. How am I going to work under the influence of stress ...? Even if I came to work because I do not want to be absent from work, but then when I get here I am stressed, each and everything I do is because ...I am stressed and here in the workplace lots of people you can see they are stressed" Rubbing nose (Operational staff member 3).*

*"Leadership style can influence it because as a leader the person must motivate the subordinates so that they can do as expected. If a person is not motivated, you cannot expect him to perform very well so I can say sometimes leadership style can influence the accuracy of the performance appraisal. If it is not properly managed it can influence it badly" Leaning on the table (Manager 4).*

Situational factors such as stress, sexual and racial bias or leadership style can immensely affect the accuracy of the performance appraisal (Erasmus *et al.*, 2011). On the other hand, Kondrasuk (2012) asserts that leadership styles can cause performance appraisals to be subjected to some imbalances. In addition, leadership style influences the decision-making process because of the actions displayed by the autocratic leader who abuses

power and position to dominate everything, instead of encouraging his/her colleagues to take part in the process (Ahmad & Bujang, 2013:5). Getnet *et al.* (2014) state that work-related stress is a product of the perceptions of procedural unfairness. Once organisational stress increases, employee performance declines and so does job satisfaction (Mofoluwake & Oluremi, 2013). This suggests that should personal bias prevail; the performance appraisal system would be improperly conducted.

### 5.5 Unavailability of Funds

The findings of this study indicate that lack of fund for incentivising meritorious performance was problematic. Although money can be utilised to pay performance bonuses, employers should also consider non-financial rewards as a solution towards the unavailability of funds, such as anything that enhances a worker's sense of self-respect and esteem by others (Cascio, 1998). Ideally, the public sector institutions should plan thoroughly for their activities which also have to be budgeted for (Republic of South Africa, 2001). The absence of financial rewards in connection with performance constantly creates tension between managers and their subordinates. In fact, once some of the subordinates notice that the ratings will not yield any form of financial reward, conflict ensues. Managers and their subordinates in the Department of Home Affairs articulated mixed feelings regarding the issue of financial rewards:

*"We can finish whatever we have and then we increase what is expected of employees ... knowing very well that in the long run we are not going to give performance appraisals and bonuses to all of them, the reason being that there are no funds available" (Manager 4).*

*"When coming to performance agreement I will say in my view everybody must qualify for this because we are working really hard, so unfortunately they will say there is no money" (Operational staff member 19).*

### 5.6 Unclear Performance Standards and Targets

The research findings show that unclear performance standards and targets may contribute to conflict between the manager and subordinate during performance reviews. This could be attributed

to the fact that it becomes extremely difficult for subordinates to fully comprehend what is expected of them if performance targets are not clarified. At the same time, it could be difficult for the manager or supervisor to award a fair performance rating. As a result, conflict can easily emerge if these issues are not dealt with at the beginning of a financial year. Regarding the issue of unclear performance standards and targets, supervisors agree that some of the performance targets are unrealistic:

*"Most of the time we don't even meet the requirements, because we don't meet the target because of some challenges that maybe we could solve before the target was set" (Supervisor 6).*

*"Performance appraisal does not have the actual targets that will make you reach the level where they say you have done your best as it shows each and every key result area (KRA). It shows something that we are doing on a daily basis, meaning that for you to reach the bonus level, you need to show them the whole box of what you are doing almost every day and that is difficult" (Supervisor 2).*

The main reason why there are unclear performance standards and targets is that managers have a limited training on how to conduct a performance appraisal (Belcourt, Bohlander & Snell, 2011). Besides, Radebe, (2015) argues that performance standards should be clearly defined by indicating what measures are to be achieved. In addition, performance can be managed well when there are set standards that guide employees in terms of how they should perform (Makamu & Mello, 2014). In this regard, there is non-payment of performance bonuses to good performing employees, because most of the employees seem not to be aware of their performance targets.

### 5.7 Scarce Resources

The findings reveal that the absence of resources required to maximise performance may frustrate employees when managers rate them low. Research participants highlight the fact that they cannot be able to perform optimally in some instances due to lack of resources. Some of the views in this regard are captured by the following statements:

*"We struggle a lot about the instrument to do the work, but I do whatever it takes to do my work. We don't have enough equipment to do the work" Shrugging (Operational staff member 16).*

*"Sometimes we cannot perform exactly what is expected of us, due to lack of resources of the department, for example we are using old machines like our computers ... we don't have modernised resources. We only have one printer in our office and you can imagine how big is this office, even our immigration (section) does not have systems to work on ... we lack the resources" (Supervisor 6).*

The correct tools are supposed to be provided for the successful completion of tasks and for employees to meet their targets. In fact, these tools include management support, technological tools such as computers, training of employees, adequate human resources or man-power (Manyaka & Sebola, 2012). Moreover, Erasmus *et al.* (2011) contend that there should be an equivalent allocation of adequate resources to undertake the tasks. According to Luthuli (2009), if resources are scarce, conflict will rise between employees. As part of their responsibilities to manage poor performance, public sector institutions are also obligated to make tools available to employees so that they could meet their targets (Republic of South Africa, 2007b). Over and above this, the performance appraisal process should present managers with an opportunity to give guidance to subordinates, as to how the available resources could be utilised in line with the institutional strategic goals (Farndale & Kelliher, 2013).

