Perceived Benefits of the Open Performance Review and Appraisal System (OPRAS) in Kilolo District Council, Tanzania

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Abstract – For a couple of years now, the public sector of both developed and developing countries continue to undergo restructuring aimed at effective and efficient public service delivery. These changes were introduced and adopted as reforms, deemed necessary if services are to improve amidst limited resources. In Tanzania, the current Performance Appraisal System, which is also referred to as the Open Performance Appraisal and Review System (OPRAS) was introduced to replace the former Secretive Appraisal System to accord more justice and fairness to government employees.

The aim of this study was to assess government employees' awareness of the OPRAS system, their perceptions regarding its implementation, how these affect their response towards the system and overall job satisfaction. Using the Justice theory, employee's perceptions towards system benefits were measured using four dimensions; distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational evaluation. The study was conducted in Kilolo District at Kilolo District Council Office and involved 75 government employees of the district council. The exploratory research design was applied using the non-probability sampling design, particularly purposive sampling. Findings revealed that the majority of employees were aware as to why the system was introduced. Distributive justice and interpersonal relations were found to, significantly and positively influence employees' perceptions regarding the benefits of OPRAS thus; an increase in these variables in the office or working environment resulted to employee's positive response towards OPRAS.

Keywords – Open Performance Review and Appraisal System.

I. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Globally, formal employee appraisal is believed to have been adopted for the first time during the First World War. At the instance of Walter Dill Scott, the U.S Army adopted the 'Man to Man' rating system for evaluating military personnel. Employee appraisal is particularly known to have started in the United States of America, Canada and Botswana in Africa.

Performance appraisal techniques were used for technical, professional and managerial purposes in the early fifties. Since then, tremendous changes have taken place in the concept, techniques and philosophy of employee appraisal (Armstrong, 2003).

Like other countries, the Government of Tanzania introduced the Open Performance Review and Appraisal System (OPRAS) in July 2004, through the No.2 of 2004 Circular. OPRAS replaced the Confidential Performance Appraisal (CPA) system, which was blamed for the poor employee performance and lack of accountability in public service. These changes in appraising performance of public employees are in line with the public service Act. No. 8 of 2002, both of which emphasize institutional result oriented management and meritocratic principles in public service (URT, 2009).

OPRAS emphasizes the importance of involving employees in objectives setting, implementation, monitor--ing and reviewing processes, which promote individual accountability, improve transparency and communication between management and employees. It is mandatory for all Ministries' Departments and Executive Agencies (MDAs), Regional and Local Government Authorities (LGAs) to introduce OPRAS and make it operational (URT, 2003). This is backed up by policies and laws, which enforce, among other things, OPRAS implementation in the public service.

OPRAS was implemented at national level in Tanzania, and later to the regional and local levels. The system has been operational in the public sector for approximately 14 years now; hence the intention of the study is to establish employees' perceptions regarding the benefits of OPRAS. As argued by Christensen, (2007) sometimes solutions offered by reforms are often simple however when implemented to solve a complex organizational matter, they tend to be inadequate; tending to create in some cases new problems in the process of solving the intended problem.

A study that sought a link between Appraisal System and performance revealed that the appraisal system used is one of the several variables that influence performance (Kamencu, 2012, and Bana 2007). This assertion is however yet to be widely supported by evidence from the Tanzania context. If this position continues to exist, there is danger that uncertain conclusions could be adopted for implementation to the detriment of local organizations. It is in this light that employees' perceptions regarding the benefits of OPRAS in Kilolo District Council of Tanzania were studied.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1.1 *Theoretical Literature Review*
Justice Theory

More recently, Roch and Shanock (2006) used the exchange theory to incorporate all four-justice dimensions into one theoretical framework. They found that procedural, interactional, interpersonal, and informational justice were related to social relationships, either with the organization (i.e. procedural justice) or with the supervisor (i.e. interactional, interpersonal, and informational justice), whereas distributive justice is more closely related to an economic exchange relationship. In the current studies, this integrative framework is drawn upon and specifically

applied to a performance appraisal context. This conceptualization may hold the key to explaining employees' perceptions of fairness during their performance appraisals and appraisal systems. Relevant performance appraisal literature pertaining to each of the four justice dimensions is discussed below**.**

Procedural justice perceptions; According to the Rosenzweig and Nohria, (1994) model, judgments will depend on the relative weighting of the perceived fairness of structural components of the performance appraisal procedure. Three specific procedures have shown promin--ence in the performance appraisal research (assigning raters, setting criteria and seeking appeals). Folger, Konovsky & Cropanzano (1992) and the subsequent empirical work by Taylor *et al.* (1995) emphasized the importance of setting criteria and seeking appeals. Wenzel (2002) found that participation in construction of behaviorally anchored rating scales led to favorable perceptions regarding the performance appraisal interview process and outcomes. Lungu (1998) found that perceptions of appeal procedures were positively related to evaluations of supervisors, trust in management, and job satisfaction.

