

Performance Appraisal, Career Development and Employee Performance: Implications from Procurement Professionals

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Abstract

This study examined the mediating role of career development on the relationship between performance appraisal and procurement professionals' performance. The study involved 204 procurement professionals from Dodoma city. It used cross-sectional survey design, where data were analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). The findings indicate that procurement professionals' performance and career development are positively influenced by performance appraisal practices. The study also found out that career development has positive influence on procurement professionals' performance. Finally, the study revealed that career development mediates the influence of performance appraisal on procurement professionals' performance. The results imply that; procurement professionals' performance can be enhanced by performance appraisal practices through career development. By integrating performance appraisal, career development and procurement professionals' performance, this study brings additional understanding in the human resource development body of knowledge in the context of procurement management.

Keywords: career development, employee performance, performance appraisal, performance feedback, procurement, procurement professionals.

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Introduction

Employee performance is one of the foremost interest of managers in all contexts (Kenny, 2019). Thus, the performance of professionals whose function involve a great public interest is even more important. Particularly, procurement is one of the functions which have great importance as it consumes huge amount of public money in nearly all countries. For instance, in 2016, nearly 35 trillion dollars of government organizations in the world were used for public procurement (Djankov et al., 2017). In European Union (EU) countries, it accounts to nearly 14% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (García-Altés et al., 2023). Similarly, in third world countries, the function takes between 25% and 30% of the GDP (Roos, 2012). Tanzania in particular spends about 70% of its budget on public procurement (Kajimbwa, 2018). Therefore, the performance which procurement professionals put on their jobs is crucial for the general effectiveness of public procurement (Changalima et al., 2021).

Researchers have been concerned about the effectiveness of public procurement (Changalima et al., 2021). In Tanzania, the effectiveness of public procurement is questionable due to cases pertaining to usage of non-competitive procurement methods, paying for goods and services without being supplied, and high costs and delays (Maliganya, 2015; Matto, 2017; National Audit Office of Tanzania [NAOT], 2021). In examining this situation, previous studies have concentrated on professionalism of the procurement practitioners. Several researches have examined the effectiveness of public procurement in Tanzania in relation to professionalism (Mahonda, Mwonge, & Naho, 2022; Mrope, 2017). These studies are based on the idea that, professionalism entails the capability of procurement practitioners, which determines their actions and reactions in conducting procurement operations (Jaffu, 2023). In connection to previous studies, it is understood that, professionalism among procurement professionals can improve their capabilities which (according to human capital theory) can increase the effectiveness of procurement activities (Basheka & Mugabira, 2008; Mrope, 2017). On the other hand, according to Gibson (2004), and Thuy and Trinh (2020), on the basis of social learning theory, the level of employees' capability, hence performance can be determined by the learning they undergo during performance appraisal through performance feedback.

Nevertheless, the research findings on the relationship between performance appraisal and employee performance in different contexts are inconsistent. For instance, studies on employee from ministry of education (Binta et al., 2019), World Health Organization (WHO) (Mwema & Gachunga, 2014) and charitable organizations (Ugoani, 2020) concluded that, performance appraisal has significant positive influence on employee performance. Contrary, Ahmad and Shahzad (2011) and Subekti and Setyadi (2016) concluded that, the influence of performance appraisal among universities and government agencies is not significant. Moreover, Adeyeye and Victor (2021) found out that, the influence of performance appraisal on employee performance among insurance companies' employees is weak. However, the literature on the influence of performance appraisal on the employee performance in the context of procurement professionals is scant. Only a few studies examined the role of performance appraisal on the performance of procurement function in general (Barsemoi et al., 2014; Jaffu & Changalima, 2023). Thus, the inconsistency of results in previous studies attracts further examination into the influence of performance appraisal on employee performance among procurement professionals, and the factor that might explain the inconsistency in that relationship.

