

Full Length Research Paper

Measuring employee performance in Gweru and Kwekwe city councils in midlands province, Zimbabwe

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For organizations to measure the performance of its employees there is a need to have key performance indicators and performance standards set. The current study at Gweru and Kwekwe City Councils in Zimbabwe assessed eight (8) performance aspects, which are quality work, employee output, communication and dependability (customer), controlling of costs (financial), planning, team working, problem solving and technical understanding (internal methods/organization procedure) and leadership management (learning and growth potential). The study was a quantitative descriptive survey that allowed managers to appraise employee performance. All 32 line managers participated in the research, and 400 employees were selected using stratified random sampling by departments, as employees reported to the same managers. The constructs that measured employee performance were reliable with Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients ranging from problem analysis and resolution (0.734), employee controlling costs (0.794), planning and organizing (0.796), employee output (0.778), employee communication (0.823), employee leadership (0.8333) and employee dependability (0.861). Generally, employee performance with regard to quality service for customer needs, financials, internal procedures and learning and growth was low. The technical understanding attribute of performance among employees as determined by managers had the least mean score (12.4%), indicating that public sector organizations like city councils in Zimbabwe, may still engage 'Rocks' kind of employees. Rocks are the kind of employees who are incompetent because they do not have the technical understanding to do the job and they seem not to care. It is recommended that managers in Gweru and Kwekwe city councils should come up with rigorous training and development policies and practices that help employees acquire relevant skills. Performance indicators should be clearly communicated to all employees. The Gweru and Kwekwe city councils should develop a performance management system that is linked to their performance goals. Constant performance feedback should be given to both managers and employees.

Key words: Employee performance indicators, employee appraisal, Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients, technical understanding, rocks, relevant skills.

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance in organizations of the 21st century has been an important factor in pushing the economic growth of a country and delivering quality

services to citizens. Municipalities in Zimbabwe have been found wanting on the quality of service needed by the stakeholders which include government, residents,

customers and vendors. This has necessitated an investigation into levels of employee performance in city councils to deliver services to the satisfaction of stakeholders. Employees are primary sources of competitive advantage in every organization, and their performance plays a vital role in achieving organizational goals. Deadrick (2014) views, performance as a distribution of outcomes achieved, and performance can be measured by a variety of parameters which describe an employee's pattern of performance over time. Most organizations in this global world are believed to depend on employee performance to survive (Kahtani, 2013). City councils are also participating in the competitive environment of globalization. There are a number of performance indicators which may gauge the performance of employees. For the organization to measure the performance of its employees, there is a need to have key performance indicators and performance standards set against the performance of each individual employee. Key performance indicators help to develop measurable objectives (Synovia and Burchel, 2017). Employee performance indicators are employee competence, planning and organizing, dependability and controlling of costs, among others (Deadrick, 2014).

Structures of the Gweru and Kwekwe City councils

Organizational structure is a system that is used to define a hierarchy within an organization. It identifies each job, its function and where it reports to within the organization. This structure is developed to give a framework of how an organization operates and assists an organization to achieve its goals. The structure of municipalities in Zimbabwe is defined by an Act. The Urban Councils Act Chapter 29 Section 15 governs the 32 Urban Councils which have been established throughout Zimbabwe. Urban councils, which are established under the same act, have, however, been accorded a different status, and these include the Local Boards, which are the lowest in the hierarchy, Town Councils, Municipal Councils and City Councils. The City Councils, which have the highest status in the country, are run by a policy-making body consisting of elected councillors and a Mayor. The Council is mainly responsible for legislative, financial and governance issues. Figure 1 highlights the organogram of a city council. In the organogram, the Council is the executive management, which is a team of full-time professional officers who are responsible for the implementation of Council decisions and the day to day running of Council affairs.

