

The Impact of Performance Appraisal Systems on Staff Productivity: A Study of Kwara State University, Nigeria

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Abstract

This research work examines the impact of performance appraisal systems on staff productivity of the Kwara State University Malete, Nigeria. This study employed a survey approach, whereby 272 academic staff members were selected through simple random sampling. This study examined three key components of performance appraisal: the feedback system, reward system, and goal setting. Questionnaires were administered and responses were analyzed using multiple regression techniques. The findings show that all three components are significantly and positively related to employee productivity. The feedback system had a moderate effect, and the reward system had the highest effect on productivity at 0.231, 0.623 significant at the 0.001 level, respectively. Goal-setting was also found to be positively related to productivity ($\beta = 0.192$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, the study concludes that there is a significant positive relationship between performance management practices embracing the sound feedback process, reward system, goal setting, and total employee output. The study recommended that feedback should be provided on a consistent basis, providing constructive feedback, constructing complete reward systems, and having realistic targets aligned with the objectives of the organization. Therefore, the results of this study add to the current literature on performance appraisal practices within academic contexts and offer management best-practice suggestions for enhancing staff performance in educational institutions.

Keywords:

performance appraisal, employee productivity, feedback systems

1 . Introduction

Performance appraisal, which is a critical pillar of human resource management, is critically important in determining the productivity of employees within today's structured organizations (Veenstra et al., 2020). This systematic evaluation process is used as a broad and complex approach to evaluating the performance of workers, as well as addressing methods of their improvement and development, which would ensure the general success and competitive position of an organization (Schleicher et al., 2019). Goal setting and strategy formulation stand out among the basic functions that relate performance appraisals to the levels of productivity among employees. This is specifically true when employees understand their objectives and how these relate to more extensive organizational objectives because the employees are more inclined to channel their aspirations towards accomplishing these goals with greater This alignment raises the level of purpose and self-motivation and thus results in significant output vigor (Pervaiz et al., 2021)



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This alignment raises the level of purpose and self-motivation and thus results in significant output improvements. Furthermore, defining SMART goals during the appraisal exercise gives employees a variety of ways to perform their tasks effectively and systematically track their performance (Tweedie et al., 2018). The best example is the restructuring of the goal-setting process, which is a critical component of performance appraisal and performance improvement systems and has highly rated benefits in increased employee performance and productivity (Gkizani & Galanakis, 2022).

Periodic appraisals also have the function of determining the various growth areas that employees need training in and acting as a spring board for learning and development. A strength of using this method of employee performance appraisal is that it allows organizations to identify where their staff needs to improve or develop a skill, and then ensure that the training and development interventions address these requirements in an efficient manner (Adamu et al., 2022). This approach to individuals, in addition to availing a better employee, also helps build a more productive workforce since people are developed to meet the existing needs of a business entity. With new skills, knowledge, and competence, human capital becomes more productive in its duties, can handle other responsibilities, and enhances organizational innovation and productivity (Wang & Shi, 2024).

However, the feedback aspect of performance appraisals has a significant and complex effect on employee productivity. Constructive feedback inspires workers and assists in their training of cognizing prospect blind spots towards their abilities and follies or ways of performing their obligations, hence recognizing the potential for shifts in their ways or methods of working (Yang et al., 2023). The prospect of regular discussions between managers and employees thus leads to a culture of improvement where a faithful worker critically assesses his efficiency and always looks forward to how he or she can do better. In addition, feedback and rewards for good performance largely contribute to morale, satisfaction, motivation, productivity, and organizational commitment, for which quality and sustained productivity must be the outcomes (Manzoor et al., 2021). Performance appraisals also provide the basis for some other crucial human resource decision-making processes that include promotion, or any increase in pay, bonuses, and other career development alternatives. Whenever employees are able to establish a causal relationship between performance and tangible organizational outcomes, they are highly motivated to perform their duties effectively and produce good results (Chen et al., 2023). It encourages employees to work harder, promotes fairness, and achieves high performance throughout the organization. In addition, it assists favorably in attracting and maintaining high performers by offering a defined framework for advancement, which is highly significant for the continuous generation of organizational productivity and success in the prolonged run (Caligiuri et al., 2024).