Given the inconsistency in previous studies, it is conceivable that career development may play an important role in mediating the link between performance appraisal and the performance of procurement professionals. On this, previous studies have determined that, performance appraisal influences employee performance through performance feedback (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; London & Smither, 2002). However, performance feedback has multiple facets, including self-correction, motivation, comparison, and career development due to learning (Hardré, 2003; Russ-Eft, 2002). Nevertheless, the literature has further established that, career development is an aspect of performance feedback (London & Smither, 1995; Steelman et al., 2004). Interestingly, previous studies have ignored the role of career development (in isolation) on the relationship between performance appraisal and employee performance. Thus, insertion of career development in the analysis may throw light on the explanations for the disagreements in previous studies in other contexts. Hence, it is assumed that, by including career development as a mediator, a more complete understanding of the link between performance appraisal and employee performance in the context of procurement professionals in Tanzania can be obtained. Thus, this study intended to use social learning theory and human capital theory to determine mediating the role of career development on the link between performance appraisal and procurement professionals' performance in Tanzania.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Two theories, namely, social learning theory and human capital theory were used to guide the assumptions of the study due to the complexity nature and interplay between the key variables involved in this study.

Social learning theory was developed by Albert Bandura in 1960s. Learning is considered as relatively permanent change of individual's behaviour due to experience (Weinstein & Mayer, 1983). The theory of social learning is based on the assumption that, learning is observational (Bandura & Walters, 1977), in the sense that, persons change their behaviors by observing other persons (Bikhchandani et al., 1998). So, other elements of the theory (modelling and imitation, reinforcement and punishment, cognitive processes and self-regulation) have been developed on the basis of observation (Ferrari, 1996). Specifically, the observation is made possible through interactions with others in a social context. Being a behaviour, employee performance can be affected by the interface between the employee and supervisor (De Waal, 2004). One of the important social interactions in organizations involves employees and their immediate supervisors (Kilduff & Brass, 2010). This interaction takes place in different functions, including during performance appraisal (Levy & Williams, 2004). Importantly, in this interface, employees receive performance feedback from the supervisors from which modelling, imitation, reinforcement, punishment and self-regulation are based. Therefore, on the basis of social learning theory, performance appraisal practices aid employee performance in two ways. Firstly, by constructive performance feedback which enhances self-correction, skills and ability. Secondly, through motivation due to reinforcement (Hardré, 2003; Mani, 2002; Shea & Howell, 2000). The limitation of social learning theory is based on its failure to take in board individual differences, and biological and cultural contexts in explaining the concept of learning (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Bandura & Walters, 1977).

In the context of this study, it is assumed that, from the social interaction between employees (learners) and immediate supervisors (models) during performance appraisal, the employees' performance (behavior) will improve. On one hand, the improvement will directly be determined by self-correction and motivation. On the other hand, the influence of the interaction will lead to enhancement of employee skills and ability (career development). Therefore, the social learning theory falls short in analysing the interplay between performance appraisal, employee performance and career development as it does not explain the link between enhancement of career development and employee performance. Thus, human capital theory is used to analysis the missing link.

The human capital theory was developed by Theodore Schultz in 1960s, and later expanded by Gary Becker. Human capital refers to knowledge, skills, experience and attributes of persons that make them productive (Schultz, 1961). The theory assumes that human capital is accumulative in the sense that it can increase through learning (Becker, 1962). Moreover, it suggests that a more skilled and experienced employees can be more innovative and efficient (Lucas Jr, 1988). Thus, the theory has three major dimensions: education and training (learning) (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961), accumulation and development (Becker, 1964; Mincer, 1974), and productivity and innovation (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004). Thus, the idea behind human capital is that, employee knowledge, skills, experience and attributes can be acquired and enhanced through learning, and employees with enhancement knowledge, skills, experience and attributes becomes more productive. According to Coleman et al. (2015) enhancement of employee job related knowledge, skills, experience and attributes is an aspect of career development. The important elements of career developments attributes include confidence on the job, attitudes, and ability to handle challenges (Aggabao & Al-Moteiry, 2017; Murerwa, 2017; Pulakos, 2014). In the perspective of this study, the career development which attained through learning can determine employee performance (McCarthy & Garavan, 2001; Nasution et al., 2018). As such, the human capital theory is applicable in this study. Thus, the human capital theory provides valuable understanding about how career development and procurement professionals' performance relate. The theory is criticized for not taking into consideration social and cultural issues, the role of technology, measurement of human capital and non-financial outcomes (Schultz & Schultz, 1982; Stiglitz et al., 2009).