Executive management

The city council executive management is headed by the Town Clerk and supported by five departments, which are Engineering, Housing, Health, Chamber Secretary and Finance. The Town Clerk is responsible for all actions by officials under his/her supervision and should ensure that the departments operate effectively (Commonwealth Report, 2017). Line managers assist heads of departments in city councils that are seen as team leaders and coordinators of council policies responsible for delivering efficient service to the community. In the Town Clerk department there is a manager who heads the auditing unit, chamber secretary has legal services, human resource and security, housing department has a housing and parks unit, engineering has town planning, water sewage, valuation, roads and projects and workshop, health department has clinical and environmental units and treasury has information and technology, revenue and cost control cutting units. All these units are housed by the six main departments and headed by city directors with the assistance of line managers. Thus, the Town Clerk, directors of departments and heads of units lead city councils towards the achievement of their goals. Managers in this study are defined as council employees who occupy management positions and have subordinate staff that receive instructions and report to them.

The non-executive managers

The non-executive managers are managers elected by residents and these consist of the Mayor and councillors. The Mayor is elected by the council to chair council meetings. While Zimbabwean city councils have executive mayors, these have remained accountable to full council. The city council is the city's legislative body, comprising of elected and appointed councillors and chaired by a mayor. The councillors are elected by residents and responsible as well as accountable to the residents. It should be noted that council decisions are made by the council and a full council is made up of both executive and non-executive managers. According to Roberts et al. (2017), once decisions are made in council, city managers have to implement them regardless of whether they are agreeable or not.

Performance of Gweru and Kwekwe city councils

The Gweru and Kwekwe City Councils are the major

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municipal cities in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe, with Gweru being the capital city for the Midlands. Both city councils are expected to play a leading role in their cities' and province's socio and economic development. According to Mamboko et al. (2013), the expenditure pattern for both the Gweru and Kwekwe City Councils has been negative, with more income being spent on operating expenditure than capital expenditure. The expenditure pattern for three years from 2009 to 2011 shows that for the year 2009, 42 and 58% were used for capital and operating expenditure respectively. In 2010, 40 and 60% were allocated to capital and operating expenditure respectively. As for the year 2011, capital expenditure accounted for 38% and operating expenditure used 62% of the total revenue. The pattern clearly shows that more income is spent on operating expenditure than capital expenditure. The authors explain that much of the operating expenditure was spent on payroll expenses, with managers taking a significantly high portion of the city's income, and the capital expenditure for both councils was dominated by purchases of motor vehicles for top management. These expenditure patterns in the Gweru and Kwekwe city councils may have engendered employees' mistrust of their managers which may have affected their performance. This may also have a negative effect on the overall organization's performance (Synovia and Burchel, 2017). The Zimbabwe Report of Auditor General (2013; 2016) highlighted issues of poor planning in the Gweru City Council's Human Resources department where the council had no authorized establishment in the departments of Housing and Health and the Town Clerk's office. This could possibly have led to problems such as overstaffing, which would then support Mamboko et al. (2013) findings that most revenue expenses were spent on the payroll. Planning is a management task, and when there is no planning done, this may affect performance negatively. Employees look up to managers to plan, implement, control and evaluate organizational tasks.

Performance of employees in Gweru and Kwekwe city councils

The Gweru and Kwekwe City Councils are the major municipal cities in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe, with Gweru being the capital city for the Midlands. Both city councils are expected to play a leading role in their cities' and province's socio and economic development. According to the Herald (2013), the city fathers in the Midlands province have been found wanting with performance indicators showing poor employee competence, planning and organizing, dependability and controlling of costs, among others. Employee competence, concentrate on the employee's capacity to handle the job-related tasks such as patching potholes for roads in the cities of Gweru and Kwekwe, as well as

the time frame in which employees react or complete tasks delegated to them (Chigumwe et al., 2016). To illustrate this lack of competency among the employees, Gweru and Kwekwe city residents have been complaining about nonattendance of sewer systems, non-attendance to recreational facilities and burst pipes among others (Gweru Times, 2013).

