



Effect of the Accountability Appraisal Process on Public Institutions' Performance at Kilolo District Council

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of the accountability appraisal process on public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council. A mixed research approach using a cross-sectional research design was adopted. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 116 employees and semi-structured interviews conducted with five key informants. Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26 through frequencies, percentages and mean scores, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings showed that the accountability appraisal process improved communication of performance expectations, strengthened supervisory follow-up, enhanced employee responsibility and supported the achievement of institutional targets. The appraisal process also supported alignment between employees' assigned duties, performance targets and institutional goals, thereby improving teamwork, coordination and achievement of planned activities. The study concluded that the accountability appraisal process positively affected public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council by strengthening employee responsibility, performance monitoring and alignment of individual performance with institutional goals. The study recommends strengthening accountability in the appraisal process through regular communication of performance expectations, continuous supervisory follow-up, proper documentation and implementation of appraisal decisions, and regular alignment of employee performance with institutional objectives.

Keywords: Accountability appraisal process; Public institutions' performance; Performance appraisal; Employee accountability; Kilolo District Council.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Accountability in the performance appraisal process is important for strengthening public institutions' performance because it links employees' responsibilities, performance expectations and institutional results. OECD (2024) reported that performance appraisal and accountability mechanisms help public institutions assign responsibilities, monitor performance and maintain standards of service delivery. Effective performance management also aligns employees' actions with organisational goals and supports transparent communication of performance information, which strengthens accountability (OECD, 2025). This shows that accountability in the appraisal process is not limited to assessing employees but also involves clear responsibilities, performance monitoring, feedback and use of appraisal information to improve institutional results.

In Africa, public institutions have continued to strengthen performance management and accountability mechanisms to improve service delivery and employee performance. OECD (2024) noted that clear responsibilities and performance monitoring are important for holding public officials accountable for institutional objectives. However, the contribution of appraisal systems to institutional performance depends on regular monitoring, clear performance targets and the use of appraisal information in management decisions. This suggests that an appraisal process that does not provide adequate follow-up and accountability may have limited contribution to institutional performance. The relationship between accountability during appraisal and institutional performance therefore remains important in understanding how public employees' performance contributes to achievement of organisational objectives.

In Tanzania, performance appraisal in the public service has developed from the Open Performance Review and Appraisal System (OPRAS) to the Public Employees Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS). The Government introduced PEPMIS to improve the management and monitoring of public employees' performance and institutional performance (Office of the President, Public Service Management and Good Governance, 2024). However, the Controller and Auditor General reported weaknesses during the transition from OPRAS to PEPMIS, including gaps in performance monitoring and weaknesses in the use of performance information (Controller and Auditor General [CAG], 2024). The Government has continued to emphasise PEPMIS as a mechanism for monitoring employees' performance and accountability in public institutions (Office of the President, Public Service Management and Good Governance, 2025). At Kilolo District Council, the accountability appraisal process was therefore important because employee performance, supervisory follow-up, appraisal decisions and alignment of individual responsibilities with institutional objectives were expected

to contribute to public institutional performance. However, limited empirical evidence was available on how the accountability appraisal process affected public institutions' performance at the Council, creating the need for the present study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Public institutions are expected to use performance appraisal processes to strengthen employee accountability and improve institutional performance. In Tanzania, reforms in public-sector performance management have included the transition from the Open Performance Review and Appraisal System (OPRAS) to the Public Employees Performance Management Information System (PEPMIS), with the aim of strengthening performance monitoring and accountability (URT, 2025; CAG, 2025). However, the existence of appraisal systems does not automatically ensure effective accountability, particularly where performance expectations, supervisory follow-up, appraisal decisions and alignment of individual responsibilities with institutional goals are not adequately implemented. At Kilolo District Council, there was limited empirical evidence on how the accountability appraisal process affected public institutions' performance. This created a knowledge gap on whether accountability practices within the appraisal process contributed to employee responsibility and achievement of institutional targets. Therefore, this study assessed the effect of the accountability appraisal process on public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