However, it needs to be understood that the role that performance appraisals play in increasing the productivity is heavily dependent with the way in which they are developed, put into practice and perceived by the employees. When conducted poorly, appraisals result in adverse effects, including reduced motivation, high levels of stress, loss of trust in management, and counterproductive work behaviors (van Woerkom & Kroon, 2020). Thus, for workplace appraisals provided to exert the most positive initial influence on productivity, organizations should ensure that the system complies with the requirements for fairness and transparency and is utilized for all the organization's employees. This covers matters such as the type of performance measures used in the appraisal, sufficient rater training to minimize bias, and making the entire process of performance appraisal acceptable and useful to volunteers (Tweedie et al., 2018).

1.1 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of performance appraisal on employee productivity with the following specific objectives:

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- i. To evaluate feedback system on employee productivity of academic staff at KWASU
 - ii. To investigate the impact of reward system on employee productivity of academic staff at KWASU
 - iii. To determine the impact of goal setting on employee productivity of academic staff at KWASU

2. Literature Review

2.1 Concept of Performance Appraisal

For simplicity, performance appraisal aims to evaluate how well employees perform their tasks and to support the goal achievement of the organization (Barbieri et al., 2021). This complex process consists of phrases such as goal-setting and performance expectations for an employee or group, performance appraisal, feedback, and developmental plans to achieve organizational strategy and promote improvement (Faozen & Sandy, 2024). There are a number of approaches to performance appraisal that may include the traditional approach, and regardless of the specific approach, the underlying principle remains consistent to help give direction in the appraisal and improvement of the performance of employees. This assessment is usually performed by comparing the performance of an employee against specific targets or goals through a mix of numeric measures and rank scales (Karim, 2024). The results of these appraisals are used to make different decisions on human resources, such as compensation that should be given to employees, promotions to give to employees, training that may be required by employees, and the career planning of employees (Thuy & Trinh, 2020). This is one of the key benefits of the performance appraisal concept because it aims to provide communication between subordinates and their superiors. Through the appraisal process, managers can discuss, explain, and influence expectations regarding employee performance, share their evaluations, and have conversations on performance and development needs and plans (Gnepp et al., 2020). This communication aspect is vital for the development of trust, employee engagement, and an organization's culture of feedback. In addition, performance appraisals are a tool in which high performers are rewarded and other employees are encouraged to match up by rewarding the right performance (Radu, 2023).

2.2 Feedback System

Any organization that wants to successfully manage performance cannot underestimate the role of feedback systems, which are tools used to give workers information regarding their performance, conduct, or behavior and their consequences in the organization (Caligiuri et al., 2024). A brief, clear, and actionable feedback system provides an ongoing valuable learning platform in which employees, supervisors, and team leaders can learn, grow, and constantly reflect on how to enhance their performance and achieve the organization's goals (Gkizani & Galanakis, 2022). Such systems can be organized and incorporated into performance management processes as official and strict development schemes. The three key factors that define the success of a feedback system are the bluntness of the information that it brings, the constructive nature of that information, and its balance. Since feedback is suited for improvement, the points of the message should seek to correct negative aspects while also finding it in their respective charges to complement positive traits (Karim, 2024). Hofmann et al. (2024) argues that feedback provided if it is to be specific, timely, behavioral feedback is likely to bring about positive changes in performance. However, the method in which feedback is presented has a significant influence on the process and the end results. Intentions made through constructive feedback that is delivered in an intimidating or dominating manner will not be accepted, but instead, the intentions that are made through constructive feedback constructively delivered, which will enhance the culture of the organization at a positive reception (Blake-Beard et al., 2021). Ever increasing, organizations today have adopted real-time and casual feedback as opposed to the traditional once-in-a-year evaluation method. This trend is known as continuous feedback or real-time feedback, and seeks to inform employees more frequently of their performance (Schröder-Hansen & Hansen, 2022). Such systems use technology to allow continuous communication between managers and subordinates, thereby enhancing timely performance management strategies.