Distributive justice perception; Distributive justice is deeply rooted in the research of the original equity theorists. There are two types of structural forces associated with the distributive justice of a performance appraisal as an outcome. The first type is decision norms structured to conform to existing social norms, like equity. These typically believe that the distributions are fair. Raters, however, may also feel driven to develop appraisals that conform to other distribution norms such as equality, need, or social status which may seem unfair to those being rated (Leventhal, 1980). The second type of structural force relates to the personal goals of the rater (e.g. to motivate, teach, avoid conflict or gain personal favor). Whether employees consider a particular appraisal as fair or unfair greatly depend on their perceptions of the rater's goals. Employees may consider an appraisal as fair if they perceive that the evaluator is trying to motivate them, improve their performance or expand their perceptions of their own capabilities. Goals that may not be perceived as fair can include conflict avoidance, favoritism and politics.

Interpersonal justice perceptions; Interpersonal justice concerns fairness perceptions that relate to the way the rater treats the person being evaluated. Greenberg (1996) provided evidence that individuals are highly influenced by the sensitivity they are shown by their supervisors and other representatives within the organization. This is especially true when raters show concern for individuals regarding the outcomes they receive. Specifically, Greenberg found that apologies and other expressions of remorse by raters seem to mitigate raters' perceptions of unfairness.

Informational justice perceptions; Informational justice concerns fairness perceptions based on the clarification of performance expectations and standards, feedback received, and explanation and justification of decisions. Like procedural justice, the focus is on the events which precede the determination of the outcome, but for informational justice, the perceptions are socially rather than structurally determined. Information about procedures

can take the form of honest, sincere and logical explanations and justifications of any component of the allocation process. In the context of performance appraisals the most common interactions will involve the setting of performance goals and standards, routine feedback, and explanations during the performance appraisal interview.

2.1.2 *Empirical Literature Review*

Lungu (1998), studied performance management and found that numerous problems hinder performance appraisal as a process, following the application of a traditional trait based approach. Laxity and the 'hallo' effects are some of the most common problems that encourage lack of openness, frequency of appraisal and lack of objectivity.

Kamencu (2011), solely evaluated the effect of performance appraisal systems on employees' performance in selected tea factories in the Meru County in Kenya, competence, assessment and development affected employee performance to a moderate extent as indicated by 56.9% of respondents. Several respondents also cited competence, assessment and development as enhancing employee performance. The main statements were: both staff and management see competence assessment and development as a mechanism for identifying people with promotion potential. Competence assessment and development at the firm emphasizes on integrating individuals′ aspirations and abilities with organizational goals.

Bana (2009), recommends that employee performance appraisal should, among other things serve, as a tool for identification of the employees' training needs. Performance appraisal should serve, as a means to an end, hence should not become an end in itself. Training and development plans for employees should be developed and implemented in order to enhance their capacity. This would enable employees to perceive appraisal as a useful tool in their career and a source of healthy psychological contract.

The studies reviewed above mainly assess the effectiveness of OPRAS and how to improve employee's performance however; none attempts to assess employees' perceptions of the benefits of OPRAS. This study therefore bridged the knowledge gap by investigating employees' perceptions of the benefits of OPRAS in Tanzania and Kilolo District Council in Iringa Region as case study.
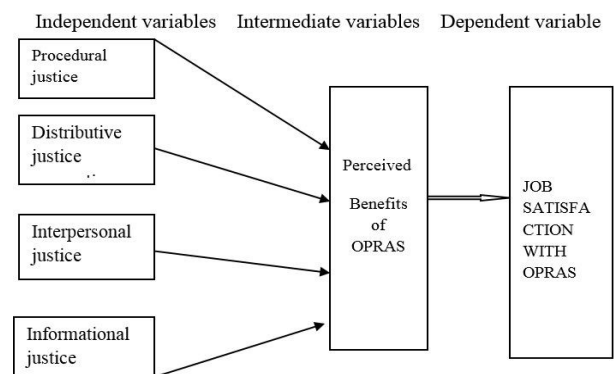
Source: Researcher (2018).

Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework shows the Relations between the Variables.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There are several studies that base on employees' appraisal. The studies stipulate the contributions of individual techniques and challenges associated to each. Currently, researchers, scholars and practitioners are supportive that people, their knowledge and skills are considered to be the most valuable resource a company has, therefore it is necessary not only to reward and develop them (check in Hronik, 2006; Koubek, 2007; Banfield & Kay, 2008; Belohlávek, 2009; Plamínek, 2010), but also evaluate them in order to ascertain their individual performance ultimately co-join forces to have industrial wise results (as stated by Dessler in Kondrasuk, 2011; Palailogos, Popazekos, Panavotopoulou, 2011; Lussier & Hendon 2012; Snell & Bohlander 2012). Literary, evaluation process done to formal employee performance is appraised through which managers evaluate, compare and provide feedback (check in Kocianova, 2010; Giangrecco, Carugati, Sabastino, Al Tamini, 2012, Murphy & Cleveland in Spence & Keeping, 2011) and manage human resources in an organization (Roberts, 2003; De Andres, Garcia – Lapresta, Gonzales Pachón, 2010) through various proposed technics.

Best quality and commitments of human resource management of an organization guarantees the success of institution. Carrying out performance appraisal from time to time by employees could yield the continued efficiency and effectiveness of members of staff of organization. This also supports to hire, retain, replace, motivate, or take any other appropriate action to make sure that the organization prospers. There has been number of techniques in appraising employees by organizations over the years. Organizations and individuals have done little or no research to ascertain the perceived benefits of OPRAS. Most studies discusses performance appraisal that allows employees to develop their skills and to meet business goal.

There are various techniques of appraising employees; Richl (1996) introduced a skill-based method of performa--nce management that creates a work environment that allows employees to develop the skills they need to meet business goals. In this, the skill of an employee is developed and measured to cover gaps in performance. Murray (1980) suggested appraising using customer satisfaction measure as a basis for performance assessment. Managements are rewarding objectively to get more effective employees; more satisfied customers and better business performance uses the results as the milestones for the organizations development. The majority of empirical studies on performance appraisal (PA) systems focus on the search for the perfect form in which subjective traits are replaced by objective and job-relevant measurable behaviors.

This study plays an important role as it accomplishes to know the perceived benefits accrued by OPRAS in Kilolo District. The achievement of objective of any appraisal system is done through mitigating the objectives put forward. Most organizations in developing world have adopted OPRAS as a tool for employees' assessment and management and affect overall performance. It's therefore paramount to study the employees perceived benefits of OPRAS in organizations. As the need be, knowing the importance of the OPRAS will facilitate the continual use of the system. This paper therefore explores the perceived benefits of OPRAS in organizations.

The study is important because for organizations to achieve their objectives, they must have effective performance appraisal system. Most organizations in in world and Tanzania in particular, have adopted performance contracts that the employees are expected to commit themselves. It is therefore very important for an organization to know the perceived benefits of the system by the employees so as to have an effective performance appraisal system. It has been noted that employees working in organizations are to be aware of the systems used to rate them and be knowledgeable on benefits they accrue from.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Kilolo District at the Kilolo District Council Office. A triangulation method approach was adopted in order to maximize strengths the combined sources of data and minimize the limitation of each approach in order to establish employees' perceptions of the benefits of OPRAS. Seventy-five government employees of the district council equested and agreed to participate in the study. The study is also exploratory in nature because it aims at determining the current facts as well as those that are yet to be explored about the phenomenon. Exploratory design is flexible enough to provide opportunity for considering different aspects of a problem under investigation. The non-probability sampling design was used and data were collected using questionnaire and unstructured interviews. Data from the field was subjected to statistical analysis using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Pallant (2005). SPSS was employed because it is a computer software package used for conducting statistical analyses, manipulating data and generating tables and graphs that summarize data. Inferential and descriptive statistics, consisting of frequency and percentages, chi-square, and Cronbach's test was employed in analyzing data.