Hypotheses Development

Performance Appraisal and Career Development

Performance appraisal comprises of activities which can develop employees in their careers. Performance appraisal is responsible for enhancing employees' technical and personal qualities through periodic appraisal interviews and performance feedback as well as ongoing self-assessment and counselling by supervisors (Aggabao & Al-Moteiry, 2017; Pulakos, 2014). Thus, employee performance appraisal practices are directed towards learning, which in turn promotes employee quality with respect to skills, knowledge and job related attributes (Hardré, 2003). Career development is displayed through continuous newness of employees in terms of job related knowledge, skills and attributes (Serbes & Albay, 2017). Hence, career development can be determined by performance appraisal. According to Ljungholm (2017), performance appraisal practices generate employee confidence in executing their duties. Practically, the nature of the social interaction between employees and the immediate supervisors in performance appraisal brings about learning and development in terms of enhanced

knowledge, skills and ability (Mani, 2002). Therefore, performance appraisal practices give insights and inputs to employees that enable them reform their occupational quality in the current and future assignments (Hardré, 2003). In this perspective, performance appraisal practices are vital tools of career development. Therefore, career development among procurement professionals can be fostered through performance appraisal. So, this study is based on the assumption that:

H1: Performance appraisal has positive and significant influence on career development of procurement professionals.

Career Development and Employee Performance

Developing employees' careers is an ongoing process of enhancing employee's abilities (Dialoke & Wabara, 2017). It involves continuous efforts for fostering employees' abilities in the current and future requirements of the organization (Akkermans et al., 2015). A good career development programme can produce employees who are more capable of undertaking their duties (Osibanjo et al., 2014). Formal career development programmes, coaching, guidance, and counselling are all part of career development (Neary, 2016). These practices can enhance employee confidence, improve their capacity to handle challenges, and positively influence their attitude towards their jobs (Sturges et al., 2002). So, it is a human resource function which is responsible for upgrading human capital. Furthermore, career development practices generate job related experience which further leads to improved job performance (Lee et al., 2016). Therefore, this study assumes that, career development practices improve procurement professionals' performance. This assumption is the basis of the following hypothesis:

H2: Career development has positive and significant influence on performance of procurement professionals.

Performance Appraisal and Employee Performance

Appraisal of employee performance involves determining the value of employee job performance. The function involves periodic appraisal interviews, performance feedbacks, and on-going self-assessment (Aggabao & Al-Moteiry, 2017; Pulakos, 2014). This set of activities has a potential to improve employee performance. That is the case due to the inbuilt social interaction between employees and their immediate supervisors. In the course of this interaction, employees receive feedback about their performance (Russ-Eft, 2002). In line with social learning theory, such performance feedback forms a basis for improvement of employee performance due comparison and adaptation (Russ-Eft, 2002), and self-correction (Shea & Howell, 2000). However, several studies in the contexts of universities (Ahmad & Shahzad, 2011), and government agencies (Subekti & Setyadi, 2016) conclude that performance appraisal has no significant influence of employee performance. Moreover, Adeyeye and Victor (2021) in their study which involved employees from insurance companies, found that, the link between performance appraisal and employee performance is weak. On the other hand, in line with social learning theory, Mwema and Gachunga (2014) in their study which involved WHO employees conclude that, performance appraisal enhances employee performance. Similar conclusions have been reached in studies on central government employees (Binta et al., 2019) and charitable organizations' employees (Ugoani, 2020). Interestingly, studies of this nature are scant in the context of procurement professionals.

Previous studies on this areas only established a relationship between performance appraisal and performance of procurement function (Barsemoi et al., 2014; Jaffu & Changalima, 2023). Following the inconsistency in previous studies in varying contexts, on the basis of social learning theory, this attempted to examine if performance appraisal influences the performance of procurement professionals. Hence, the current study is based on the assumption that:

H3: Performance appraisal has positive and significant influence on the performance of procurement professionals.