2.3 Reward System

In management, reward systems are critical constructs within the organizational framework used to encourage and appreciate performance toward organizational goals and objectives (Zhenjing et al., 2022). Such systems involve a variety of mechanized and non-ordinary incentives, wages, awards, royalties, and privileges. Reward mechanisms ensure that employees produce high results in a way that demonstrates organizational objectives and creates optimal levels of staff commitment (Liu & Liu, 2022). Okwuise and Ndudi (2023) pointed out that the design and implementation of reward systems has a strong influence on employee motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational performance. The structure of reward systems usually involves two components: extrinsic and intrinsic. Intrinsic rewards can be understood as any positive result that employees receive from organizations or organizations reward employees in terms of money, recognition, status, or power that are associated with performance outcomes. Intrinsic rewards, hence, are psychological satisfaction that arises out of work, such as a feeling of accomplishment, acknowledgement, and promotion of employee growth (Wang & Shi, 2024). A blend of both has been proven to elicit the best performance among employees and simultaneously promote continued motivation (Veenstra et al., 2020). This is one of the essentials of reward system management, because if the system is not fair and transparent, it is impossible to manage.

2.4 Goal Setting

Setting goals is intrinsic to organizing and managing and is a robust tool for guiding employee endeavors and improving organizational and individual outcomes. Manzoor et al. (2021) postulate that in performance relations, specific and difficult goals surpass simple and/or easy goals, and it has been widely researched and used in organizations as it has a positive influence on motivation, focus, and the resulting performance, regardless of the nature of activities and organizational context (Ying, 2024). In part of the process of goal setting embraces, goals must be specific and, in a position, quantifiable so that workers have something to work for. In addition, goals should be particularly demanding, but not too difficult to demotivate people, and not too easy to bring any challenge out of them. Furthermore, goals should be congruent with organizational and role obligations to match personal actions and organizational strategies. Moreover, goals must be set with time limitations to ensure that there is pressure for achievement, and timelines for achieving the set goals can easily be monitored (Pervaiz et al., 2021). It defines goals and aims and does not end there, as well as the management and facilitation of these goals. This establishes touchpoints to give constant feedback on the progress, modifying the goals periodically because of the dynamic environment, and ensuring that the employees are equipped adequately with what is required of them to hit their objectives (Chen et al. 2023). Moreover, decision makers can use participative or collaborative forms of setting goals to enhance organizational commitment and motivation, thereby improving performance (Liu & Liu, 2022).

2.5 Theoretical Review

2.5.1 Expectancy Theory

The expectancy theory propounded by Victor Vroom in 1964 explains why performance appraisals can motivate low performers and determine the best strategies for achieving the goals of an organization. This theory asserts that people are inclined towards acting based on the belief that certain outcomes exist that are desirable if the activity is performed (Emelianova, 2019). Expectancy Theory, when applied to performance appraisals, warns that employees are motivated when they see a clear positive relationship between performance, appraisal, and organizational rewards (Fang, 2023). The theory is built on three key components: perceived control, expectancy (the confidence that effort will produce performance), instrumentality (the belief that performance will result in rewards),

and the perceived value of the reward (valence). When applied to performance appraisals, expectancy theory unfavorably draws attention to the need to establish an ethical approach that allows for a clear link between the amount of effort exerted by an employee and an assessment of their performance as well as the corresponding rewards. According to expectancy theory, when employees develop the expectancy that more hard work will lead to positive performance appraisals (expectancy), positive performance appraisals will in turn lead to the attainment of organizational rewards such as promotions or increase in pay (instrumentality), and that the organizational rewards are important to the employee (valence) motivation to improve their performance, will be high, as noted by Filipova (2023). This theoretical angle also highlights the importance of organizations in developing measures of capacity review that not only evaluate employees but also explain how the appraisal results can be tied to tangible rewards.