Regarding planning, Gweru and Kwekwe city councils have been accused of failing to plan to enable the municipalities to provide adequate service to the expanding population (The Chronicle, 2013). To illustrate this lack of poor planning, residents in Mkoba villages of 15, 18 and 19 have been subjected to erratic water supplies. The reasons for inadequate water supply have been said to be the three water pumps the city has, instead of the required six water pumps (The Newsday, 2013). Another shortcoming which exposes the municipalities of poor planning is the unpreparedness to tackle a fire in case of an emergency. One senior officer in the fire brigade in Gweru was quoted saying that

'.....the city has only two fire tenders both which unfortunately have broken down.....'.

To substantiate this poor planning, an incident that occurred in Gweru in 2013, where 21 vehicles at a garage, in the city's industrial area, were burnt beyond recognition as the city council could not respond in time. In Kwekwe city, a fire destroyed a hotel building and the catering equipment inside. Protecting residents' properties is one of the critical functions of city councils, but due to poor planning, residents are exposed to high risks of losing their property. The shortcomings of Gweru and Kwekwe city councils discussed above brings the challenge of employee dependability in providing the requisite service.

To further illustrate the challenge of employee performance in the two cities, research by Chigumwe et al. (2016) attributed reasons for poor service delivery in the municipalities to, among other reasons, incompetent personnel, poor leadership, insensitivity to residents' needs, demoralized personnel and lack of supervision. One of the employees in Kwekwe City Council was quoted saying that 'The management of the city is not being done properly ...there is no water, no refuse collection but we receive bills which are based on estimates....' (The Newsday, 2013). This has triggered the need to measure levels of employee performance in the two city councils.

Zimbabwean city councils have been struggling financially in the past years. City councils, which generally receive some funding from the government, have indeed been forced to rely on revenue from local ratepayers, service charges and rentals from leased property. The local newspaper, *Gweru Times* (March, 2013), reported that the Gweru City Council had been cited as the leading government debtor after the Ministry