V. RESULTS

5.1 *Demographic Characteristics*

Frequency analysis was used in this study in order to have a better understanding of respondents' demographic characteristics and specifications. The questionnaire samples were taken from Kilolo District Council that consisted of 75-sample size, 54 (75%) of whom returned their questionnaires. There were four questions that required respondents to provide a brief overview of their demographic attributes as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample characteristics.

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	30	55.6
	Female	24	44.4
Age	18-35	12	22.2

	36-45	23	42.6
	46 and above	19	35.2
Education Level	Form Four	15	27.8
	Form Six	1	1.9
	Certificate	12	22.2
	Diploma	3	5.6
	Degree	7	13
	Post Graduate Diploma	6	11.1
	Masters	10	18.5
Working Position	Top managers	8	14.8
	Subordinates	19	35.2
	Supporting staff	27	50.0

Source: field data (2018).

As presented above, 55.6 % of respondents were male while 44.4% were female. Most respondents were in the age group of 36-45 years (42.6%). As expected, the education level of government employees in such an administrative organization varied significantly. This was reflected by respondents' educational background.

5.2 *Awareness of the OPRAS Objectives*

Respondents' awareness regarding the **OPRAS** system's introduction and purpose in the organization was measured using the direct question "do you know why OPRAS was introduced?"
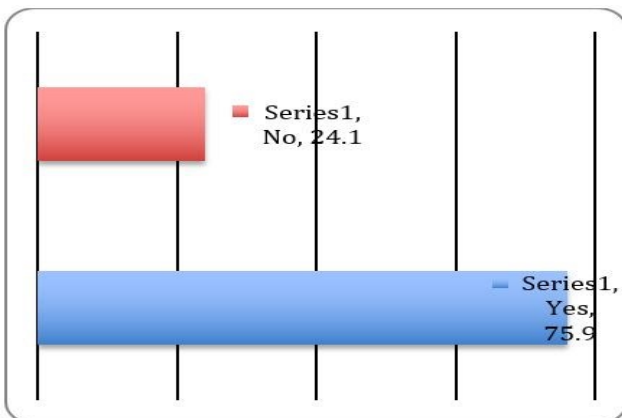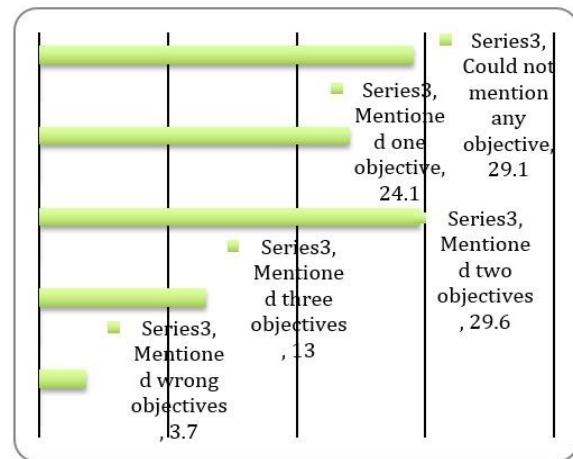

Source: field data (2018)
Fig. 2. Awareness of OPRAS introduction.

As per figure 2, an overwhelming majority of 75.9 percent of respondents involved in the study replied, "yes" indicating that they knew why the system was introduced in their organization. Monis and Sreedhara (2010) in their study also found that 87 percent of employees were aware of the introduction of the performance appraisal system such as OPRAS in their respective firms.

When asked to mention at least three objectives of the introduction of the OPRAS system in the organisation, 29.6 percent of respondents could mention two objectives while the same percentage of respondents could not mention any objectives (Figure 3) indicating that employees' awareness of the objectives remains a challenge.

Source: Field data (2018).
Fig. 3. Awareness of the objectives.

5.3 *Information Justice Perception*

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements on clearness, realism and fairness of what is expected from them as an outcome and feedback they receive from their superiors and findings are as depicted on Table 2 below.

Table 2. Perception of employees towards information justice perception on the implementation of the OPRAS in the organization.

