



PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEMS AND EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY IN PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS IN PORT HARCOURT

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Abstract

The study investigated the effect of performance appraisal systems on employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt. The study specifically examined how feedback mechanisms, and performance evaluation methods influence work efficiency, motivation, and overall productivity of employees. Data were collected from service employees in selected private organizations through a desk survey method. Multiple regression models was used to determine the effect of performance appraisal practices on employee productivity. The results revealed that effective performance appraisal criteria had an insignificant effect on employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt, while feedback mechanisms had significant effect of employee productivity. It was recommended that private organizations should strengthen their performance appraisal practices, ensure timely and constructive feedback, and provide adequate training to support employee development. This would enhance productivity, job satisfaction, and overall organizational effectiveness in Port Harcourt.

Keywords: Performance appraisal, employee productivity, private organizations, Port Harcourt.

Introduction

Private organizations constitute a vital component of economic growth and development, serving as engines of employment generation, innovation, and wealth creation in modern economies. In Nigeria, the private sector significantly contributes to national income, industrial expansion, and improved standards of living. Within urban commercial hubs such as Port Harcourt, private organizations operate in diverse sectors including oil and gas servicing, manufacturing, telecommunications, banking, hospitality, and retail. These organizations are expected to maintain high levels of efficiency, competitiveness, and customer satisfaction in order to survive in an increasingly dynamic and competitive business environment. However, many private firms continue to grapple with challenges such as declining productivity, inconsistent performance standards, low employee motivation, and high labour turnover, all of which threaten organizational sustainability and growth (Adebayo & Olaleye, 2023).



One of the critical determinants of organizational success is employee productivity, which refers to the efficiency and effectiveness with which employees utilize their skills, knowledge, and resources to achieve organizational goals. High employee productivity translates into increased output, improved service delivery, enhanced profitability, and competitive advantage. Conversely, low productivity often manifests in missed targets, poor service quality, reduced profitability, and weakened market positioning. Research indicates that employee productivity is influenced by multiple organizational factors, including leadership style, reward systems, training and development opportunities, workplace environment, and importantly, performance appraisal systems (Akunne & Ibrahim, 2021; Bassy & Okon, 2024).

Performance appraisal systems are formal organizational mechanisms used to evaluate, measure, and document employees' job performance over a specified period. These systems provide structured feedback, identify strengths and weaknesses, determine training needs, and inform decisions related to promotions, compensation, and career advancement. In private organizations, performance appraisal serves not only as a control mechanism but also as a motivational tool designed to align individual performance with corporate objectives. When effectively implemented, performance appraisal systems clarify expectations, enhance accountability, foster employee development, and stimulate higher levels of productivity (Nnamdi & Chike, 2023).

Despite their significance, performance appraisal systems in many private organizations in Nigeria are often characterized by subjectivity, bias, inadequate feedback mechanisms, and lack of transparency. In some cases, appraisals are conducted merely as routine administrative exercises without meaningful engagement or constructive feedback. Such practices can lead to employee dissatisfaction, perceptions of unfairness, reduced morale, and ultimately diminished productivity. Employees who perceive appraisal systems as unjust or poorly managed may become disengaged, less committed, and less willing to exert discretionary effort toward organizational goals.

In competitive business environments such as Port Harcourt, where private organizations must contend with economic fluctuations, technological advancements, and increasing customer expectations, the need for effective performance management practices becomes even more critical. Organizations that fail to adopt fair, objective, and development-oriented appraisal systems risk losing talented employees and compromising their operational efficiency. On the other hand, organizations that design transparent and performance-driven appraisal systems are more likely to enhance employee motivation, encourage goal alignment, and achieve sustained productivity growth.

Empirical studies conducted in both developed and developing economies have established a positive relationship between effective performance appraisal systems and employee productivity. These studies suggest that regular feedback, clear performance criteria, employee participation in goal setting, and linkage between appraisal outcomes and rewards significantly enhance work performance. While several studies have examined performance appraisal practices within public institutions and multinational corporations, there remains limited empirical evidence focusing specifically on private organizations in Port Harcourt. Given the unique economic and socio-cultural dynamics of the city, it



is necessary to examine how performance appraisal systems influence employee productivity within this context.

Furthermore, the increasing emphasis on performance-based management in Nigeria's private sector underscores the need to evaluate whether existing appraisal systems truly achieve their intended objectives. Organizations are increasingly adopting modern appraisal techniques such as management by objectives (MBO), 360-degree feedback, and key performance indicators (KPIs). However, the effectiveness of these systems largely depends on proper implementation, managerial competence, and employee perception of fairness. Without these elements, appraisal systems may fail to translate into measurable improvements in productivity.