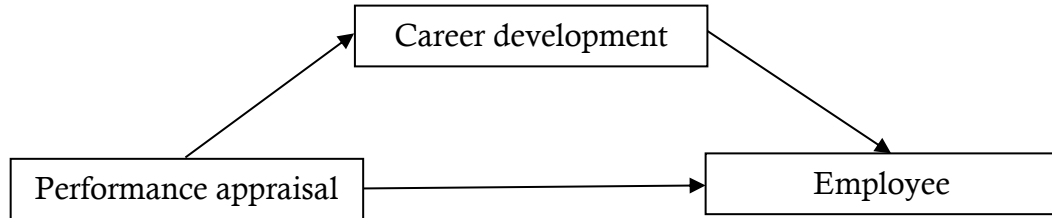
Role of Career Development

It has been established among employee of WHO, ministries and charitable organizations that performance appraisal has positive influence on employee performance (Binta et al., 2019; Mwema & Gachunga, 2014; Ugoani, 2020). Performance appraisal practice is characterized with social interaction between employees and their immediate supervisors (Kilduff & Brass, 2010). Through this interaction employees are provided with performance feedback, which fosters their job performance (Hardré, 2003; Mani, 2002). Though, the findings from other studies on employees of government agencies, universities and insurance companies do not endorse this conclusion (Adeyeye & Victor, 2021; Ahmad & Shahzad, 2011; Subekti & Setyadi, 2016). The literature on the link between performance appraisal and performance of procurement professionals is scant. The available studies establish only the relationship between performance appraisal practices and procurement function in general (Barsemoi et al., 2014; Jaffu & Changalima, 2023). Thus, the inconsistency of findings in previous studies invites further examination on the mechanism through which performance appraisal and performance can relate, basing on the experience from procurement professionals. According to Hardré (2003), performance appraisal through performance feedback enhances employee job related knowledge, skills and attributes, which are aspects of career development. On the other hand, according to human capital theory, enhanced human capital (knowledge, skills and attributes) is associated with increased employee productivity (Lucas Jr, 1988). This assertion is consistent with the findings by (Niati et al., 2021a; Nkechi & Dialoke, 2017). In this sense, performance appraisal can influence career development, which in turn, may improve employee performance.

In line with this, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) found out that, the effectiveness of performance feedback intervenes the link between performance appraisal and employee performance results. Similarly, London and Smither (2002) ascertain that, performance appraisal solves performance problems through performance feedback. Thus, the literature establishes that, performance appraisal influences employee performance through performance feedback. Remarkably, performance feedback has multiple implications, including motivation, self-correction, comparison and learning. On the basis of social learning theory, performance feedback is an aspect of career development due to its learning elements. Furthermore, it has been established that, career development improves employee performance (Lee et al., 2016). Despite the contribution of previous studies, still they have not isolated the career development aspect of performance feedback as a possible mediator in the relationship between performance appraisal and performance of employees. Thus, this study is grounded on assumption that:

H4: Career development mediates the relationship between performance appraisal and performance of procurement professionals

Figure 1: Conceptual model



Methodology

This study is based in Tanzania, particularly in Dodoma city. The city was selected because it hosts a large volume of procuring organizations, which makes it information rich (Shakir, 2002) due to concentration of public procurement activities of varying levels and nature following to the transfer of government functions from Dar es Salaam in 2017. In this study, cross-sectional survey design was employed. Cross-sectional design was used because the study intended to capture, analyse and established the relationships between performance appraisal (independent variable), career development (moderator), and procurement professionals' performance (dependent variable) at the one point of time. Cross-section design was adequate because the procurement professionals' performance was captured through their opinions on their performance at the time when data were collected (DeNisi & Kluger, 2000). On the other hand, in applying survey design, data were quantitatively collected on a Likert scale of five dimensions which was distributed to a representative sample. In establishing the relationship between performances appraisal, career development and procurement professionals' performance, data were analysed quantitatively by using Structural Equation Model (SEM).

Priori sample size calculator for SEM proposed by Soper (2020) was applied to determine the sample size. It is an online application for determining the minimum sample size for studies that use SEM (Memon et al., 2020). It was used in this study because it was possible to determine the number of variables (latent and observable), anticipated effect, desired statistical power as well as p value (Memon et al., 2020). Moreover, the technique was appropriate in this study because the researcher could not establish the specific population in the study location from which the sample could be determined by using other formulas. The technique has been applied in several studies including (Valaei & Jiroudi, 2016). The calculator produced a minimum sample of 123. The calculator considered latent variables (3), observed variables (11), the anticipated effect (0.5), statistical power (0.8), and p value (0.05). Thus, any sample size above 123 is adequate. In this sense, 204 respondents used in this study are enough since the priori sample size calculator for SEM only provides the lowest acceptable sample size. Furthermore, the sample of 204 is suitable for SEM studies as it exceeds the minimum requirement of 116 (Kline, 1998). The participants were randomly selected from various public organizations situated in Dodoma city, and data were collected from October 2022 to December 2022. Only the procurement professionals who are registered with procurement professional board were involved.

