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THE IMPACT OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ON PRODUCTIVITY WITHIN SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL SECURITY AGENCY IN VHEMBE DISTRICT, 2021 – 2023

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of the performance management system on employee productivity at the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) in the Vhembe district. The objectives include identifying and explaining various approaches to implementing a performance management system, investigating its effects on employee productivity, and exploring alternative methods to enhance employee performance and productivity. A qualitative research approach was used, involving 24 respondents selected through purposive and random sampling techniques. The findings reveal that poor communication, lack of training, and insufficient resources significantly hinder productivity, even when a performance management system is in place. The study concludes that enhancing communication, providing targeted training, and ensuring adequate resources can improve the performance management system and boost productivity among SASSA employees. Recommendations emphasize adopting a systematic approach to promote effective and responsive service delivery within the agency.

KEYWORDS: *Performance Management System, Productivity, Employee Performance and Service Delivery.*

1.INTRODUCTION

The performance of employees in organisations is one aspect which should be closely monitored at all times to make sure that employees performed at their best level. Bhattacharyya (2018) states that performance management is an approach that ensures the continuous acquisition of learning, skills, knowledge, and experience for improved performance. However, different employees are motivated to perform better by various aspects, such as working conditions, motivation levels, and leadership approaches (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman 1959).

According to the Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999, schedule 3A, the South African Social Security Agency was established in 2006 with the mandate to focus on the administration of social grants (South African Government, 1999). Operationally, the department focuses on the welfare and well-being of employees to ensure they are treated fairly and that their rights are preserved and respected. To achieve this mandate, the department relies on the effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity of its employees to perform their duties and responsibilities. Therefore, the employees in this department needed to be always at their best abilities because they fought not only for their own welfare as employees but also for the welfare of their colleagues. In other words, if employee welfare is neglected, the employee of this department will lack the courage to ensure the welfare of others in the system.

Furthermore, the study by Mkhize (2018) in the SASSA in Durban district revealed that performance management was done not to improve performance but for compliance purposes. The study further indicated that the benefits of performance management needed to be highlighted for its effectiveness and implementation. This alone, could have been achieved through increased productivity of these employees by managing their performance and ensuring that they performed well.

In this study, the researcher will examine the performance management system, focusing on how employees' performance is monitored, assessed, and evaluated, and provide recommendations based on the findings.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Under this section, the researcher had sought to unearth the facts about performance management systems in relation to the improvement of employees' performances in the public sector. Howevever, the detailed review of literature related to the study are embedded under section 4.2 below, which addresses the study results discussion.

3.RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Under this section a detailed discussion of the preferred research methodology ranging from the research design and approach, the unit of analysis, the study variables, population and sampling methods, data collection, data analysis, assurance to data assurances and ethical guidelines.

3.2 Research Approach and Design

This study adopted a qualitative research approach and synchronized with a case study design, to explore the impact of the performance management system on productivity within South African Social Security Agency Vhembe district. The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth examination of the researched phenomenon, enabling the researcher to gather rich, contextual data. Yet, the choice of a case study design was based on various factors supported by relevant theories and previous research. Yin (2009) notes that case studies are effective for answering "how" and "why" questions, making them ideal for examining complex social issues like the operations at SASSA. The researcher aimed to discover how the performance management system affects employee behavior, motivation, and overall productivity.

3.3 Unit of analysis

This study focused on the impact of employee performance on productivity at the South African Social Security Agency in the Vhembe District.

3.4 Variables

The Independent variable in this study is the performance management system and the dependent variable is the productivity of employees.

3.5 Target Group/Population

The researcher focused on employees at Vhembe District Office. The district office has 24 management officials as part of the population to be studied. These population is comprised of the district manager , Managers, assistant Managers, Team leaders, and Senior Grant Administrators. There are 24 management officials in the studied population.

Population and sample of the study

Position	Number
District Manager	1
Managers	4
Assistant Managers	6
Team Leaders	5
Senior Grant Administrators	8
Total	24

3.6 Sample and Sample type

The researcher selected a group of 12 individuals for the study from the South African Social Security Agency in the Vhembe District. This group included one (1) District Manager, two (2) Managers, three (3) Assistant Managers, two (2)Team Leaders, and four (4) Senior Grant Administrators. The researchers chose these individuals using both purposeful and random sampling methods. Purposive sampling aimed to include people with deep knowledge about how the performance management system affects productivity in the agency, as they can share useful insights. Random sampling was also employed to include other staff not previously selected.