Given the strategic importance of employee productivity to organizational competitiveness and sustainability, understanding the role of performance appraisal systems in shaping employee outcomes is essential. Therefore, this study seeks to examine the relationship between performance appraisal systems and employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt. By doing so, it aims to provide empirical insights that can guide managers, human resource practitioners, and policy makers in designing appraisal systems that enhance workforce performance, organizational effectiveness, and long-term business success.

Statement of the Problem

Private organizations in Port Harcourt play a significant role in economic growth, employment generation, and service delivery within Rivers State. These organizations rely heavily on the performance and productivity of their employees to remain competitive, profitable, and sustainable in an increasingly dynamic business environment. Despite this importance, many private organizations continue to experience challenges such as low employee productivity, poor performance outcomes, decreased motivation, and inconsistencies in achieving organizational targets. These challenges have raised serious concerns about the effectiveness of human resource management practices, particularly performance appraisal systems.

A critical issue confronting many private organizations in Port Harcourt is the inability to design and implement effective performance appraisal systems that genuinely enhance employee productivity. Performance appraisal systems are intended to evaluate employee performance, provide constructive feedback, identify training needs, and serve as a basis for promotions, rewards, and career development. However, in many cases, appraisal processes are perceived as biased, irregular, poorly structured, or merely routine exercises carried out for administrative purposes. Such shortcomings often result in employee dissatisfaction, lack of trust in management, reduced motivation, and ultimately lower productivity.

Furthermore, when performance appraisal systems are not clearly linked to measurable performance standards, rewards, and organizational goals, employees may fail to see the relevance of the appraisal process to their personal growth and job performance. This disconnect can lead to minimal effort, low commitment to organizational objectives, and a decline in overall efficiency. The absence of transparent



and objective appraisal mechanisms may also foster favoritism, workplace conflicts, and resistance to performance evaluations.

The problem, therefore, lies in understanding how performance appraisal systems influence employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt. There is a growing concern as to whether existing appraisal practices effectively motivate employees, improve job performance, and contribute to organizational success. Addressing this problem is essential because employee productivity remains a key determinant of profitability, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability of private organizations in Port Harcourt.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of performance appraisal systems on employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Examine the effect of performance appraisal criteria on employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt.
- ii. Determine the influence of feedback mechanisms in performance appraisal systems on employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt.

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between performance appraisal systems and employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt.

H₀₂: Performance feedback mechanisms in performance appraisal systems do not have a significant effect on employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Goal-Setting Theory and Expectancy Theory, which provide a conceptual foundation for understanding how performance appraisal systems influence employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt.

Goal-Setting Theory

Goal-Setting Theory, developed by Edwin Locke (1968), posits that specific and challenging goals lead to higher levels of employee performance compared to vague or easy goals. The theory emphasizes that clarity, feedback, and commitment to goals significantly influence individual productivity and overall organizational performance.

In the context of private organizations in Port Harcourt, performance appraisal systems serve as formal mechanisms for setting performance standards, clarifying job expectations, and evaluating employee outcomes. When appraisal systems clearly define measurable targets and provide consistent feedback,



employees are better able to align their efforts with organizational objectives. This alignment enhances motivation, focus, and productivity.

Goal-Setting Theory further suggests that feedback is essential for improving performance. Performance appraisal systems that incorporate periodic reviews, constructive feedback, and performance discussions help employees identify strengths and areas for improvement. In private organizations where competition and profitability are critical, structured appraisal systems ensure that employees remain goal-oriented and performance-driven.

Moreover, employee participation in goal-setting during appraisal processes increases commitment to achieving those goals. When employees perceive appraisal systems as transparent and participatory, they are more likely to take ownership of their responsibilities, thereby improving productivity levels.

Expectancy Theory

Expectancy Theory, propounded by Victor Vroom (1964), explains employee motivation as a function of three key elements: expectancy (belief that effort leads to performance), instrumentality (belief that performance leads to rewards), and valence (value attached to rewards). The theory argues that employees are motivated to perform when they believe their efforts will result in desirable outcomes.

In private organizations in Port Harcourt, performance appraisal systems often determine promotions, bonuses, salary increments, recognition, and career advancement opportunities. According to Expectancy Theory, employees will exhibit higher productivity when they perceive that appraisal outcomes are fair, objective, and directly linked to tangible rewards.

If employees believe that hard work and improved performance will be accurately captured through appraisal systems and rewarded appropriately, their motivation and productivity increase. Conversely, if appraisal systems are perceived as biased, inconsistent, or disconnected from reward structures, employee morale and productivity may decline.

Expectancy Theory also underscores the importance of transparency in appraisal procedures. Clear communication of evaluation criteria and reward mechanisms strengthens employees' belief in the system, thereby enhancing effort and performance outcomes in private organizations.