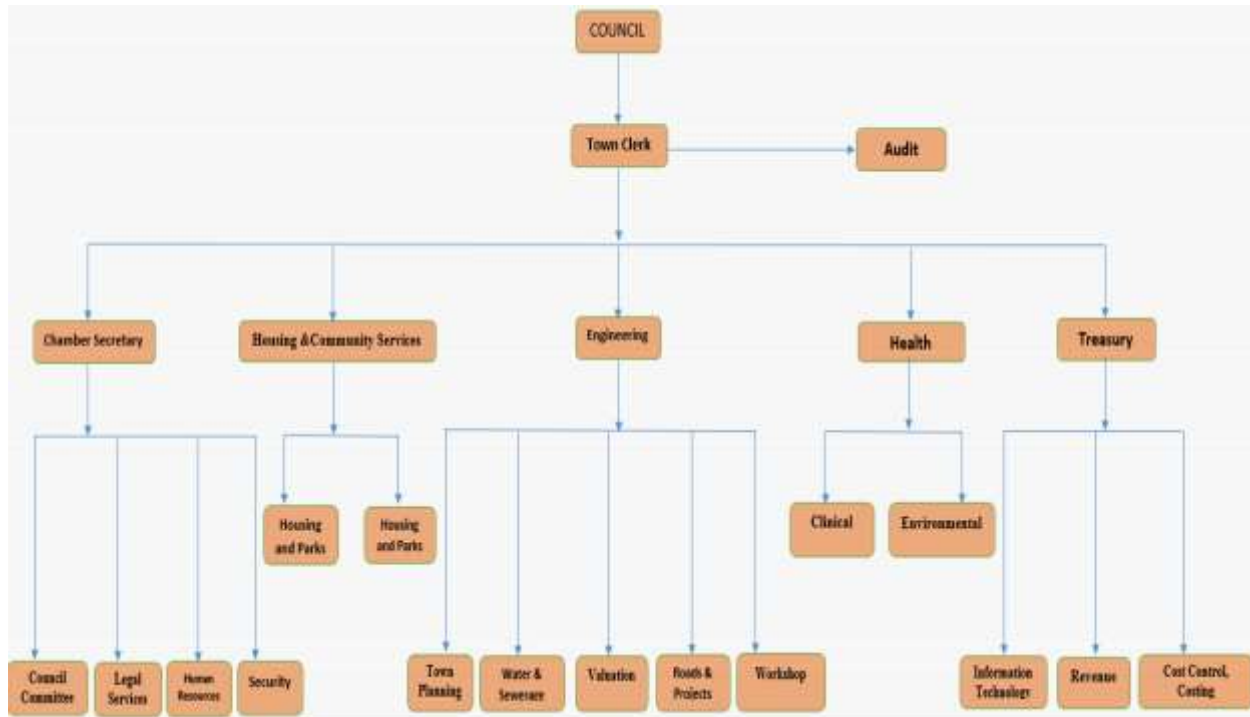


Figure 1: Modified Organogram for urban local authorities

of Local Government and Public Works failed to remit funds to the council. The Town Council was quoted by the newspaper stating that 'we have problems recovering money from the buildings owned by the Ministry...' and the amount was around US\$8 million. This requires the city council to devise dynamic systems to collect revenue and establish more income generating projects. However, city councils can only achieve this if they are able to attract and retain hardworking, innovative and results-oriented employees.

Employee performance indicators

Deadrick (2014) summarizes performance indicators as enthusiasm among employees for better performance, loyalty to management, willing cooperation towards organizational goals, team building, and reduction in grievances, reduction in conflict, reduction in absenteeism and reduction in labour turnover among others. According to Synovia and Burchel (2017) managers must consider the customer service features of services like issues of dependability, quality work, problem solving and effective communication among others, when creating metrics and performance indicators. The performance indicators for city councils may, therefore, include several organizational outcomes among which are quality service, customer attraction and satisfaction and resource mobilization. Franceschini et al. (2013) support this by arguing that whether performance indicators are employed to view a

procedure or improve an organization's performance, there is a need for key performance indicators to connect to a concise strategic goal. According to Synovia and Burchel (2017), there are four concepts which should be considered when developing key performance indicators which are a customer, financials, internal methods including an organization's operation procedures, and learning and growth potential. Performance indicators should be integrated and interdependent to provide an overall perspective on the company's goals, business strategies and specific objectives, as well as on the company performance (Tescic et al., 2014). In this paper, performance indicators for employees were the employees' productivity tendencies (customer) of quality work, employee output, communication and dependability, (financial) controlling of costs (internal methods/ organization procedure) planning, team working, problem solving and technical understanding and (learning and growth potential) leadership management. The performance indicators used in this study are already being used by the two city councils in their performance appraisals. The current study had to measure the validity and reliability of these performance indicators in measuring employee performance by calculating the Cronbach's alpha. Good performance is when an employee performs according to the expected standard while poor performance will be when employees fail to perform as expected.

Employee performance assessment is critical for the identification of both strong and weak service areas

(Zamani and Esfahani, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

The research was a descriptive quantitative survey. In total 32 line managers representing management participated in the research. Stratified random sampling was used to select 400 employees as guided by the Sekaran table. About 24 line managers were able to rate 274 employees whom they supervised. Employee performance in this study was measured using performance questionnaires divided into eight components which are planning, control of costs, employee output, communication, technical understanding, dependability, leadership management, problem analysis and resolution. Managers in this study assessed the performance of employees. To measure employee performance, the research made use of a 5 point Likert scale again, moving from strongly disagree to agree strongly. The performance measurement objectives were guided by the eight performance activities which are Y_1 , planning and organizing (initiative and creativity, set clear goals and plan solutions), Y_2 , utilization of resources (avoid being wasteful, positive attitude towards work and good work practices), Y_3 work output (volume of work, quality of work and multiple skilling), Y_4 , communication, Y_5 , technical understanding (specialized skills), Y_6 , dependability (loyalty, level of co-operation and active team member), Y_7 leadership (able to motivate, guide and develop others and ability to delegate) and Y_8 problem solving (able to identify work related problems and give solutions). For each individual performance, low performance was anything below 2 (≤ 2), moderate performance was =3, while the high performance was in the range of 4 and above (≥ 4). The performance for a department was the average scores of employees appraised.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The constructs that measured employee performance were reliable with Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients ranging from problem analysis and resolution (0.734), employee controlling costs (0.794), planning and organizing (0.796), employee output (0.778), employee communication (0.823), employee leadership (0.8333) and employee dependability 0.861. Employees who performed above average or outstanding as rated by managers scored the following: technical understanding 12.4%, leadership 13.5%, planning and organizing and communication both at 13.9%, problem analysis and resolution 15.3%, dependability 15.8%, controlling costs 16.8% and employee output 17.2%. The results in the levels of employees' performance indicated low levels of performance. The technical understanding attribute of performance among employees as determined by managers' appraisal had the least mean score (12.4%).