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Population and sample of the study

Position	Number	Sample
District Manager	1	1
Managers	4	2
Assistant Managers	6	3
Team Leaders	5	2
Senior Grant Administrators	8	4
Total	24	12

3.7 Data Collection Method

In this study, the researcher used interviews to deeply understand how the performance management system affects productivity at the South African Social Security Agency in the Vhembe district. By talking directly with employees in their usual environments, the researcher made them feel at ease, leading to detailed discussions. This approach helped reveal complex views on the system's effectiveness and its role in improving employee work performance.

3.8 Data Analysis

The study's data analysis process involved organizing, cleaning, and interpreting data using thematic content analysis, which included coding to identify key themes. Documentary analysis was also conducted to provide deeper insights into the performance management system. The thematic analysis focused on coding and categorizing data gathered from interviews and focus groups to uncover recurring themes and patterns. Key themes that emerged included participants' experiences with the performance management system, their perspectives on its influence on productivity, and the challenges and benefits they encountered. Additionally, content analysis was employed to examine documents such as performance management policies and reports, highlighting critical components of the system, including performance targets, metrics, and feedback and evaluation processes. This thorough and multi-faceted approach to data analysis enabled a deeper understanding of how the performance management system was perceived and its impact on productivity within the organization.

3.9 Trustworthiness

The researcher has to randomly select participants to make sure that the right participants who had an idea or who made up of the described targeted population are included for trustworthiness purposes. In addition, the researcher had used one-on-one interviewees as this reflected the reality and ideas of the participants.

3.10 Ethical considerations

The permission to conduct research was requested and granted from the STADIO University Ethical Clearance Committee and also from the SASS Regional office. All participants were required to give informed consent to participate in the research. They were also informed that they could opt-out at any time during the research if they chose to do so. This ensured that confidentiality and anonymity was maintained, as noted by Silverman (2011).

4. RESULT DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Findings

This section outlines the results of a study examining how the Performance Management System (PMS) affects employee productivity at the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) in the Vhembe district. Data was collected from a group of 24 management officials at the district office, including roles such as district manager, managers, assistant managers, team leaders, and senior grant administrators.The results are organised based on the demographic characteristics of the participants as clearly illustrated in Table 1, 2,3 and Table 4 illustrate respondents views on the performance management system. Whereas, Table 5 depicts the results on the study objectives.

Demographic Information of Research Participants

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Research Participants

Demographic Variable	Male	Female	Frequency
	15	9	24

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Table 2: Age Group of Research Participants

Age Group	Frequency
18 - 29	5
30 - 39	7
40 - 49	6
50 - 60	6

Table 3: Duration of Employment at SASSA

Duration of Employment	Frequency
Less than 1 year	2
1 – 5 years	8
6 – 10	6
More than 10 years	8

Table 4: Effectiveness of PMS in Boosting Productivity (Perceptions of Performance Management System Effectiveness).

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Unsure
PMS helps establish clear performance goals	20	3	1
PMS offers sufficient feedback	15	7	2
PMS encourages employee motivation	18	5	1
PMS is connected to recognition and rewards	14	8	2

The results show that most participants believe that the PMS is effective in setting clear performance goals and motivating employees. However, there are concerns about the quality of feedback and the connection between PMS results and reward systems, highlighting areas that need improvement. Therefore, Indepth findings in relation to the key study objectives of the study is summarised in Table 5 as below:

Table 5- The Study Objectives Findings

Study objective 1: specific factors that affect productivity through the PMS and how PMS affects productivity, several important themes emerged from the responses: respondents pointed out several important themes:	
Themes	**Respondents comments**
Clear Objectives	Many respondents (Respondent 1, Respondent 3, Respondent 6) mentioned that having clear performance goals helps align individual roles with the organisation's aims, leading to improved productivity.
Feedback Systems	A number of respondents (Respondent 4, Respondent 8, Respondent 10) pointed out that a lack of timely and helpful feedback limits employees' ability to enhance their performance, indicating a need for regular reviews and coaching.
Recognition and Incentives	Respondents (Respondent 5, Respondent 9, Respondent 12) observed that while the PMS aims to acknowledge high performance, the current reward systems may seem unfair or not closely tied to performance results, which can lower employee motivation.
Training and Growth	Participants (Respondent 2, Respondent 7, Respondent 11) stressed the significance of training in performance management. They noted that without ongoing professional development opportunities, productivity improvements may be hindered.
Study Objective 2: Effects of Performance Management System on Employee Satisfaction and Engagement	
Themes	Respondents' comments
Job Satisfaction	Most responses pointed out a connection between the PMS and job satisfaction. Many employees (Respondent 1, Respondent 3, Respondent 8) noted that a well-executed PMS could boost their job satisfaction by acknowledging their efforts and contributions.
Engagement Levels	Several participants (Respondent 5, Respondent 9, Respondent 14) noted that their engagement would improve if the PMS allowed them to share their input on performance metrics and criteria.

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Study objective 3: Alternative methods to enhance the Performance Management System	
Themes	**Respondent comments**
Enhance Feedback Loops:	Set up regular feedback meetings that include both managers and employees to maintain ongoing discussions about performance goals and areas needing improvement
Connect Recognition to Performance:	Create a clear and open system for recognising and rewarding performance that is effectively shared with all employees.
Offer Professional Development:	Invest in training and skill-building programs that support performance objectives to help employees grow and boost productivity
Involve Employees	Include employees in the evaluation of the Performance Management System (PMS) to promote a sense of ownership and ensure their views are considered in developing performance standards.
Regularly Review the PMS	Carry out periodic evaluations of the PMS to measure its effects on productivity and employee well-being, making adjustments based on feedback to keep it relevant and effective.

4.2 Research Discussion

The study key discussion is based on findings presented in a section that focused on measures of the effects of the performance management system on productivity in the Vhembe area of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) between 2021 and 2023. Hence, the discussion of the study is outlined in this section as follows:

What is the impact of the performance management system on the productivity of employees in the SASSA in Vhembe District?

The findings showed that employees at the SASSA Vhembe District office have not yet realized the benefits of a performance management system (PMS). It was found that poor implementation by managers is a significant issue. Employees reported that they do not understand the importance or goals of the PMS. For the system to effectively improve performance and productivity, employees need to grasp the organization's objectives and connect their personal goals to them. This indicates a gap in how the PMS is applied within the department.

The effectiveness of the system relies on involving employees in the process through performance agreements during planning, which is crucial for performance management. This aligns with Ravhura (2016), who noted a general lack of commitment from supervisors in properly implementing PMSs to manage employee performance at SASSA. Herholdt (2017) also supported this, stating that public managers often lack the knowledge and skills needed for effective performance management. The findings advise that study participants are not well-informed about the PMS in their department. This knowledge gap points to weaknesses in performance planning and indicates that departmental goals may not match those of individual employees.

The findings revealed that the objectives or significance of a PMS have not yet been realised by employees of the SASSA at Vhembe District Office. It was confirmed that ineffective implementation by managers featured as a major factor. The primary participants of this research who are the employees of the SASSA, indicated that they did not understand the importance of a PMS or its objectives. The systems will not be fully effective in enhancing performance or productivity until the employees understand the goals and objectives of the organisation and link their goals to it. These findings reveal a discrepancy in the implementation of a PMS in the department The concept of effectiveness emphasizes the significance of involving employees throughout the process, particularly by implementing a performance agreement during the planning phase, as this is fundamental to performance management.

Therefore, this study result is in agreement with Herholdt's (2017) claim that supervisors in the public sector often do not commit to properly using performance management systems (PMSs) to oversee employee performance.Other study by Gamage (2014) also found similar issues, noting that public managers often lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively implement performance management. Additionally, the study showed that participants were not aware of the PMS in their department, indicating weak performance planning and a misalignment between departmental goals and individual employee objectives.