This study was guided by Goal-Setting Theory developed by Locke and Latham (1990), which explains that clear and specific goals, regular feedback and commitment to agreed targets influence individual performance. The theory is relevant to the accountability appraisal process because clear performance expectations allow employees to understand their responsibilities, while regular monitoring and feedback strengthen accountability for achieved results. Locke and Latham (2019) further emphasise that effective goals should be clearly defined, measurable and linked to desired performance outcomes. In this study, the theory provided a basis for explaining how clear performance expectations, supervisory follow-up, feedback and alignment of individual responsibilities with institutional goals within the appraisal process could contribute to improved public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Empirical evidence shows that accountability within performance appraisal processes is important for improving performance in public institutions. Aleksovska (2021) found that clearly specified accountability standards influenced decision-making behaviour in public-sector settings, demonstrating the importance of clear expectations in strengthening responsible performance. In Tanzania, Nduye and Massae (2021) found weaknesses in the use of performance appraisal results for management decisions, particularly in relation to accountability and improvement of organisational performance. Michael (2019) further found that employee performance measurement had a significant positive relationship with accountability in public-sector governance, while OPRAS was positively related to transparency and accountability. More recent evidence from Tanzania showed that performance appraisal systems improved clarity of targets, feedback, transparency, responsibility and alignment between individual tasks and organisational goals (Sikira & Sharma, 2026). However, the available studies have mainly examined general performance appraisal systems or digital performance management rather than the specific effect of the accountability appraisal process on public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council. This gap justified the present study.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The approach enabled the researcher to collect numerical data on the accountability appraisal process and public institutions' performance, while also obtaining detailed views and experiences from key management officials at Kilolo District Council. A cross-sectional research design was used, where data were collected from respondents at a single point in time. This design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to assess the effect of the accountability appraisal process on public institutions' performance while obtaining detailed explanations concerning performance appraisal, accountability, supervisory follow-up and alignment of individual performance with institutional goals.

3.2 Area of the Study

This study was carried out at Kilolo District Council in Iringa Region, Tanzania. The Council performs administrative and service delivery functions in areas including health, education, agriculture and local administration. The area was selected because the accountability appraisal process was implemented through the public employee performance management framework and the Council provided a suitable setting for examining employee performance, accountability and institutional performance. The area therefore provided an appropriate setting for assessing the effect of the accountability appraisal process on public institutions' performance.

4. Population and Sampling

4.1 Population

The population for this study consisted of 164 public employees at Kilolo District Council whose performance was managed and appraised through the public employee performance management framework. The study also included five key management officials responsible for employee performance management, institutional planning, information technology, finance and administrative supervision. These key informants were included because they had relevant knowledge and experience concerning performance appraisal, accountability, institutional planning and employee performance.

Sampling

This study employed simple random sampling and purposive sampling. Simple random sampling was used to select 116 employees from the population of 164 employees, giving each eligible employee an equal chance of participating in the study. Purposive sampling was used to select five key management officials because they had relevant knowledge and responsibilities related to employee performance management and institutional operations. Therefore, the study involved a total of 121 participants, comprising 116 employees and five key management officials.

Data Collection Instruments

Structured questionnaires were administered to 116 selected employees to collect information on the accountability appraisal process and public institutions' performance. The questionnaire covered information related to transparency in the appraisal process, accountability in the appraisal process, alignment of individual performance with institutional goals and public institutions' performance. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five key management officials to obtain detailed information concerning performance appraisal, supervisory practices, accountability and the alignment of employee performance with institutional goals. The use of questionnaires and interviews enabled the study to obtain both numerical and descriptive information relevant to the study.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were coded, entered and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were used to summarise responses concerning the accountability appraisal process and public institutions' performance. Qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews were organised, coded and grouped into themes based on the study objectives and presented narratively to complement the quantitative findings.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles to protect the rights, privacy and welfare of participants. An introductory letter was obtained from the University of Iringa, while permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant authorities at Kilolo District Council. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed about the purpose of the study before data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and respondents were free to withdraw from the study without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by avoiding the use of participants' names and using identification codes where necessary. Information collected from participants was securely stored and used only for academic purposes.