A structured questionnaire was used to gather data from procurement professionals. The questionnaire was self-administered. It was designed on the basis of the study’s variables, namely, performance appraisal, career development and employees’ (public procurement professionals) performance. Items from previous studies by Otoo and Mishra (2018), Otoo et al. (2019), Ramos-Villagrasa, Barrada, Fernández-Del-Río, & Koopmans (2019) and Sturges et al. (2002) were used for capturing these variables after being adopted and revised to suit the context of this study.

This study involved three main variables: performance appraisal, career development, and procurement professionals' performance. In measuring performance appraisal, four items adapted from (Otoo & Mishra, 2018; Otoo et al., 2019) were used. Career development was measured using four items previously used by (Otoo & Mishra, 2018; Otoo et al., 2019), as well as (Sturges et al., 2002). Moreover, three items were used to measure procurement professionals’ performance as adopted from (Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019) (*see Appendix A*). All items used in this study are adopted from previous researches, thus they have already been validated.

Pre-testing of questionnaire is a means of improving reliability of the tool (Hashim et al., 2022). Before actual data collection, pre-testing of the questionnaire. It was pre-tested to four procurement experts; two were academicians and the other two were procurement practitioners. Then, the tool was re-examined and improved to fit the context of the study. Additionally, Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients were applied to ensure internal consistency and construct reliability. Internal consistency and construct reliability are considered to be ensured when coefficients of Cronbach’s Alpha are not less than 0.7 (Taber, 2018). From the results (*see Table 1*), each coefficient of Cronbach’s Alpha is in the acceptable limit.

Table 1: Factor Loadings, AVE, Cronbach’s Alpha and Construct Reliability

Items	Factor loadings	AVE	Cronbach's alpha	Construct reliability
Performance appraisal		.677	.891	.893
PAP1	.793			
PAP2	.888			
PAP3	.868			
PAP4	.733			
Career development		.555	.832	.833
CDV1	.765			
CDV2	.780			
CDV3	.734			
CDV4	.699			
Employee performance		.694	.852	.870
EPF1	.856			
EPF2	.678			
EPF3	.943			

The study analysed convergent validity by calculating every construct’s Average Variance Extracted (AVE) through the indicators’ outer loadings, following the technique put forward by (Afthanorhan, 2013; Hair Jr et al., 2017). Table 1 presents that the AVE values of each construct are within the acceptable limit of 0.5 (Chau, 1996). Fornell-Larcker criterion was applied in determining discriminant validity. Fornell-Larcker criterion requires that each construct’s AVE must be large than the joint variance of any two constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). From the results (*see Table 2*), the AVE values are greater than the square of the inter-correlations, confirming the discriminant validity.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

	CR	AVE	PAP	CDV	EPF
PAP	.893	.677	.823		
CDV	.833	.555	.249	.745	
EPF	.870	.694	.451	.310	0.833

To ensure reliable and valid results, the study utilized Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) which is an important component of CB-SEM, together with Hayes' PROCESS for analysing the mediation. Before path analysis, CFA was conducted. Meanwhile, Hayes' PROCESS mediation analysis was done to analyse the link between performance appraisal and procurement professionals’ performance while also determining the role of career development on the influence of performance appraisal on procurement professionals’ performance.

Results

To examine the study variables, a CFA was initially performed. The findings reveal that all items effectively measure the study's latent constructs, as indicated by factor loadings above 0.5 (Sujati & Akhyar, 2020). Furthermore, the model fit indices demonstrate good fit, with GFI (0.941), NFI (0.940), RFI (0.919), IFI (0.972), TLI (0.962), CFI (0.972), RMSE (0.063), X² (74.292), df (41) and X²/df (1.812) at p<0.05. In the second step, PROCESS macro mediation analysis was conducted for testing the hypothesized relationships. Table 3 presents the study findings. The study determined whether career development can mediate the relationship between performance appraisal and procurement professionals’ performance. Before reaching to that, it attempted to establish the relationships between: performance appraisal and career development, career development and employee performance, and performance appraisal and employee performance.