About 40.9% claim that in as far as volume of work relative to employee experience is concerned their employees meet minimal requirements with 33.2% deeming them to be satisfactory and only 17.2% claimed that they were above average/clearly exceeds outstanding. Most of the participants (41.6%) claim that in as far as standard of work is concerned their employees meet minimal requirements with only 13.9% believing them to be above average/clearly exceed. 42% of the

participants also believe that their employee's multiple tasking capabilities meet minimal requirements and 34.7% deem them to be satisfactory with only 15.3% rating them to be above average/clearly exceeding outstanding. The overall measure of employee output (EO) is calculated as $EO=0.813C8 + 0.820 \times C9 + 0.864 \times C10$. The weights show that the three items that make up the construct are all reasonably equally crucial in the determination of the overall measure of the construct (coefficients ranging from 0.813 to 0.864). The latent variable of EO makes use of 69.33% of the information contained in the three questionnaire items that make up the construct and is very reliable (Chronbach's Alpha=0.778).

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the participants (73.4%) claimed that their employee's effectiveness in conveying information meets minimal requirements and 20% claimed that theirs were above average/clearly exceed expectation. 70% claimed that their employee's ability to share information meets minimum requirements/satisfactory and 13.9% claimed that their ability was above average/clearly exceeds expectation. The overall measure of employee communication (EC) is calculated as $EC=0.924C11 + 0.924 \times C12$. The latent variable of EC makes use of 85.43% of the information contained in the two questionnaire items that make up the construct and is very reliable (Chronbach's Alpha=0.823).

With regard to employee dependability, about 11% of the participants believed that their employees fail to meet required levels of loyalty, 46.2% deemed their employees to meet minimal requirements, and 27.1% claimed that they were satisfactory. The majority of the respondents (73.8%) felt that their employees' level of cooperation meets minimal requirements/satisfactory and only 15.8% are of the opinion that they are above average/clearly exceeds outstanding. About 43.4% of the participants view their employee involvement as team members as meeting minimal requirements, and only 17.2% believed they were above average/ clearly exceeding outstanding. The overall measure of employee dependability (ED) is calculated as $ED=0.919C14 + 0.869 \times C15 + 0.890 \times C16$. The weights show that the three items that make up the construct are all fairly equally important in the determination of the overall measure of the construct (coefficients ranging from 0.869 to 0.919). The latent variable of ED makes use of 79.73% of the information contained in the three questionnaire items that make up the construct with very high reliability (Chronbach's Alpha=0.861).

For the financial managers' scored employee controlling costs and the results showed that in terms of avoiding being wasteful 42.0% of the respondents claimed that their employees meet minimal requirements and 36.9% were satisfactory. In as far as positive attitude towards work is concerned only 5.5% of the participants view their employees to fail to meet requirements with 41.2% (meeting requirements) and 34.3% being rating them as satisfactory. About 75.2% of the participants are

of the opinion that their employee's good work practices meet basic requirements/ satisfactory. Only 16.8% deem them to be above average or clearly exceeds outstanding. The overall measure of employee control of costs (ECC) is calculated as $ECC=0.819C5 + 0.880 \times C6 + 0.825 \times C7$. The weights show that the three items that make up the construct are all important in the determination of the overall measure of the construct (coefficients ranging from 0.819 to 0.880). The latent variable of ECC makes use of 70.86% of the information contained in the three questionnaire items that make up the construct and is very reliable (Chronbach's Alpha=0.794).