Item	Strongly disagree Percent (frequency)	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Objectives indicated in the business plan are realistic	3.7 (2)	13 (7)	11.1 (6)	48.1 (26)	24.1 (13)
Guidelines for OPRAS are clear	3.7 (2)	14.8 (8)	1.9 (1)	50 (27)	29.6 (16)
The OPRAS rating is done periodically	0 (0)	11.1 (6)	13 (7)	40.7 (22)	35.2 (19)

Source: field data (2018)

The respondents' views on three statements used to study their perceptions towards Informational justice satisfaction with the system are presented on Table 3. The majority of respondents (50%) agreed with the statement that guidelines for OPRAS were clear. While 48.1 percent agreed with the statement that objectives indicated in the business plan are realistic and 40.7% agreed that OPRAS rating is periodically conducted. The findings imply that Kilolo District Council OPRAS procedures are clear to employees. Thus amidst clear guidance, managers and employees feel valued and don't end up frustrated to the point of quitting thus reducing turnover. At the same time, satisfy clients by turning in projects according to plan that meet expected deadlines and budgets.

5.4 *Distributive Justice Perception*

This study further examined employees' perceptions regarding distributive justice in the implementation of the OPRAS system in the organization and findings are as presented on table 3 below.

Table 3. Perception of employees regarding distributive justice and the implementation of the OPRAS in the organization.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	Percent (frequency)				
Promotion is purely based on the OPRAS system	3.8(2)	17(9)	37.7(20)	20.8(11)	18.9(10)
Transfers, demotions, suspensions are based on OPRAS	11.1(6)	20.4(11)	24.1(13)	31.5(17)	13(7)
Standards and rating vary widely and sometimes unfairly depending on the supervisor	18.5(10)	22.2(12)	16.7(9)	31.5(17)	11.1(6)
The evaluators' OPRAS ratings increase employees' motivations	9.3(5)	14.8(8)	20.4(11)	29.6(16)	25.9(14)

Source: field data (2018)

The majority of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that promotion is purely based on the OPRAS System (37.7%). Also 31.5 percent agreed with the statements "*transfers, demotions, suspension is based on OPRAS*" as well as "*standards and rating vary widely and sometimes unfairly depending on the supervisor*". Moreover 29.6 percent agreed that evaluators' OPRAS ratings enhanced employees' motivation. Since the majority of respondents were neutral on the statement that promotion is purely based on the OPRAS system, this depicts that Kilolo management occasionally promotes employees without considering the performance outcome, an occurrence that may de-motivate good performers.

5.5 *Interpersonal Justice Perception*

Employees perceive the system to have interpersonal justice if it also improves interpersonal relations in work places and table 4 below presents respondents' interperso--nal perceptions.

Table 4. OPRAS on improving Interpersonal relations in the working places.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	Percent (frequency)				
The OPRAS helps to win cooperation and team work	7.4(4)	22.2(12)	18.5(10)	40.7(22)	11.1(6)
The OPRAS is helpful for improving personnel skills	3.8(2)	37.7(20)	1.9(1)	43.4(23)	13.2(7)
Negative feedback can de-motivate employees	1.9(1)	9.3(5)	3.7(2)	24.1(13)	61.1(33)

Source: field data (2018)

Majority of respondents (61.1%) strongly agree with the statement "Negative feedback can de-motivate employees". It is a true that employees often avoid negative feedback from their employers. Negative feedback generally signals that the employee has not completed all aspects of her job satisfactorily and that there is need for improvement. However, not all negative feedback necessarily needs to be detrimental to employee morale. In reality, each worker is different and the negative feedback provided by employers will affect employees in various ways. In this case, supervisors should adopt an appropriate approach when communicating such feedback.

5.6 *Procedural Justice*

According to the Rosenzweig and Nohria, (1994) model, judgments will depend on the relative weighting of the perceived fairness of the structural components of the performance appraisal procedure. Three specific procedur--es have shown prominence in the performance appraisal research (assigning raters, setting criteria and seeking appeals). The study measured employees' perceptions on the procedural justice of the implementation of the OPRAS system in the organization.

Table 5. Perception of employees towards Procedural justice and the implementation of the OPRAS in the organization.