Nevertheless, expectancy theory holds the key determinants of the success of performance appraisals. First, appraisal criteria must be equally desirable and accessible to employees. Second, there must be a relationship between performance and rewards, which must also be logical, and which of the two does not contradict each other. Third, incentives need to be appealing to employees and may differ from one person to another, as well as their rank in employment (Van Eerde & Thierry, 1996). Organizations whose performance appraisal systems adhere to these principles of expectancy theory are apt to realize higher motivation and productivity among their human resources. Therefore, organizations can benefit from this theoretical framework to build an ideal performance management system by making sure through the appraisal process that the employees can deduce a clear connection between the work they input and the valued outcomes that are realized in the organization (Veenstra et al., 2020).

2.5.2. Empirical Review

Uzochukwu et al. (2024) studied the impact of performance appraisal fairness on employee productivity in Nigerian federal regulatory agencies. Using equity theory as a theoretical foundation, this study examines the effect of performance appraisal fairness on productivity levels among employees in Nigeria's federal regulatory agencies with a focus on NAFDAC. A descriptive survey research design was used, and the data collected were primary data from NAFDAC staff through the use of a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale model. The data were analyzed using correlation and regression methodologies since the study employed non-probability quota sampling. The analysis conducted in this research confirmed that interactional, procedural, and distributive fairness in performance appraisal were statistically significant and positively related to employee productivity in NAFDAC.

Chimauzom and Udechukwu (2024) examined the impact of performance appraisal on employee performance in the Ministry of Power in the selected ministries in the Enugu State civil service. In view of the above objectives, three null hypotheses congruent with the objectives were developed for the study. A descriptive research design and a survey were used to collect data. The population of the study consists of 755 staff of the three selected ministries in Enugu State Civil Service, namely: Office of the Head of Service, Civil Service Commission; Ministry of Lands and Housing are all in Enugu State Secretariat Enugu containing staff of the Enugu State Civil Service. This result confirms that performance appraisal significantly affects employees' productivity, competence, and workload delivery.

Mose and Gachanja (2023) looked into the factors of performance appraisal on employee performance in the energy sector of Kenya. The total population of the study was 8820 employees whereas the sample consisted of 801 employees attracted to all divisions and to organizations including senior, middle, and lower-level management employees and 11 % of the total population of the study. With regard to the effects of performance appraisal

on employee performance, the observations made are that there is an increase in productivity in an organization, as observed with the assessment.

3. Methodology

To establish the relationship between performance appraisal and employee productivity of academic staff at Kwara State University in Malete, Nigeria, this study adopted a survey research design. With the help of Taro Yamane's formula, 287 academic staff members were selected through simple random sampling from a population of 1015 academic staff members. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires, which employed 5-point Likert scale. A 97.21 % response rate was achieved, as out of 287 questionnaires circulated, only eight were not returned. Among the returned questionnaires, 94.77 % were found to contain usable responses. The validity and reliability of the instrument were assessed by an expert in the area. The collected data were analyzed using multiple regression analysis, and the hypotheses were tested at the 5% significance level. Thus, ethical concerns included confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, and voluntary participation in the study.

3.1 Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

H01: There is no significant relationship between the feedback system and productivity of academic staff at KWASU.

H02: The reward system does not significantly affect the productivity of academic staff at KWASU.