### 5.8 Appraisal Timing and Lack of Evidence

The findings indicate that some of the participants indicated that timing of performance appraisal could also be a source of conflict between managers and subordinates, particularly if performance reviews are scheduled at a time when subordinates are not able to gather sufficient evidence to motivate their performance. One participant expressed the following view:

*"Performance appraisal is done in a short space; it is done twice a year ... we don't have enough time to prepare for statistics. Supervisors will come today and say 'Please prepare your evidence and your statistics because your performance is to be appraised tomorrow' ... (Operational staff member 15).*

The absence of enough performance evidence creates tension between managers and their subordinates. Managers and subordinates articulate



frustrations on this issue as follows:

*"The way we are rated and the manner in which they need evidence ... if you perform they say they need evidence, ... and then when you perform they need evidence and you ask yourself 'what evidence?', because there is evidence already in my personnel file, but still they need one to provide evidence" (Operational staff member 2).*

*"At the end of the assessment employees have to get bonuses, the challenge is that some of them, even if they qualify, they lack evidence" (Supervisor 1).*

Essentially, performance appraisal should be administered in terms of the work cycle that reflects adequate time for appraisals and outlining all the job responsibilities for a particular employee (Daley, 1992). Furthermore, Kondrasuk (2012) argues that rating employees according to the date they were appointed, allows managers to allow enough time to pass in order to have a productive appraisal. Performance appraisal enables managers to have proper time management in terms of how employees should be guided and to have their performance managed appropriately in the workplace (Van der Waldt, 2004). Essentially, performance appraisal requires that each line manager should appraise the performance of their staff on an annual, six-monthly or even quarterly basis (Torrington & Hall, 1995). Accordingly, public sector managers should consider evaluating employees at regular intervals to determine whether their performance is above what is being expected (Kondrasuk, 2012).

### 5.9 Unclear Performance Agreement

Largely, an unclear performance agreement deters employees from achieving institutional objectives and therefore renders the performance appraisal process ineffective. The participants expressed their frustrations regarding unclear performance agreements as follows:

*"(If there is) no clear performance agreement, you see immigration services as if we had looked at the drafting of the key performance indicators (KPI's). They were based on what other regions were doing, which were incorporated and adopted and the situations are never the same, so not clearly defining the performance agreement and also expectations and how those will be executed also poses a challenge" (Supervisor 3).*

*"It is one standard performance agreement, but you find that because of the fact that you were doing more than what is on your contract and then denied for bonus, immediately ... they change the contract to fill all those duties that you were doing that are not in the contract, so that when the final assessment comes, they will say 'But these are all your duties that you are supposed to do ...'" (Operational staff member 8)*

Accordingly, performance agreement should have to be entered into by an employer and an employee who also has to be reviewed annually. At the same time, performance agreement should be clear so that individual employees could be able to sign with ease (Erasmus *et al.*, 2011). Of particular importance is that performance agreement outlines the description of the job purpose, identification of key result areas, clear criteria and standards, agreement on a personal development plan, determination of performance-related rewards and dispute resolution mechanisms.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest that manager-subordinate conflict during performance appraisal emerges as a result of inconsistent measurement of performance and inaccurate performance measuring instrument. Apart from these, conflict can be attributed to employee perceptions of unfairness in relation to the appraisal processes. Equally important, the findings have shown that situational factors such as stress, racial bias and leadership style could ensue in major tension between managers and their subordinates. In addition, unclear performance standards for staff members can create role confusion culminating in conflicts due to poor ratings linked to poor achievements. Based on these findings, it is essential for the Department of Home Affairs to ensure that managers are given suitable training opportunities to administer performance appraisal in a fair and consistent manner. At the same time, managers ought to be afforded training in terms of conflict prevention strategies and management thereof. Managers should be informed by the Leader-member Exchange Theory which advocates valuing, rewarding and recognising meritorious performance by employees within institutions. Moreover, the Department of Home Affairs needs to ensure that employees are provided specific, measurable and attainable performance targets or standards. This will assist in preventing role confusion, biased ratings as well as inconsistencies. It is

important to ensure that employees are informed of the various accessible and less cumbersome avenues available to them, particularly when they are not satisfied with their performance ratings.

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