Only 13.9% believe that their employees' initiative is above average/clearly exceeds outstanding. Most of the respondents believe that their employees' ability to set clear goals is satisfactory (44.9%) while 36.1% claim it to meet minimum requirements. Only 4% fail to meet requirements with 15% above average/clearly exceeds outstanding. 40.9% of the respondents claim that their employees' ability to plan solutions meets minimal requirements with 20.1% claiming that it was above average/exceeds outstanding. The overall measure of employee planning and organizing (EPO) is calculated as $EPO=0.682 \times C1 + 0.846 \times C2 + 0.826 \times C3 + 0.791 \times C4$. The weights show that the four items that make up the construct EPO are all important in the determination of the overall measure of the construct (coefficients ranging from 0.682 to 0.846). The most important contributor to the construct is "set clear goals" (coefficient=0.846) with "initiative and creativity" contributing the least (coefficient=0.682). The latent variable of EPO makes use of 62.63% of the information contained in the four questionnaire items that make up the construct and is very reliable (Chronbach's Alpha=0.796).

On technical understanding, the results show that the majority of the participants (42.7%) believed that their employee's ability to understand specialized task of the job meet minimal requirements. These were followed by 32.5% who deemed their employee's ability to understand specialized task of the job to be satisfactory. About 12.4% claim that their employees fail to meet specific requirements with the same percentage deeming them to be above average/ clearly exceed outstanding. Technical understanding is made up of only one item and will thus be represented by this single item. There is no need of a latent variable to represent technical understanding. The results also show the employee level of identifying work related problems and providing solutions. The results show that 41.6% of the respondents deemed employees as meeting minimum requirements, with only 16.4% claiming that their employees were above average/clearly exceed expectation. 48.9% claimed that their employees' promptness in producing work solutions meets minimal requirements. However, only 15.3% claimed that their employees were above average/clearly exceeds expectation. The latent variable of EPAR makes use of 79.14% of the information

contained in the two questionnaire items that make up the construct, and it has high internal consistency (Chronbach's Alpha=0.734).

For learning and growth, the results show that the majority of the managers (46.7%) believed that employees' ability to motivate, coordinate, guide and develop others only met minimal requirements and 7.7% failed to meet requirements at all. Very few (13.5%) felt that their employees did the tasks mentioned earlier above average/ clearly exceeding outstanding. Most of the participants (47.8%) also felt that their employees' ability to assign tasks to their subordinates only met minimum requirements. The overall measure of employee leadership (EL) is calculated as $EL=0.926C17 + 0.926 \times C18$. The latent variable of EL makes use of 85.71% of the information contained in the two questionnaire items that make up the construct with very high reliability (Chronbach's Alpha=0.833).

The results also show the employee level of identifying work related problems and providing solutions. The results deemed employees as meeting minimum requirements by 41.6% of with only 16.4% claiming that their employees were above average/clearly exceeds expectation. 48.9% claimed that their employee's promptness in coming up work solutions meets minimal requirements, but only 15.3% claimed that their employees were above average/clearly exceeds expectation. The overall measure of employee dependability (ED) is calculated as $ED=0.89019 + 0.890 \times C20$. The latent variable of ED makes use of 79.14% of the information contained in the two questionnaire items that make up the construct, and it has high internal consistency (Chronbach's Alpha=0.734).

DISCUSSION

The results in the levels of employees' performance indicated low levels of performance. With regards to employee performance attributes that help provides quality service to customers, the results in Table 1 show that in terms of employee output most of the participants believe that their employees meet minimal requirements.