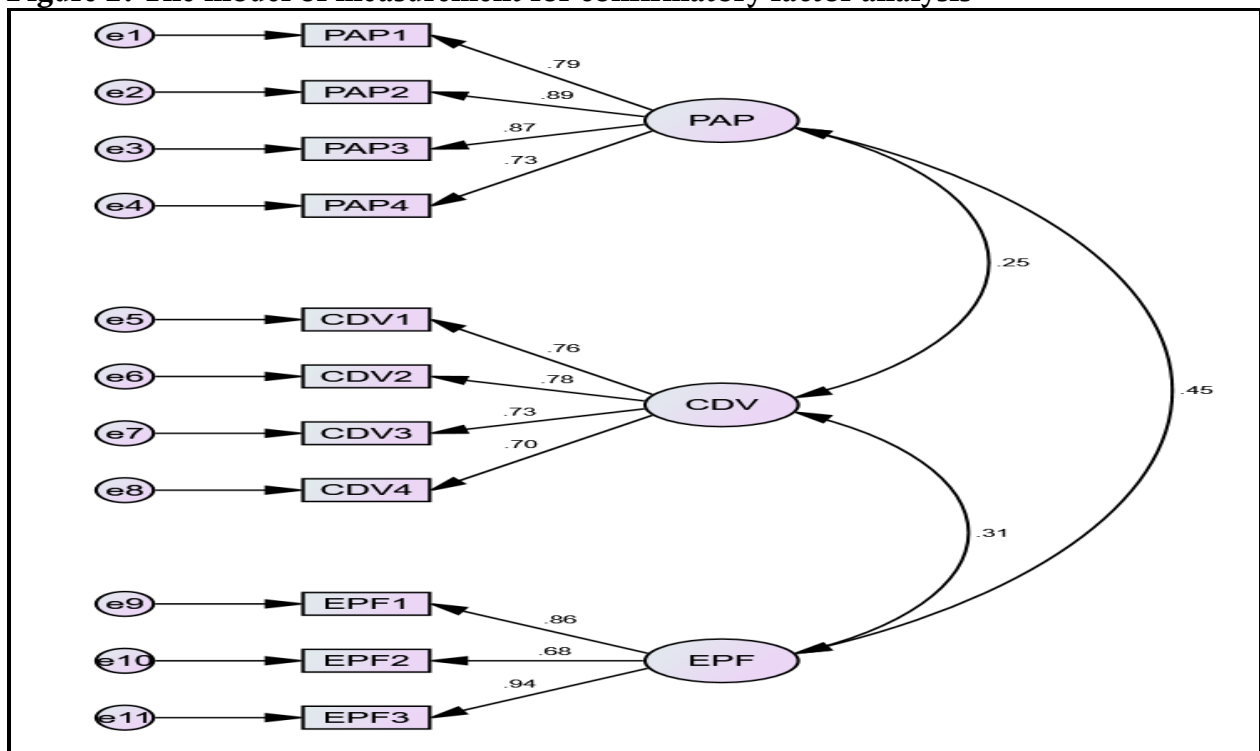
Table 3: The direct and indirect effects

Variables	Direct effect	SE	T	P	LLCI	UPCI
PAP→CDV	.1973	.0649	3.0416	.0027	.0694	.4445
PAP→EPF	.3980	.0682	5.8313	****	.2634	.5326
CDV→EPF	.2667	.0724	3.6836	.0003	.1239	.4094
	Indirect effect	BootSE			BootLLCI	BootUPCI
CDV	.0526	.0238			.0125	.1053

Note: ****p < 0.01, PAP – Performance appraisal, CDV – Career development and EPF – Employee performance.

From the results in Table 3, performance appraisal has significant positive influence on career development of procurement professionals ($\beta = 0.1973$, $p = 0.0027$), supporting H1. This suggests approximately 19.73% of the changes in career development among procurement professionals is explained by performance appraisal. Moreover, regarding the influence of career development on procurement professionals' performance, the results support H2. This means that, career development positively and significantly influences procurement professionals' performance ($\beta = 0.2667$, $p = 0.0003$). The results suggest that 26.67% of the procurement professionals' performance can be explained by career development. The results further show that, performance appraisal positively and significantly influences the procurement professionals' performance ($\beta = 0.3980$, $p = 0.000$), which supports H3. Based on these findings, performance appraisal explains 39.8% of the variation in procurement professionals' performance.