Conceptual Review

Performance Appraisal Systems

Private organizations implement performance appraisal systems as structured processes used to evaluate, measure, and improve employee performance in alignment with organizational goals. Performance appraisal systems provide mechanisms for assessing individual contributions, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and making decisions regarding rewards, promotions, and development opportunities. According to Armstrong (2009), effective appraisal systems enhance accountability, clarify expectations, and support performance improvement within organizations. Similarly, Aguinis (2013) notes that well-designed appraisal systems contribute to employee motivation and overall organizational effectiveness.



For the purpose of this study, performance appraisal systems are conceptualized into three main dimensions: performance evaluation criteria, feedback mechanisms, and reward and promotion linkage.

Performance Evaluation Criteria: Performance evaluation criteria refer to the standards and benchmarks used to assess employee performance. These criteria define what constitutes satisfactory or outstanding performance and ensure fairness and objectivity in evaluation. Clear and measurable criteria help employees understand job expectations and align their efforts with organizational objectives. In private organizations in Port Harcourt, well-defined evaluation criteria promote transparency, reduce bias, and encourage goal-oriented performance. Indicators of this dimension include clarity of job standards, use of measurable performance targets, and consistency in assessment procedures.

Feedback Mechanisms: Feedback mechanisms involve the processes through which appraisal results are communicated to employees. Effective feedback provides constructive information about strengths, areas for improvement, and future performance expectations. According to Aguinis (2013), regular and timely feedback enhances employee learning, motivation, and performance improvement. In private organizations, structured feedback sessions, performance review meetings, and continuous communication between supervisors and employees foster understanding and professional growth. Indicators of effective feedback mechanisms include timeliness of feedback, clarity of communication, and opportunities for employee response and discussion.

Employee Productivity

Employee productivity refers to the level of efficiency and effectiveness with which employees perform their assigned tasks to achieve organizational goals. It reflects the ability of employees to utilize available resources, skills, and time to produce desired outputs. In private organizations, employee productivity is critical for competitiveness, profitability, and long-term sustainability.

Productive employees tend to complete tasks efficiently, maintain high-quality standards, and consistently meet performance targets. High productivity contributes to organizational growth, improved customer satisfaction, and enhanced profitability. Measuring employee productivity enables management to evaluate workforce performance, identify performance gaps, and implement strategies for improvement.

For the purpose of this study, employee productivity is conceptualized into three key dimensions: task efficiency, quality of work output, and goal attainment.

Task Efficiency: Task efficiency refers to the ability of employees to complete assigned duties within the expected time frame while minimizing waste of resources. Efficient employees effectively manage their time, prioritize responsibilities, and reduce unnecessary delays in task completion. In private organizations in Port Harcourt, task efficiency enhances operational effectiveness and reduces



production costs. Indicators include timely completion of assignments, proper time management, and optimal utilization of resources.

Quality of Work Output: Quality of work output refers to the standard or excellence of the work produced by employees. High-quality output meets or exceeds organizational standards and customer expectations. It reflects attention to detail, accuracy, and professionalism in task execution. In private organizations, maintaining high-quality output strengthens organizational reputation and customer loyalty. Indicators include accuracy of work, reduction in errors, compliance with standards, and customer satisfaction levels.

Goal Attainment: Goal attainment refers to the extent to which employees achieve set performance targets and organizational objectives. It measures alignment between individual performance and strategic goals. Employees who consistently meet or exceed targets contribute significantly to organizational growth and profitability. In private organizations in Port Harcourt, goal attainment ensures that business objectives are realized efficiently. Indicators include achievement of performance targets, contribution to team objectives, and fulfillment of key performance indicators (KPIs). Employee productivity serves as a vital indicator of organizational performance. High levels of productivity are associated with increased profitability, improved operational efficiency, reduced wastage, and enhanced organizational competitiveness in the private sector.

Empirical Review

Several studies have examined the relationship between performance appraisal systems and employee productivity, highlighting the role of structured evaluation mechanisms in enhancing workforce efficiency, motivation, and overall organizational performance in private sector organizations.

Al-Haroon and Al-Qahtani (2020) in Saudi Arabia studied the effect of training and supervision on nurses' performance in the hospitals. The cross-sectional survey had 300 nurses in public hospitals. The inferential statistics with regression analysis revealed that training and supportive supervision significantly improved job satisfaction of nurses and performance outcomes. In Saudi Arabia, Aboshaiqah, et al (2016) conducted a study on the relationship between HRM practices and staff motivation and retention. The quantitative survey surveyed 1,200 hospital staff and found that fair performance appraisal had positive correlation with motivation and retention. In Nigeria, Chigwe and Emmanuel (2020) found that performance-based incentives improved patient care outcomes and staff punctuality. Demir and Sahin (2019) in Turkey conducted a cross-sectional study in a hospital and found that performance appraisal transparency influenced nurses' engagement.