H03: Goal setting have no significant impact on employee productivity of academic staff at KWASU

4. Data Analysis

Table I presents a detailed demographic analysis of respondents. A total of 272 participants completed the questionnaire, of which 53.31% (N=145) were male and 46.69% (N=127) were female. The age distribution of the respondents was as follows: 11.40% (31) aged 18-30, 25.74% (70) aged 31-40, and 62.87% (171) aged 41 and above. In terms of experience of less than five years 32.72% (89) six- 15 years, 51.10% (139) had more than 16 years, and 16.18% (44). These data have a fairly equal representation of people with more years in this industry and those with fewer years. The educational background showed that 13.01% (n=35) acquired OND/NCE, 25.65% (n=69) had HND/BSc, while the remaining 49.07% (n=132) had MBA/MSc. In addition, 26 people (9.67%) had PhDs, and the rest were classified as "Others," of which seven people (2.60%) had PhDs.

Table 1: Respondents Demographic Characteristics

Variable	Respondent Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	145	53.31
	Female	127	46.69
	Total	272	100
Age	18-30	31	11.40
	31-40	70	25.74
	41 and above	171	62.87
	Total	272	100
Years of Experience	Less than 5yrs	89	32.72
	6 -15 yrs	139	51.10
	16 yrs and above	44	16.18
	Total	272	100
Educational Background	OND, NCE	35	13.01
	HND, BSc	69	25.65
	MBA, MSc	132	49.07
	PhD	26	9.67
	Others	7	2.60
	Total	272	100

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.893 ^a	.872	.821	.11431
A. Predictors: (constant), feedback system, reward system and goal setting				

Source: Author's Computation (2024)

The residual characteristics and estimated model performance are provided in Table 2, using model summary statistics to assess the regression model's quality of fit. An R-squared of about 0.872, use of the independent variables (feedback system, reward system, and setting of goals) explained 87.2% of the variation in the dependent variable, namely, employee productivity. The impact of the model was estimated to be high even when controlling for the levels of model complexity based on the adjusted R-squared value of 0.821, which was obtained from the number of sample cases and the total number of independent variables available. The standard error of the estimate, which gives the average difference between the actual and anticipated values, was 0.11431.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.324	3	1.735	7.231	.000 ^b
	Residual	21.138	269	.212		
	Total	26.462	272			
a. Dependent Variable: employee productivity						
b. Predictors: (Constant), feedback system, reward system and goal setting						

Source: Author's Computation (2024)

Further support for the applicability of the regression model came from the ANOVA table (Table 3). The Regression row of the table shows that a significant amount of variance in the dependent variable—employee productivity—can be accounted for by the model as a whole. The p-value is 0.000 and the F-statistic is 7.231; therefore, the study’s model is statistically significant can be seen from table 4.

Table 4: Coefficients

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.273	.096		4.284	.000
	Feedback system	.123	.023	.231	0.534	.000
	Reward system	.043	0.94	.623	0.045	.000
	Goal setting	.173	0.28	.192	0.617	.000
a. Dependent Variable: Employee productivity						

Source: *Author’s Computation (2024)*

The table shows a regression analysis examining the feedback system, reward system, and goal setting as predictors of employee productivity. The coefficients t and their Sig levels offer information on how each independent variable affects the level of employee productivity.

The analysis reveals and confirms the significant and positive effect of the feedback system on the level of employee productivity by the values of the unstandardized estimated regression coefficient of $B = 0.123$, standardized estimated regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.231$, and statistically significant level of $p = 0.000$. This means that for every unit increase in the feedback system, there is a corresponding 12.3% increase in employees’ productivity. The standardized beta value also shows that the feedback system has a moderate impact on employee productivity. This result is consistent with the study by Chimauzom and Udechukwu (2024), which states that feedback conceptualized with structure increases organizational performance and efficiency because of its facultative nature in providing day-to-day guidance for enhancement. Their study proved that feedback is an essential factor in determining the potential need for training and assisting employees in moving in the right direction to attain an organizational objective. In addition, Karim (2024) found a positive relationship between constructive

regular feedback, employee engagement, and productivity. Chen et al. (2023) also identified that feedback in groups, ideally in conjunction with performance reviews, creates improved individual and group performance. In the same respect, Emelianova (2019) asserts that feedback promotes improved employee performance accountability and, hence, efficiency.