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The method of checking the evidence portfolio is, however, ineffective because the SASSA Moderation Committee still chooses to moderate the half-yearly evaluation reports and the whole organisation's evidence at once, making the whole procedure ineffective. The goal is to complete the work, while it should be to check whether the verifiable evidence supports the ranking. In resolving the challenge of arbitrary (biased) evaluations by managers, the Moderation Committee must play a paramount role. If the portfolio of verifiable proof that is presented is scrutinised and checked against the ratings issued, the Committee can succeed. The overseer (second supervisor) may also assist the Moderation Committee before sending half-yearly evaluation reports by assisting the parties in resolving subjectivity issues and any other related conflicts.

How have the performance management system help to improve the productivity of employees in Vhembe District?

The aim was to find out if the performance evaluations followed the performance management framework. However, the investigation showed that the PMS procedures were inconsistent, and the assessment methods were unfair. Employees in the Vhembe District expressed dissatisfaction with SASSA's performance management, mainly because of low performance ratings.

Typically, employees should be informed about performance planning, the organization's goals, and how their personal goals align with those of the organization, as this is the first step in the performance management process. The study also indicated that during the goal-setting phase, employees should be educated about the organization's objectives and encouraged to align their individual goals with them. Participants felt that the PMS had not help improve their productivity or performance due to a lack of training, recognition, and challenging goals at SASSA in the Vhembe district. The process was meant to be developmental, recognizing good performance, but its significance in the department was not acknowledged because the goals and objectives were still unclear.

The fact that many SASSA employees in the Vhembe district do not understand the importance of PMS indicates that they are unaware of or do not accept the goals and performance standards outlined in their agreements. This stems from poor implementation by management, which disrupts service delivery and affects performance and productivity. Goal-setting theory suggests that employees must accept the goals to boost motivation. Acceptance of goals is the first step in motivating employees (Maloa, 2022).

In comparison, performance management is characterised as a structured and systematic process through which employees 'work-relevant strengths and weaknesses are established, assessed, documented and created. PMDS tends to be an authoritative performance management method for workers that includes policy structure and framework for those aspects and components of the evaluation period: productivity preparation and agreement; performance reporting, review and influence; performance assessment and moderation; and evaluation results management. The entire process is guided precisely by PMDS in SASSA of the Vhembe District office. Furthermore, the organisation responsible for translating overall objectives into specific individual targets is considered a semi-annual or annual priority for employees (Mogotsi, 2018).

Taking into account the statutory structure underpinning the public service and the regulatory mechanisms mentioned above, this section presents the required measures to be taken, both in the public service and at SASSA of Vhembe District office, to establish an effective PMDS. In previous sections on stakeholders that influence PMDS decisions within the public service, this debate is further supplemented. The PMDS policy of SASSA was developed based on several legal mandates, as outlined in the previous sections. The main objectives of the PMDS at SASSA as indicated in(SASSA, 2022) are:

- Formulating an objective of success and learning which supports the policies of SASSA.
- Ensuring awareness of workers in the comprehension of viable standards of work.
- Improving good governance between workers and their superiors.
- Steering the developmental needs of workers and continuous tracking of effective strategies during the success cycle.
- Ensuring fair treatment and assessment of all workers.
- Encouraging continuous feedback and the introduction, where possible, of corrective action.
- Management of inefficient output below the required level

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What are the current strategies for conducting performance management in the South African Social Security Agency in Vhembe District?

High-performing employees can feel demotivated if their efforts do not lead to results at SASSA in the Vhembe District. When good performance is not rewarded or recognized, it negatively affects employee productivity and performance. Therefore, the employer needs to tackle important issues related to the Performance Management System (PMS) during planning and create strategies to overcome challenges faced during the performance cycle. In the public sector, PMS allows the employer to implement non-financial recognition methods to boost performance and motivate employees at SASSA in Vhembe District, as decided by the Management.

Training for staff is not a priority at SASSA. One participant noted that training is not regularly held and often lacks relevance. Staff development is essential at SASSA because effective service delivery depends on the performance of employees who interact directly with clients. Another participant pointed out that personal development plan training and courses are not being conducted. The employer should identify the training needs of employees and offer development opportunities that align with each employee's Personal Development Plan (PDP). It is crucial for the employer to address these training needs as outlined in the PDP since they are documented there.