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Effect of Accountability in the Appraisal Process on Public Institutions' Performance

This section presents the findings related to the second specific objective, which sought to assess the effect of accountability in the appraisal process on public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council. The assessment focused on key accountability practices, including adherence to agreed performance targets, supervisory follow-up, documentation and implementation of appraisal decisions, implementation of performance improvement actions, and the contribution of supervisory follow-up to service improvement. These accountability practices were examined in relation to public institutions' performance, particularly service delivery, achievement of planned targets, timely implementation of appraisal decisions, performance improvement and overall service improvement. Quantitative findings are presented using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative findings obtained from interviews with managers are used to explain and support the quantitative results. Responses from the open-ended questions are also incorporated to provide respondents' experiences and explanations regarding the observed findings. The findings are presented according to each accountability indicator to provide a comprehensive understanding of how accountability within PEPMIS contributes to improving public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council.

Table 4.1: Effect of Accountability in the Appraisal Process on Public Institutions' Performance

Accountability in the Appraisal Process	Response Category	Frequency	Percent (%)
Agreed performance targets and service delivery	Less than 20%	5	4.3
	20–39%	10	8.6
	40–59%	2	1.7
	60–79%	68	58.6
	80–100%	31	26.7
	Total	116	100.0
Supervisory follow-up and planned target completion	Never	36	31.0
	Once per year	65	56.0
	Twice per year	5	4.3
	Quarterly	5	4.3
	Monthly or more	5	4.3
	Total	116	100.0
Documentation of appraisal decisions and implementation	More than 6 months	8	6.9
	3–6 months	13	11.2
	1–3 months	7	6.0
	Within 1 month	43	37.1
	Within 2 weeks	45	38.8
	Total	116	100.0
Performance improvement actions implemented	None	11	9.5
	1–2 actions	18	15.5
	3–5 actions	5	4.3
	6–8 actions	58	50.0
	More than 8 actions	24	20.7
	Total	116	100.0
Supervisory follow-up and service improvement	Less than 20%	9	7.8
	20–39%	54	46.6
	40–59%	3	2.6
	60–79%	28	24.1
	80–100%	22	19.0
	Total	116	100.0

Source: Field Data (2026)

4.1.1 Agreed Performance Targets and Service Delivery

Table 4.1 shows that 58.6% (68) of the respondents indicated that between 60% and 79% of employees who met agreed performance targets also delivered services on schedule, while 26.7% (31) reported between 80% and 100%. In contrast, 8.6% (10) indicated between 20% and 39%, 4.3% (5) reported less than 20%, and 1.7% (2) indicated between 40% and 59%. The findings indicate that adherence to agreed performance targets has contributed to timely service delivery for many employees at Kilolo District Council. Responses from the open-ended question revealed that respondents who selected 60–79% and 80–100% explained that employees became more responsible because they clearly understood the targets agreed upon during the appraisal process and worked hard to achieve them. Respondents who selected the lower categories explained that failure to meet agreed targets was mainly associated with limited resources, changing work priorities and delays in obtaining approvals for some activities. The findings suggest that accountability

through adherence to agreed performance targets plays an important role in improving service delivery, although organisational challenges may affect the achievement of expected results.

The questionnaire findings were further explained through information obtained during interviews with managers. The Human Resource Officer explained that:

When employees agree on their targets with their supervisors, they know clearly what they are expected to do. This helps them arrange their work and give attention to activities that need to be completed first. We have seen that employees who follow the agreed targets are less likely to delay important activities. They also take more responsibility because they know that their performance will be checked against what was agreed. This has helped make service delivery more consistent in different departments. (Human Resource Officer, interview conducted at 9:45 a.m., 19 May 2026).

The Head of Planning and Coordination linked agreed targets with employee responsibility:

Employees take the work more seriously when they have discussed and agreed on their targets with their supervisors. They understand what they need to deliver and how their activities contribute to the work of the department. This makes it easier for supervisors to follow up because there is already an agreed basis for checking performance. It also reduces situations where employees say they did not know what was expected from them. In our experience, this has helped improve the consistency of service delivery. (Head of Planning and Coordination, interview conducted at 11:20 a.m., 2 June 2026).