This study also shows that the reward system has a positive influence on productivity level, with an estimated coefficient of $B = 0.043$, $\beta = 0.623$, and $p = 0.000$. This means that for every one-point change in the reward system, productivity improved by 4.3%, with a beta value greater than 0.5, showing that the reward system is an important factor affecting employee productivity. This is in agreement with Faozen and Sandy (2024), who attributed employees to work harder when compensated because compensation serves as motivation. They also found that performance-based reward systems exhibit a tremendous response in terms of output. Uzochukwu et al. (2024) also establish the fact that while both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards help in improving satisfaction and performance at a workplace a reward system is an important component of excellence and organizational performance. Similar observations were made by Gnepp et al. (2020), who discovered that when the reward system was appropriately developed with specific regard to the need assessment of its recipients, lasting motivation and enhanced general performance were the outcomes.

Goal-setting was statistically significant and positively related to the level of employee productivity, with an unstandardized coefficient of $B = 0.173$, standardized beta of 0.192, and $p = 0.000$. This means that when goal setting is effective by one degree, employees' productivity is bound to have improved by 17.3%. Even though the beta value is less than that of the other variables, it is significant enough to denote that clear objectives help improve productivity. Muñoz et al., (2022) agrees with this supposition, by stating that it is when goals are specific, measurable and challenging that increased performance is observed. Likewise, Manzoor et al. (2021) established that when goals, objectives, and expected performance are well spelt out, employees improve their performance. In addition, Okwuise and Ndudi (2023) posit that goal setting also boosts self-motivation since it helps individuals have direction and focus. In addition, Altassan (2024) noted that performance objectives decrease ambiguity regarding anticipated performance and increase the likelihood of substituting optimal workforce

The results of this study will be useful for learning the heads of organizations, especially educational and professional institutions, about the importance of structured performance appraisal in increasing organizational productivity. Having found a positive relationship with feedback systems, reward systems, and goal setting, the role of focused interventions is to improve the link between employee work and organizational goals in centrally framed employees. The kinds of feedback systems being put into practice must provide timely and relevant data feedback that can positively impact employee performance. In addition, a reward system must be designed to match the aspirations of employees and respond to motivation and commitment. The promotion of clear goals increases organizational focus, quantifiable objectives give employees a target to work towards, and proportionate objectives make goals achievable apart from increasing productivity. Thus, these perceptions will be useful for enhancing the knowledge of the best approaches to developing performance management systems for the maximum effectiveness of organizational performance.

The findings of the study also provide a strong backup for Vroom's expectancy theory, which focuses on the motivational force associated with effort-performance rewards. The results support the theory by proving that for an employee entity, it is important for employees to perceive fairness and clarity in performance appraisal procedures. In addition, this study supports equity theory, which postulates that the perceived fairness of organizational

practices results in high job satisfaction and performance among workers. In line with the study by Uzochukwu et al. (2024), the outcome clarifies the need to incorporate these theoretical frameworks into policies. Therefore, from such theories, one can appreciate ways of creating an organizational culture that supports respect for fairness and promotes organizational motivation, and hence productivity, in a sustainable manner for optimum organizational performance.

5. Conclusion

This study reveals that there is a direct and positive relationship between feedback systems, reward systems, goal setting, and employee productivity. All these factors are important for improving performance within an organization. In particular, the feedback system was revealed to moderately affect productivity because such employee guidance and corrections proved helpful for constant enhancements. Thus, the reward system was found to be most significantly positively related to productivity, pointing to the notion that it is useful to formally appreciate employee initiatives to maintain optimum levels of productivity. Goal establishment was also found to influence employees' efforts and enhance their performance, because goals are specific and quantifiable.

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