Another participant emphasized that staff training is vital for service delivery. SASSA must understand that employee training and development are effective tools to help them reach their full potential. The White Paper on Public Services Training and Education (1998) states that all personnel should have access to meaningful training opportunities.

Conversely, the findings indicated that additional adjustments were necessary due to the numerous challenges that persisted during the implementation phase. In particular, the study additionally discovered that the primary cause of worker dissatisfaction with performance evaluation was based on unsatisfactory performance ratings and as a result, performance appraisals are viewed as an event rather than as a method of motivating employees. Herholdt (2017) stated that effective performance management promotes individual growth, constant communication and interpersonal interactions with a view to enhancing effectiveness. As explained by Herholdt (2017), the success of an organisation is dependent not just on the implementation of good strategies, but also on employee involvement.

It should be noted that, the methodology might not conclude with the signing of a performance agreement, but that it must be reviewed regularly (Zaman, 2019). Being able to link an efficient performance agreement with an organisational and strategic plan is critical. The management process's end-product is a strategic plan that identifies strategic vision including goals, along with organisational priorities and how they can be achieved. Transforming the strategic goals outlined in its diplomatic plan into key areas of commitment for specific departments, branches, and divisions, along with measurable objectives, allows an organizational plan to bring the strategic plan to life (as noted by Zaman, 2019).

The study further revealed that a performance agreement should include the purpose of the work, key outcome areas, performance goals, a professional development plan, and the date of performance reviews, dispute resolution procedures, and performance-related compensation considerations at SASSA. The study also found that performance reviews are not likely to work if the performance agreement does not clearly define requirements and uniform appraisal procedures, especially in SASSA of the Vhembe District offices.

If a performance contract has been signed in the form of a performance agreement, it is necessary to carry out a regular appraisal of that performance by consistently comparing performance objectives towards actual achievement (Armstrong, & Taylor, 2020). The study emphasise that performance reviews support subordinates when they receive daily input on employee performance. As a general rule, the PMDS is carried out on a semi-annual basis and then at the end of a fiscal year. Each main outcome area should be scored by the supervisor within the range of 1 to 4, as specified in the performance agreement, while four is outstanding performance, 3 is fully effective, 2 is not fully effective, and 1 is unacceptable performance (SASSA, 2022).

In the main outcome areas, the skills growth must also be rated as such versus their applicability. The supervisor can provide written feedback on all key outcome areas to help employees make necessary changes. If an employee performs at levels 3 and 4 or higher, they are eligible for performance bonuses as part of their performance evaluation.

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At SASSA in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, this caused subjective inquiries into PMDS and also increased employee efficiency at the public service. The study is important because the goal of public service institutions is to improve the services they offer to citizens. To improve efficiency and meet objectives, the PMDS was implemented in the public sector. It is, therefore, necessary to assess whether the PMDS is contributing to an improvement in the productivity of employees. The assessment should also identify vulnerabilities in the PMDS, aligning with the research objectives related to the challenges faced by SASSA in its implementation of the PMDS.

Another study stretching beyond the effects of PMDS is by Mello (2013) who noted that public institutions globally face increasing demands to provide better services with limited resources. This pressure mainly comes from the public, who are more aware of their rights to demand improved services, often leading to protests that can escalate into violence. Citizens need to feel confident that public institutions are striving to meet complex and growing societal demands. Creating and executing an effective PMS can significantly address public needs and reduce waste. Thus, performance is crucial for the success of any public institution, reflecting the collective performance of individual employees. In any organization, employees who grasp the overall objectives are more likely to excel when given the right support and resources.

What are the effects of conducting a performance management system on the productivity of employees in the South African Social Security Agency in Vhembe District?

The results showed that participants felt unmotivated to come to work every day because of a bad work environment and poor management. The lack of motivation affected the performance and productivity of employees, leading to inadequate service delivery and making it hard for SASSA in the Vhembe District to achieve its annual goals. Employees believed their needs were overlooked by the employer, who focused too much on performance without creating a supportive work environment or good relationships. Armstrong and Taylor (2020) noted that employees are motivated not just by pay but also by personal satisfaction, which is very important. Thus, Armstrong et al (2020) pointed out that the work environment, motivation, and leadership are key factors that affect employee performance.