According to Tomic et al. (2014), multitasking and greater involvement of lower-level employees in decision-making are critical for employee output. Good performance is when an employee performs according to the expected standard while poor performance will be when employees fail to perform as expected (Gerber, 2017). Levels of performance in effective communication indicated that the majority of the participants claimed that their employee's effectiveness in conveying information meets minimal requirements. The finding is supported by Chigumwe et al. (2016) who attributed reasons for poor service delivery in the municipalities to demoralised personnel, among other reasons. Employees in Gweru and Kwekwe city councils seem to have challenges in

Table 1. Employee performance

Employee planning and organising (EPO)	Low/very low	Satisfactory	High/ very high	Mean	St Dev	Latent factor (principal component) coefficient	% of total variation	Reliability-Cronbach'alpha
C1. Initiative & Creativity	45.3	40.9	13.9	2.69	0.77	0.682	62.63	0.796
C2. Set clear goals	40.1	44.9	15.0	2.72	0.80	0.846		
C3. Plans Solutions	44.5	35.4	20.1	2.74	0.86	0.826		
C4. Utilises resources effectively	46.0	38.3	15.7	2.67	0.84	0.791		
Employee Control of Costs(ECC)								
C5. Avoids being wasteful	46.0	36.9	17.2	2.69	0.85	0.819	70.86	0.794
C6. Positive attitude towards work	46.7	34.3	19.0	2.70	0.91	0.880		
C7. Good work practices	48.5	37.4	16.8	2.62	0.91	0.825		
Employee Output (EO)								
C8. Volume of work relative to employee's experience	49.7	33.2	17.2	2.60	0.90	0.813	69.33	0.778
C9. Work produced of required standard	50.7	35.4	13.9	2.56	0.89	0.820		
C10. Multiple skilling	50.0	34.7	15.3	2.59	0.88	0.864		
Employee Communication (EC)								
C11. Effective in conveying information	43.1	36.5	20.4	2.76	0.96	0.924	85.43	0.823
C12. Good at sharing information with others	58.3	27.8	13.9	2.47	0.96	0.924		
Employee Technical Understanding (TU)								
C13. Understand the specialised task of the job	55.1	32.5	12.4	2.49	0.95			
Employee Dependability (ED)								
C14. Loyalty	57.2	27.1	15.8	2.52	0.98	0.919	79.73	0.861
C15. Level of co-operation	47.5	34.7	17.9	2.64	0.92	0.869		
C16. Active team member	53.3	29.6	17.2	2.57	0.95	0.890		
Employee Leadership (EL)								
C17. Motivates, co-ordinates ,guide and develops other	54.4	32.1	13.5	2.54	0.89	0.926	85.71	0.833
C18. Ability to assign tasks to subordinates	57.7	26.6	15.7	2.51	0.93	0.926		
Employee Problem Analysis & Resolution (EPAR)								
C19. Level of identifying work related problems	52.2	31.4	16.4	2.56	0.94	0.890	79.14%	0.734
C20. Promptness in coming up with work solutions	52.2	32.5	15.3	2.63	0.85	0.890		
C19. Level of identifying work related problems	52.2	31.4	16.4	2.56	0.94	0.890	79.14%	0.734
C20. Promptness in coming up with work solutions	52.2	32.5	15.3	2.63	0.85	0.890		

relating well to others through effective communication hence relationship building could be a challenge as well. Poor communication skills reflect low interpersonal skills which help people to listen to others and appreciate what others want. Listening to others is one powerful way of dealing with communication barriers (Gerber, 2017). With regard to employee dependability, again the majority of participants believed that their employees fail to meet required levels of loyalty. Most employees were also rated low in the level of cooperation. It is possible that while some employees may have useful attributes in performance and ability to do the task but the same may have the poor attitude hence they may not take responsibility to get things done and be depended upon to deliver results (Deadrick, 2014). Employees in Gweru and Kwekwe city councils were found low in performance attributes that help satisfy the customer which are quality work, employee output, communication and dependability.