Figure 2: The model of measurement for confirmatory factor analysis



Finally, the study utilized the PROCESS macro mediation to determine if career development mediates the relationship between performance appraisal and procurement professionals' performance (H4). Table 3 presents both the direct and indirect effects from simple mediation model. The findings indicate that, performance appraisal significantly and positively influences career development ($\beta = 0.1973$, $p = 0.0027$). Moreover, the findings show that, there is significant positive relationship between performance appraisal and procurement professionals' performance of ($\beta = 0.3980$, $p = 0.000$). Also, there is significant positive relationship between career development and procurement professionals' performance ($\beta = 0.2667$, $p = 0.0003$). Additionally, the bootstrap at 95% confidence intervals do not include zero values between the lower and upper limits (0.0125 to 0.1053). Furthermore, the product of coefficients of the independent variable to mediator (0.1973) and mediator to dependent

variable (0.2667) equals to the coefficient of indirect relationship (0.0526). Thus, supporting H4 that, career development mediates the link between performance appraisal and procurement professionals' performance.

Discussion

The results (in Table 3) that, performance appraisal has significant positive influence on career development of procurement professionals suggest that improving performance appraisal practices can foster career development of procurement professionals. It means, improving performance appraisal interviews and feedbacks as well as self-assessment and counselling by supervisors enhance procurement professionals' career development with knowledge, skills and ability as well as job related attributes. These findings support social learning theory that, the social interaction in performance appraisal enhances employees ability through learning from the supervisor (Hardré, 2003; Mani, 2002). Additionally, the results confirm that, the condition for mediation which requires the independent variable (performance appraisal) to have a positive significant relationship with the mediator (career development) is attained (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2017). Moreover, these findings correspond with those of Ljungholm (2017), Aggabao and Al-Moteiry (2017), Pulakos (2014), Hardré (2003), and Serbes and Albay (2017) who conclude that performance appraisal practices improve employee performance confidence, shape employee attitudes and improve employee job related knowledge and skills. However, previous studies were based on other contexts than public procurement professionals.

Moreover, from results (in Table 3), career development has positive significant influence on procurement professionals' performance. These finding suggests that public procuring entities can enhance their procurement professionals' ability to complete their tasks on time, perform their tasks efficiently, and develop creative solutions to their work challenges through enhancement of knowledge, skills and ability as well as job related attributes (career development). These findings are consistent with the idea that career development practices improve human capital (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961) through enhancing employees' ability to carry out their job responsibilities effectively. Moreover, the results signify that career development meets the condition for mediation, which requires the mediating variable (career development) to have positive significant relationship with the dependent variable (employee performance) (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2017). Previous studies (Osibanjo et al., 2014; Sturges et al., 2002) have also concluded that career development improves job performance, but they did not examine the relationship between career development and performance among procurement professionals.

Furthermore, the results (in Table 3) support H3 that, performance appraisal positively and significantly influences the procurement professionals' performance. This means, improving performance appraisal practices can enhance the ability of procurement professionals to complete their work on time, carry out their tasks efficiently, and come up with creative solutions to problems. These results are in line with social learning theory that, performance appraisal feedback obtained by employees when they interact with their superiors during performance appraisal enables employees to improve their performance through comparison, adaptation and self-correction (Russ-Eft, 2002; Shea & Howell, 2000). Moreover, the results are in line with the conclusions of past studies in different contexts such as Binta et al. (2019)

who studied central government employees, Mwema and Gachunga (2014) who involved WHO employees and Ugoani (2020) who studied employees of charitable organizations. Nevertheless, contrary to social learning theory, other studies which involved employees from universities (Ahmad & Shahzad, 2011) and government agencies concluded that, the influence of performance appraisal on employee performance is not significant. Moreover, Adeyeye and Victor (2021) who studied employees of insurance companies, found out that, the relationship between the variables is weak.

Therefore, previous studies produced conflicting results. However, they are grounded on motivation perspective (goal-setting and reinforcement) of performance appraisal while the current study is based on social learning theory. Also, the current study involved employees (procurement professionals) whose work is performed in a different setting than the previous studies. Thus, the current study utilizes social learning theory to contribute to the existing literature by supporting the conclusion that, performance appraisal influences employee performance in the context of procurement professionals in Tanzania. However, in order to explain the inconsistency in past studies, it is imperative to determine if there are other factors which can mediate the link between performance appraisal influences employee performance.

Finally, the findings are in line with H4 that, career development mediates the influence of performance appraisal on employee performance. From the results (in Table 3), career development meets the condition of mediation because it is influenced by the independent variable (performance appraisal) and it influences the dependent variable (employee performance) (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2017). However, it has partial mediation effect because results show that the dependent variable (employee performance) is directly influenced by the independent variable (performance appraisal) (Rucker et al., 2011). This means, some of the influence of performance appraisal on the procurement professionals' performance is explained by career development. This understanding contributes to social learning theory that, while part of the influence of the social interaction (in performance appraisal) affects employee performance directly, some of it enhances career development, which in turn affects employee performance due to enhancement of employee ability as suggested by human capital theory.