Participants expressed that the SASSA offices in Vhembe District were not a preferred employer, showing their unhappiness with the relationship with management.The strained relationship with management left employees feeling demoralized and eager to leave, as their needs for better benefits and working conditions were not met. A study in support of this findings is by Awonusi (2019) whose study found that demoralized workers are likely to seek employment elsewhere. Also, worth underlining is that, when employees are involved in goal-setting and give their views, they will be able to work towards achieving these goals since they will have agreed to the set goals (Pierce, 2018).

What are the recommended methods to boost productivity and the performance management system of employees in the SASSA in Vhembe District?

The purpose of this question was to ascertain whether the SASSA of the Vhembe District office has procedures and strategies in place to use during PMS implementation. According to the study results, when signing performance agreements at the start of each financial year, employees are asked to submit their training needs. Furthermore, the study showed that SASSA offers counseling services to staff members for managing stress both at work and in their personal lives.

Participants in the study recommended several organizational strategies to enhance service delivery at the SASSA office in the Vhembe District. They emphasized the importance of staff training, noting that well-trained employees are essential for effective service delivery. The group agreed that investing in staff development is necessary for improving overall organizational performance.

The study also highlighted that upgrade to online systems have positively impacted service provision. These improvements can help reduce the long queues that the department currently experiences due to a high volume of clients seeking civic services.

Additionally, the study pointed out that SASSA's centralized operation, with the District Office as the main hub, hampers efficient service delivery. Most services are handled at local offices but require completion at the Head Office, leading to delays and unresolved client issues. Decentralizing authority could lead to more efficient and effective

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service for SASSA clients.Decentralisation in an organisation means giving employees more power and responsibility in decision-making. According to Mogotsi (2018), this approach allows employees to take on more authority and accountability, helping them meet the organisation's goals.

For SASSA to deliver services effectively, strong communication among employees, employers, and local communities is essential. Good information flow among all parties improves service quality and supports the mission of public institutions. Maloa (2022) notes that clear communication helps public institutions reach their objectives. Moreover, sharing work-related information efficiently is crucial for the daily operations of these organisations.

Additionally, participants from the study sample indicate that supervisors should communicate the findings of the review in writing to their subordinates. The performance results may be categorised as either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Of those categories there are three ways to recognise good performance: notch enhancement, incentive pay, and non-financial compensation (Maloa, 2022).

Fuerther, the study found that rewarding good performance also helps the business attract new workers, keep current skilled employees, and inspire existing employees improving their production and quality of employees. The key to a developmentally focused PMDS is its overall approach to underperformance, which encourages change rather than decisions, punishments, or retribution through feedback, learning, and encouragement (Maloa, 2022). In order to raise their performance levels, under-performance management regulations are explicit in that they allow systemic corrective or instructional assistance to just be applied to the personnel concerned. Maloa (2022) agrees that two disciplinary measures occur, one aimed at increasing productivity and the other at terminating a particular worker's services as a last resort. The termination of an employee's activities will take place only if no substantial results have been achieved by all other steps to strengthen and increase the employee's productivity. There are several ways to cope with unsatisfactory outcomes, including planning, retraining, tutoring and creating a safe working climate (Zaman, 2019). In addition the study results has emphasised on a regular interaction with the performance evaluation process which is essential.

5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Firstly, many people involved in the study were busy with their jobs, making it hard to get in-depth interviews. This meant fewer people could fully participate, which might have skewed the results by leaving out some viewpoints. Secondly, the study only looked at SASSA offices in the Vhembe District, so the results might not apply to other SASSA offices in Limpopo Province or South Africa as a whole. Equally the study indicates that the findings may not illustrate how PMS influences performance in various areas, highlighting the need for further research to validate.Also, the study used both existing research and interviews to gather data, which could have led to missing important information and perspectives on how PMS affects productivity. Despite these challenges, the study's findings are expected to be useful for other SASSA centres in the province and possibly elsewhere in the country, serving as a starting point for more research and comparisons.