The Head of Administration provided a different view by explaining the importance of working conditions:

Agreeing on targets is important, but employees also need the support to achieve what they have agreed to do. Sometimes staff are ready to work, but there are not enough working tools, transport, funds, or even enough people in the department. When that happens, an employee may fail to complete a target on time even though the person is committed to the work. We therefore try to identify these problems early and find ways to support the employees. Accountability works better when employees are given a fair chance and the necessary conditions to perform their duties. (Head of Administration, interview conducted at 2:15 p.m., 11 June 2026).

The findings from both the questionnaire and interviews indicate that agreed performance targets strengthen accountability by encouraging employees to take responsibility for achieving expected results. The open-ended responses further show that employees are more committed to timely service delivery when they understand and accept the performance targets agreed with their supervisors. The interview findings also demonstrate that accountability is strengthened when agreed targets are supported by adequate resources and continuous managerial support. These findings are consistent with Armstrong (2022), who argued that mutually agreed performance targets improve employee commitment and strengthen accountability within performance management systems. Similarly, Aguinis (2023) found that employees are more likely to achieve organizational objectives when performance expectations are agreed upon, clearly understood, and regularly monitored. Therefore, the findings demonstrate that accountability through agreed performance targets enhances the effect of PEPMIS in improving public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council.

4.1.2 Supervisory Follow-up and Planned Target Completion

Table 4.1 indicates that 56.0% (65) of the respondents reported that supervisory follow-up resulted in the completion of planned targets once per year, while 31.0% (36) indicated that supervisory follow-up never resulted in the completion of planned targets. Only 4.3% (5) of the respondents reported that supervisory follow-up was conducted twice per year, quarterly, or monthly or more. The dominance of the "once per year" response suggests that supervisory follow-up is largely concentrated during the annual performance appraisal rather than being undertaken continuously throughout the implementation period. Responses from the open-ended question revealed that annual follow-up helped employees review their overall performance, but it provided limited opportunities to identify challenges and make timely improvements before the appraisal cycle ended. Respondents who selected "never" explained that supervisors rarely monitored progress after assigning responsibilities, causing some employees to continue working without guidance until delays had already occurred. Those who reported more frequent follow-up stated that regular discussions with supervisors enabled employees to receive timely advice, solve work-related challenges and remain focused on achieving planned targets.

The survey results were further enriched by views obtained from managers during the interviews. The Human Resource Officer explained that:

Most supervisors meet employees formally during the annual appraisal, but that meeting is sometimes not enough to solve problems that come up during the year. Employees need to discuss their progress with supervisors more often so that difficulties can be identified early. When follow-up is done regularly, supervisors can see whether employees are moving towards their targets or falling behind. It also gives employees a chance to ask for help before a small problem becomes a bigger one. We still need to strengthen this kind of continuous follow-up in some departments. (Human Resource Officer, interview conducted at 10:40 a.m., 21 May 2026).

The Head of Planning and Coordination viewed supervisory follow-up as a form of support rather than inspection:

When I follow up with employees, I normally want to know what is helping them and what is making the work difficult. We talk about the problems and try to find a solution instead of just telling someone that the target has not been achieved. Employees are also more willing to explain their difficulties when they know that the discussion is meant to help them. This makes it easier to solve problems before they affect the planned activities. Regular follow-up has improved cooperation between supervisors and employees in our department. (Head of Planning and Coordination, interview conducted at 1:15 p.m., 5 June 2026).

The Head of Administration pointed to the workload of supervisors as another factor affecting follow-up:

Sometimes a supervisor has many responsibilities, so it is not easy to sit with every employee regularly. Because of this, some performance problems may only be noticed when the appraisal period is almost finished. More frequent follow-up would help supervisors know which employees need support and which activities are falling behind. It would also guide employees while there is still time to correct the situation. If we can improve regular follow-up, I believe more planned targets can be completed on time. (Head of Administration, interview conducted at 3:10 p.m., 10 June 2026).