For the financial managers' scored employee controlling costs and the results showed that in terms of avoiding being wasteful most managers claimed that their employees meet minimal requirements. Employee scores indicated an average level in resource utilization. Franceschini et al. (2013) stipulate that a manager has to facilitate performance by providing the necessary resources, and effective utilization of resources is an indicator of good performance. Geber (2017) postulates that employees who are good in resource utilization are able to contain costs. Cost reduction has an influence on performance, as lower costs have a direct influence on higher income and better company performance (Tomic et al., 2014). However, it may be possible that with the bureaucratic structures in city councils, few resources could be at the disposal of employees.

For internal methods/organization procedure, the results show that the majority of managers believe that their employees' initiative and creativity meets minimal requirements and satisfactory. Managers in Gweru and Kwekwe city councils seem not to give room to employees to try new ideas. The work environment where creativity and innovation are encouraged may help employees to try the best ideas that may help in improving performance. Gerber (2017) postulates that the level of creativity involves an employee questioning basic assumptions about a problem and help in planning and providing solutions. Most of the respondents believe that their employees' ability to set clear goals is satisfactory while the ability to plan solutions was minimal. Planning and work schedule has been found to be important factors in influencing work performance (Hiemae, 2013). On technical understanding, the results show that the majority of the participants believe that their employee's ability to understand specialized task of the job meet minimal requirements. The low scores in a technical understanding attribute of performance among employees may indicate that public sector organizations like city councils in Zimbabwe, may still engage 'Rocks' kind of employees (Tomic et al., 2014; Grobler, 2010).

Rocks are the kind of employees who are incompetent because they may not have the technical understanding to do the job and they seem not to care. This may be an indicator that plenty of 'Rocks' may have found their way into the organizations because some managers did them a favour or for political reasons. There is, therefore, need to continually monitor and provide feedback on employee performance so as to get the tasks done.

For learning and growth, the results show that the majority of the managers believed that employees' ability to motivate, coordinate, guide and develop others only met minimal requirements. Individual performance determinants as alluded by Hiemann (2013) include the way tasks are designed to strengthen employees' abilities and the organizational leadership. Organizational leadership is the capability of managers to show the collective approach in meeting organizational goals. The results also show the employee level of identifying work related problems and providing solutions. The results deemed employees as meeting minimum requirements. Tomic et al. (2014) summarise performance indicators as enthusiasm among employees for better performance, loyalty to management, willing cooperation towards organizational goals, team building, and reduction in conflict among others. Gerber (2017) on the other hand summarizes performance indicators as enthusiasm for better performance among employees, the percentage of tasks completed, output and being on time and within budget, level of creativity, and responsiveness to feedback among others. All these help employees in providing solutions to organizational problems and ultimately organizational performance.

Contribution to the study and future research

The study enriches the theoretical understanding of the concept of employee performance. There is a need to redirect mind-sets towards human resource capabilities that generate commitment, which is key to individual performance (Gerber, 2017). It has done so in applying it for the first time in the municipal context in Zimbabwe through explaining how employee performance indicators already in use can be categorized as attributes that help satisfy customers, financials, internal methods/organization procedure and learning and growth. The Gweru and Kwekwe City Councils are encouraged to implement performance management systems for all employees, including line managers, so that they may see the need for addressing performance issues in employees. When line managers know that they are assessed in performance, they may see the need to address performance in employees and ultimately, the need to acquire HR skills that help influence performance. Future research may look at factors that influence employee performance in city councils in Zimbabwe.

The result of the study indicates that Gweru and

Kwekwe city councils may have incompetent employees. Such employees can be referred to as rocks. Rocks are the kind of employees who are incompetent because they do not have the technical understanding to do the job and they seem not to care. Findings seem to support the performance challenges currently faced by the two city councils in the Midlands province in Zimbabwe such as non-attendance sewer systems, non-attendance to recreational facilities and burst pipes among others. To cope with the global pressures and compete in the global market Gweru and Kwekwe city, councils are encouraged to recruit employees with the requisite skills, define and facilitate employee performance. Future research may look at HR policies and practices found in Gweru and Kwekwe city council and how they are influencing performance.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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