6.CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

The study has revealed that improving the performance and productivity of civil servants relies on how well the performance management system is put into practice at SASSA. The performance planning phase is key, as it includes the employee's job roles, a work plan with important productivity areas, performance standards, and a personal development plan for each worker. In the public sector, the performance management system should not just be followed as a formality, it needs to be effectively carried out to boost the productivity and performance of public workers. Moreover, recognizing good performance is vital to encourage employees to maintain high standards, as a lack of praise can lead to low morale.

The performance management system's effect on productivity at the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) in the Vhembe District from 2021 to 2023 reveals important insights into how structured evaluations can improve efficiency and effectiveness among staff. This study focuses on a specific group of the management officials, including the district manager, managers, assistant managers, team leaders, and senior grant administrators, providing a detailed view of performance management and its link to productivity.

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Finally, the research results shows that a well-executed performance management system was crucial for aligning individual efforts with the organisation's goals. It encourages open communication, accountability, and professional growth among employees.

6.2 Suggestions

- The study results suggest that employees should be involved in the performance management process, as this will make them feel more motivated and have a better understanding of their roles, which boost productivity.
- Additionally, the performance management system helps identify strengths and areas needing improvement, allowing management to offer targeted support and resources that enhance the productivity of the entire district office. Implementing feedback mechanisms is key to fostering a culture of ongoing improvement, which is essential in public service, where efficiency and effectiveness significantly affect the community's well-being.
- It is essential to recognise the difficulties in implementing these systems, such as resistance to change and the need for continuous training and development. Overcoming these issues will need strong support from leadership and active participation from employees at all levels. This will help ensure that the system is seen as a tool for growth instead of just a compliance requirement.
- In summary, the study highlights the significance of a strong performance management system in boosting productivity at SASSA's Vhembe District Office. Regular assessment and improvement of these systems, along with involvement from all team members, will be vital for maintaining performance gains and ensuring SASSA effectively meets its goals. The results should lay the groundwork for future research and development efforts to enhance performance management practices within the agency, ultimately leading to better service delivery for the South African community.

6.3 International, National, and Managerial/ Workplace implications

The study on the impact of performance management systems on productivity at the South African Social Security Agency in the Vhembe District from 2021 to 2023 holds significant implications for management, national policies, and international perspectives, as detailed below.

Managerial / Workplace

- Training and Development: Managers and supervisors in SASSA Vhembe District should be trained in Performance Management Systems (PMS) to effectively support their team members.
- Effective Communication: Ongoing monitoring and evaluation through strong communication are vital for the successful implementation of PMS.
- Fairness in Performance Ratings: The PMS must be fair to keep high-performing employees motivated; unfair evaluations can harm morale and productivity.
- Organizational Structure and Clarity: Employees should have a clear understanding of their roles to improve the effectiveness of PMS.
- Regular Feedback Mechanism: Performance should be reviewed not just twice a year but also monthly to quickly identify and address any issues.
- Employee Recognition: There should be a system to publicly acknowledge and reward high achievers to inspire others.
- Creation of a Supportive Environment: Providing necessary resources (like computers and stationery) and promoting a culture of success are essential.

National

- Public Sector Reform: The results highlight the need for a complete redesign of performance management systems (PMS) in the public sector, emphasising teamwork among public officials, managers, and academic institutions.
- Government Intervention: Policies at the national level should be developed to ensure the effective and transparent redesign of PMS, guided by motivational theories that boost employee satisfaction and productivity.
- Systematic Evaluation: Regular assessments of skills should be required at the national level to confirm employee abilities and support continuous growth.

- Addressing Dependency: The heavy dependence on donor funding for public administration in Africa needs to be reevaluated to promote self-sufficient governance and effective service delivery.

International

- Learning from Western Practices: African public sector organisations can gain insights from Western nations that have faced similar performance management issues for over twenty years.
- Global Standards of Efficiency: The push for better performance management systems aligns with a worldwide movement towards greater efficiency and effectiveness in public administration.
- Complexities of Governance: Reforming public administration is a challenging part of restoring governance, especially in post-conflict areas, underscoring the need for organised and well-planned international support and cooperation.
- Performance-Driven Culture: Promoting a culture focused on performance globally can improve productivity in public services across many countries, especially in developing regions.

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