Despite the scarcity of literature on this theme, the findings of the current study correspond to the conclusions of several previous studies. For example, Kluger and DeNisi (1996) who concluded that, performance feedback mediates the associations between performance appraisal and employee performance outcomes. Moreover, London and Smither (2002) established that, performance appraisal's feedback addresses employee performance problems. Apart from the value of these studies, they did not consider what performance feedback does with respect to enhancement employees' ability, which then improves their performance. So, the current study extends the existing literature (on the basis social learning theory) by focusing on career development aspect of appraisal feedback. Therefore, the study provides important insights into the role of career development in mediating the influence of performance appraisal on procurement professionals' performance in Tanzania.

The findings of this study contributes to the literature of human resource development in different ways. Specifically, the existing literature presents inconsistent conclusions regarding the relationship between performance appraisal and employee performance in different

contexts. Thus, this study's results contribute by adding career development as a factor which partly explain the inconsistency in the existing literature, by using the experience from procurement professionals in Tanzania. Moreover, the existing literature has established that, performance feedback provides the link between performance appraisal and employee performance, without considering the specific aspect of performance feedback which provide that link. So, the results of this study extends that knowledge by providing that, career development aspect of performance feedback mediates the relationship between performance appraisal and the performance of procurement professionals.

Finally, due to the social interactions and learning components of performance appraisal, the existing literature uses social learning theory to explain the relationship between performance appraisal and employee performance. This study supports the theory, but it adds that, the influence of learning (from performance appraisal) on employee performance goes through career development. This means, the learning due to performance appraisal enhances career development in terms of improved employee ability. According to human capital theory, it's the enhanced employee ability which influences employee performance. So, this study combines the two theories (social learning theory and human capital theory) to explain how performance appraisal is linked with employee performance through career development.

Based on the findings of the present study, procurement professionals should actively and seriously take part in performance appraisal process to advance in their careers and improve their performance. Also, managers of public procuring entities ought to make sure that performance appraisal process for procurement professionals is improved by considering all the learning potentials of the process. Additionally, the management of public procuring entities must create an atmosphere which can encourage procurement professionals to take active part in the performance appraisal process. From the findings of the current study, procurement professionals should also be ready to take part in various career development initiatives in the organizations. Similarly, managements of public organizations are supposed to ensure that career development programmes of the required standards are in place.

Conclusions

This study examined the relationship between performance appraisal, career development, and procurement professionals' performance in Tanzania. It attempted to determine whether the link between performance appraisal and procurement professionals' performance takes place through career development. The results suggest that both performance appraisal and career development are determinants of procurement professionals' performance in Tanzania, and that, part of the relationship between performance appraisal and procurement professionals' performance takes place through career development. These findings are consistent with previous studies conducted in different settings, indicating that performance appraisal and career development are essential tools for improving employee performance, including among procurement professionals. Therefore, the study adds to our understanding on the interplay between performance appraisal, career development, and employee performance in the Tanzanian context of procurement professionals.

The study is based on one country (Tanzania). It also involved procurement professionals working in only one city (Dodoma). The sample size was determined using a sampling

calculator proposed by Soper (2020). Moreover, the study used cross-sectional design, where all data were collected and analyzed quantitatively. Data were collected by using self-administered questionnaire. The study included only three variables, namely, performance appraisal, career development, and employee performance which was measured using the general items of employee performance. Performance appraisal was considered in terms of performance interviews and feedback while career development was conceptualized in terms of enhancement of employees' quality with respect to knowledge, skills and ability and attributes.

On the basis of the limitations of this study, other researches on this theme can be conducted to include procurement professionals from a larger geographical area so as to add variety. Moreover, future studies of this nature may use mixed methods approach so as to capture the qualitative experience on performance appraisal, career development and procurement professional's performance. This will add more insights to the topic. Additionally, other researchers may apply longitudinal design so as to capture the evolving nature of the variables, especially career development and employee performance. Furthermore, further studies in this area may consider to use performance measurements which are specifically reflect the nature the procurement duties. Lastly, future studies may use other factors to mediate the link between performance appraisal and employee performance. Specially, they may consider to use such factors like job satisfaction, self-efficacy and perception towards organizational fairness.

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