Evidence generated from the survey, the open-ended responses and the interviews consistently shows that supervisory follow-up contributes to the completion of planned targets by providing employees with guidance, motivation and timely support. The predominance of annual follow-up demonstrates that accountability practices exist within the Council, but they are not yet frequent enough to maximise employee performance throughout the appraisal cycle. The qualitative findings further indicate that continuous follow-up allows supervisors to identify challenges early, provide practical solutions and strengthen employees' commitment to agreed responsibilities. These findings are consistent with Aguinis (2023), who argues that regular supervisory follow-up improves employee performance because challenges are identified and addressed before they affect organisational outcomes. Similarly, Armstrong (2022) reported that continuous monitoring and supportive supervision strengthen accountability and increase the likelihood of achieving planned organisational targets. Therefore, the findings indicate that increasing the frequency of supervisory follow-up would enhance the effect of PEPMIS and further improve public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council.

4.1.3 Documentation of Appraisal Decisions and Implementation

Table 4.1 shows that 38.8% (45) of the respondents indicated that implementation normally took place within two weeks after appraisal decisions were documented, while 37.1% (43) reported within one month. In comparison, 11.2% (13) stated that implementation took between three and six months, 6.9% (8) reported more than six months, and 6.0% (7) indicated between one and three months. The findings indicate that documentation of appraisal decisions has enabled timely implementation of agreed actions for many employees, with most actions being implemented within one month. Responses from the open-ended question revealed that respondents who selected within two weeks and within one month explained that documented appraisal decisions provided clear guidance on the actions to be taken, making it easier for supervisors and employees to begin implementation without unnecessary delays. Respondents who reported longer implementation periods stated that delays were mainly caused by budget limitations, lengthy administrative procedures, and dependence on approvals from higher authorities before some decisions could be implemented. These findings suggest that proper documentation strengthens accountability by providing a clear record of agreed actions, although organisational procedures may influence the speed of implementation.

The survey findings were complemented by views obtained from managers during the interviews. The Human Resource Officer explained that:

Writing down the decisions made during appraisal meetings helps both the supervisor and the employee remember what was agreed. When the information is recorded, it becomes easier to check later whether the agreed actions have been completed. Employees also understand better what they are expected to change after the appraisal. This has reduced some misunderstandings between supervisors and employees because both sides can refer to the same record. It has also made it easier to follow up on performance improvement actions. (Human Resource Officer, interview conducted at 9:15 a.m., 23 May 2026).

The Head of Planning and Coordination connected documentation with fairness in the appraisal process:

When appraisal decisions are properly recorded, we can use the same information when following up with different employees. A supervisor can explain why a particular action was agreed because there is a record to support the decision. Employees also feel more comfortable when they know that their performance is being assessed based on what was discussed and recorded. This has helped to build more trust between employees and supervisors. Good records therefore make it easier to implement the decisions that come from the appraisal. (Head of Planning and Coordination, interview conducted at 11:30 a.m., 6 June 2026).

The Head of Administration, however, emphasised that documentation needs to be followed by action:

Recording appraisal decisions is important, but the record itself does not improve performance. The important thing is to make sure that the actions agreed during the appraisal are actually implemented. Sometimes the decisions are well recorded, but implementation takes longer because of limited resources or other urgent activities. Supervisors therefore need to keep checking progress and support employees where necessary. When the recorded decisions are followed up until completion, they become useful in improving employee performance. (Head of Administration, interview conducted at 2:45 p.m., 12 June 2026).

Evidence obtained from the questionnaire, open-ended responses and interviews indicates that documentation of appraisal decisions strengthens accountability by providing clear guidance for implementing agreed performance improvement actions. The high proportion of respondents reporting implementation within two weeks and one month suggests that written appraisal decisions help employees and supervisors begin implementation promptly. The qualitative findings further demonstrate that proper documentation promotes fairness, reduces misunderstandings, and provides a reliable basis for monitoring implementation progress. These findings are consistent with Armstrong (2022), who argues that documenting appraisal outcomes strengthens accountability by ensuring that agreed actions are clearly recorded and monitored. Similarly, Aguinis (2023) reported that organisations achieve better performance when appraisal decisions are documented and translated into timely improvement actions through continuous follow-up. Therefore, the findings indicate that proper documentation of appraisal decisions enhances the effect of PEPMIS by strengthening accountability and improving public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council.