Item No.	Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	M	S	Mdn	Mo	n
a)	The OPRAS rating procedures are done periodically	0 (0)	11.1(6)	13(7)	40.7(22)	35.2(19)	4	0.97	4	4	54
b)	The OPRAS system is periodically reviewed and changed to insure its effectives	15.1(8)	9.4(5)	45.3(24)	15.1(8)	15.1(8)	3.06	1.22	3	3	53
c)	The supervisor's personal values and bias can replace organisational stds in the evaluation process	16.7(9)	18.5(10)	9.3(5)	35.2(19)	20.4(11)	3.24	1.41	4	4	54
d)	OPRAS procedures demands too much time and efforts from supervisors	33.3(18)	9.3(5)	14.8(8)	38.9(21)	3.7(2)	2.7	1.38	3	4	54

[a]Likert items: 1 to 5 strongly disagree-/strongly agree. Higher scores reflect stronger agreement to the statement.
Frequencies of respondents are in parenthesis
M=Mean. S=Standard Deviation. Mdn=Median and Mo=Mode

Four statements were posed to establish respondents' perceptions regarding procedural justice, and satisfaction with the implementation of the system in the organization and findings are as presented on Table 5. The majority of respondents agreed with the statement that: The OPRAS rating procedures are done periodically (40.%) and more than 45% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that OPRAS system is periodically reviewed and changed to ensure its effectiveness. High mode and median scores reflect a stronger agreement with the statement.

5.7 Benefits of OPRAS

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the seven statements measuring the benefits of OPRAS and findings are as presented on Table 6 below.

Table 6. Employees' perception on OPRAS benefits.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	Percent (frequency)				
OPRAS system keeps record of the major achievements and failures of work	11.3 (6)	17 (9)	18.9 (10)	28.3 (15)	24.5 (13)
OPRAS helps to identify the strengths and weaknesses of employees	3.8 (2)	9.4 (5)	13.2 (7)	50.9 (27)	22.6 (12)
OPRAS helps to identify training needs and organizational development	1.9 (1)	20.4 (11)	16.7 (9)	40.7 (22)	20.4 (11)
OPRAS is important for improving performance	0 (0)	16.7 (9)	13 (7)	42.6 (23)	27.8 (15)
The OPRAS system is needed in organization	0(0)	3.7(2)	1.9(1)	63(34)	31.5(17)
OPRAS is helps the management in providing employee counseling	1.9(1)	16.7(9)	18.5(10)	35.2(19)	27.8(15)
The desired target of the organization is achieved through the OPRAS	14.8(8)	16.7(9)	18.5(10)	37(20)	13(7)

Findings revealed that more that 50 percent agreed with the statement that the OPRAS System keeps record of the major achievements and failures of work. Further still, 63 percent agreed that the OPRAS system is needed in the Organization. Also 42.6 percent of respondents agreed that OPRAS is important for improving performance, whereas 40.7 percent agreed with the statement that OPRAS helps to identify training needs and organizational development.

5.8 Employee's Satisfaction with OPRAS Implementation

The relationship between supervisor-employee and job satisfaction is remarkably complex and entails numerous determining differences. It is argued that an affable relationship between supervisor and employee leads to job satisfaction. The researcher posed two questions requiring respondents to state their level of agreement/disagreement

with the same. Table 7 presents findings as obtained from respondents.

Table 7. Employee's satisfaction with OPRAS implementation.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
	Percent (frequency)				
I am satisfied with the OPRAS implementation procedures	5.6 (3)	22.2 (12)	20.4 (11)	35.2 (19)	16.7 (9)
I am satisfied with the existing OPRAS system	18.5 (10)	25.9 (14)	3.7 (2)	29.6 (16)	22.2 (12)

Table 7 above shows respondents' satisfaction with OPRAS implementation. The study findings indicate that, on average, the level of respondents' satisfaction with the OPRAS system in the organization is intermediary thus neither high nor low. Over 35% of respondents agreed with the statement "I am satisfied with the OPRAS implementation procedures". Monis and Sreedhara (2010) similarly reported that over 69% of employees were satisfied with the performance appraisal system in India Multi National Companies.

VI. CONCLUSION

Open Performance and Appraisal System (OPRAS) is intended to support an accountability regime on the part of individual public servants. OPRAS is an instrument for objectively assessing staff performance by their supervisors. A positive employee perception of the system would automatically result into positive perceptions regarding its benefits. The findings of this study portray a positive picture of employee awareness of the introduction and implementation of OPRAS. This indicates that the system affects employees' daily performance and well implemented, it is likely to improve performance.

Employees perceive the implementation of OPRAS as helpful in enhancing cooperation with their supervisors and teamwork. This perception is perhaps explained by the presence of good communication and interpersonal relation between supervisors and employees. Interpersonal justice concerns fairness perceptions that relate to the way the rater treats the person being evaluated (Greenberg, 1996).

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