4.1.4 Performance Improvement Actions Implemented

Table 4.1 shows that 50.0% (58) of the respondents indicated that between six and eight performance improvement actions had been implemented following appraisal decisions during the past 12 months, while 20.7% (24) reported that more than eight actions were implemented. In comparison, 15.5% (18) indicated that one to two actions were implemented, 9.5% (11) reported that no action was implemented, and 4.3% (5) stated that three to five actions were implemented. The findings indicate that appraisal decisions have led to the implementation of several performance improvement actions in many departments. Responses from the open-ended question revealed that respondents who selected six to eight actions explained that supervisors regularly acted on appraisal recommendations by assigning responsibilities, monitoring progress, organising staff discussions, and addressing identified performance gaps. Those who reported more than eight actions stated that departments with stronger management support were able to implement a wider range of improvement activities because appraisal recommendations were treated as part of normal work planning. Respondents who selected few or no improvement actions explained that limited financial resources, staff shortages and delays in decision-making reduced the implementation of agreed appraisal actions. The findings suggest that accountability is strengthened when appraisal decisions are translated into practical actions that address identified performance challenges.

The quantitative findings were further explained by information obtained from managers during the interviews. The Human Resource Officer explained that:

After the appraisal, we normally identify the actions that need to be taken to improve performance. Some employees may need guidance, while others may need changes in how their work is organised. We do not want those recommendations to remain only in the appraisal records, so we follow up to see whether they have been acted upon. This has helped some departments improve the way they handle their daily activities. Employees also become more serious when they see that appraisal decisions can lead to actual changes at work. (Human Resource Officer, interview conducted at 10:10 a.m., 24 May 2026).

The Head of Planning and Coordination emphasised the learning that comes from implementing appraisal recommendations:

Employees learn more when the recommendations from appraisal are actually put into practice. They can correct mistakes, improve their skills, and find better ways of doing their work. We have seen some employees become more confident when they receive practical support instead of only being told what they did wrong. It also helps staff work together because they can share what they have learned. The important thing is to implement the agreed actions while there is still time to improve performance. (Head of Planning and Coordination, interview conducted at 1:40 p.m., 7 June 2026).

The Head of Administration emphasised the importance of management commitment in implementing appraisal decisions:

Sometimes there are many recommendations from the appraisal, but we cannot implement everything at the same time. We have to look at the available funds, number of staff, and other activities that need attention. We normally start with the recommendations that are most important for improving the work and service delivery. When management gives support and follows up on these actions, employees also take the improvement process more seriously. So, the appraisal is only useful when the decisions made from it are actually implemented. (Head of Administration, interview conducted at 3:05 p.m., 13 June 2026).

Information obtained from the questionnaire, open-ended responses and interviews consistently demonstrates that implementing performance improvement actions strengthens accountability by ensuring that appraisal decisions lead to practical changes in the workplace. The large proportion of respondents reporting six to eight or more implemented actions indicates that many departments use appraisal outcomes to improve employee performance and service delivery. The qualitative findings further reveal that continuous monitoring, management commitment and employee participation are important in turning appraisal recommendations into measurable improvements. These findings agree with Aguinis (2023), who noted that performance management systems become effective when appraisal outcomes are followed by concrete improvement actions that support employee development. Similarly, Armstrong (2022) argued that implementing agreed performance actions strengthens accountability because employees and supervisors become responsible for achieving measurable improvements after appraisal. Therefore, the findings indicate that implementation of performance improvement actions enhances the effect of PEPMIS in improving public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council.

4.1.5 Supervisory Follow-up and Service Improvement

Table 4.1 shows that 46.6% (54) of the respondents indicated that between 20% and 39% of service improvements resulted from supervisory follow-up, while 24.1% (28) reported between 60% and 79% and 19.0% (22) indicated between 80% and 100%. In comparison, 7.8% (9) reported less than 20%, whereas only 2.6% (3) indicated between 40% and 59%. The findings indicate that supervisory follow-up contributes to service improvement, although its contribution differs across departments. The dominance of the 20–39% category suggests that supervisory follow-up alone is not sufficient to achieve substantial service improvements because other factors such as employee commitment, availability of resources and teamwork also influence institutional performance. Responses from the open-ended question revealed that respondents who selected 60–79% and 80–100% explained that regular supervisory follow-up helped employees solve work-related challenges early, improve work quality and remain focused on agreed performance targets. Those who selected the lower categories stated that limited follow-up, shortage of supervisors and competing administrative responsibilities reduced the contribution of supervisory follow-up to service improvement.

The questionnaire findings were further supported by views obtained from managers during the interviews. The Human Resource Officer explained that:

When supervisors follow up with employees regularly, they can identify small problems before they become serious. Employees also get guidance while they are still doing the work instead of waiting until the appraisal period is over. This makes it easier to correct mistakes at the right time and maintain the quality of services. We have noticed that departments where supervisors keep in contact with employees tend to handle their activities better. Regular follow-up has therefore become an important part of our daily performance management. (Human Resource Officer, interview conducted at 9:55 a.m., 25 May 2026).

The Head of Planning and Coordination focused on how follow-up can support employees:

Employees feel more supported when a supervisor checks their progress and takes time to listen to their problems. When they receive practical advice, they are more willing to make changes because they know the supervisor is trying to help them. We have seen some employees improve after discussing their difficulties with their supervisors during follow-up. This has also helped improve the way services are provided in some departments. Good supervision is not just about checking whether work is done; it is also about helping employees do the work better. (Head of Planning and Coordination, interview conducted at 11:50 a.m., 8 June 2026).

The Head of Administration provided a different perspective by emphasizing the role of employees themselves:

Supervisors can give guidance, but employees also have to take responsibility for using that guidance. Sometimes we follow up regularly, but the improvement is still slow because an employee does not put the recommendations into practice. We get better results when supervisors and employees discuss the problem and agree on what each side needs to do. This creates responsibility for both the supervisor and the employee. When that cooperation is there, performance improves more consistently during the appraisal period. (Head of Administration, interview conducted at 2:30 p.m., 15 June 2026).

The evidence generated from the questionnaire, respondents' explanations and managers' interviews demonstrates that supervisory follow-up contributes to service improvement by providing employees with continuous guidance, motivation and opportunities to address performance challenges before they affect service delivery. Although the largest proportion of respondents indicated that supervisory follow-up accounted for only 20–39% of service improvements, the qualitative findings reveal that its influence becomes much greater when it is combined with employee commitment, adequate resources and effective teamwork. The interview findings further show that supportive supervision strengthens accountability by encouraging employees to improve their performance rather than simply monitoring their work. These findings are consistent with Armstrong (2022), who argued that supportive supervisory follow-up improves employee performance through continuous guidance and timely problem-solving. Likewise, Aguinis (2023) reported that organisations achieve better service outcomes when supervisors provide regular coaching, monitor employee progress, and encourage the implementation of performance improvement measures. Therefore, the findings indicate that supervisory follow-up is an important accountability practice that enhances the effect of PEPMIS in improving public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that the accountability appraisal process positively affected public institutions' performance at Kilolo District Council. The findings showed that clear performance targets, supervisory follow-up, timely documentation of appraisal decisions and implementation of performance improvement actions strengthened employee responsibility and supported the achievement of institutional targets. Regular supervisory follow-up also contributed to service improvement by helping employees identify and address work-related challenges, improve work quality and remain focused on agreed targets. However, the level of contribution differed across departments due to differences in employee commitment, availability of resources, teamwork and supervisory practices. The study concludes that strengthening accountability throughout the appraisal process is important for improving employee performance and achievement of institutional objectives.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that Kilolo District Council should strengthen the communication of agreed performance targets by ensuring that employees clearly understand their responsibilities and expected results. Supervisors should conduct regular follow-up on employee performance rather than waiting for the formal appraisal period. The Council should also ensure that appraisal decisions are properly documented and implemented within agreed timeframes so that identified performance issues receive timely attention. In addition, management should strengthen performance improvement actions by providing appropriate guidance, resources and support to employees. Supervisors should work closely with employees during follow-up to identify work-related challenges, provide practical guidance and monitor the implementation of agreed improvements. Finally, employee performance targets should remain aligned with institutional objectives to strengthen responsibility, coordination and achievement of planned activities.

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