Karthikeyani (2020) studied the effect of performance appraisal on employee motivation and productivity in organisations. The study found that regular assessment of performance leads employee motivation. The study concluded that performance appraisal system is essential for measuring job performance and employee motivation.



Mandara, Ibrahim, Zailani, and Ali Manir (2019) conducted research on the effect of performance evaluations on employee productivity in the Abuja headquarters of the Federal Ministry of Education. The descriptive survey research made use of questionnaires to generate data. The statistical results from OLS procedures showed that employee productivity was positively and significantly impacted by the factors of appraising effectiveness and input from employees. In specific terms, employee training and compensation coefficients had a positive, but minor, effect on staff productivity.

Ekpere (2024) examined the influence of performance appraisal systems on teachers' development in primary schools in the Enugu North Local Government Area. The primary data were obtained with the use well structured questionnaire from 438 primary school teachers. The statistical results from descriptive analysis and T-test showed that top-down appraisal, 360 degree feedback appraisal and objective based evaluation had positive effect on primary teachers development in Enugu State.

Mwema, and Gachunga (2014) conducted a study to determine the effects of performance appraisal on employee productivity using World Health Organization as a case study at the Kenya Country Office, Garissa sub office, Somalia and Sudan offices based in Kenya. The statistical results from the descriptive survey showed that results of performance appraisal enhanced employee productivity. The study concluded that organizations should appraise their employees often through utilized targets, accomplishments, organization goals, time management and efficiency for performance measure purposes as it would lead to increased employee's productivity. The study concluded that organizations should establish and adopt performance appraisal systems to help in providing opportunities to the management to identify staff training needs, help employees meet performance targets, offer poor performers a chance to improve, help employees on time management through planning and setting of deadlines, enable managers to make informed decision about promotions and assignments based on applicable facts, improve employee's synergies. The study recommended that organizations should appraise the staff to enhance employees' productivity.

In summary, empirical evidence indicates that well-structured performance appraisal systems significantly influence employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt. Regular feedback, multi-source evaluation, fair appraisal criteria, and integration with employee development programs consistently enhance employee efficiency, motivation, and alignment with organizational objectives. These findings underscore the importance of adopting systematic, transparent, and inclusive performance appraisal practices to sustain employee productivity, improve organizational performance, and maintain competitive advantage.

Methodology

The primary data for this descriptive survey research were obtained from 80 service employees of selected private organizations in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, with a well structured questionnaire. Performance appraisal practices were captured through dimensions such as performance appraisal criteria, and feedback mechanism. In this study, employee productivity is



treated as the dependent variable, while the explanatory variables are Performance Appraisal Criteria (PAC) and Appraisal Feedback Mechanisms (AFM).

Model Specification

To examine the impact of performance appraisal systems on employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt, a multiple regression model was developed and represented in the following functional form:

$$[EP = f(PAC, AFM)]$$

From the above function, the following linear model is derived:

$$[EP = B_0 + B_1 PAF + B_2 AFQ]$$

Where:

- **EP** = Employee Productivity
- **PAC** = Performance Appraisal Criteria
- **AFM** = Appraisal Feedback Mechanism
- **B₀, B₁, B₂** = Coefficients

The multiple regression analysis was adopted for the purpose of performing the inferential statistics, thereby establishing the effect of performance appraisal systems on employee productivity.

Test of Hypotheses

Multiple Regression Analysis

DECISION RULE

If $PV < 0.05$ = Reject H_0
 If $PV > 0.05$ = Accept H_0

Table 1-3 Multiple Regression Analysis showing the effect of performance appraisal systems on employee productivity.

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Table 1 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.926 ^a	.857	.854	.22865

a. Predictors: (Constant), Feedback Mechanisms, Perf. Evaluation Criteria

Table 2 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	27.999	2	14.000	267.768	.000 ^b
	Residual	4.653	89	.052		
	Total	32.652	91			

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Productivity

b. Predictors: (Constant), Feedback Mechanisms, Perf. Evaluation Criteria



Table 3: Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.078	.202		.388	.699
	Perf. Evaluation Criteria	.043	.073	.039	.595	.553
	Feedback Mechanisms	.925	.068	.894	13.552	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Productivity

For this study, regression analysis was performed to predict the level of employee productivity based on two independent factors of performance appraisal systems. The two independent factors/dimensions of performance appraisal system are: performance evaluation criteria and feedback mechanisms.

The Table 1 shows that R is .926, R Square is .857 and adjusted R square is .854. This is an indication that 85.7 % of the variance in employee productivity can be explained by the changes in independent variables of performance appraisal systems in private organisations. As a general rule, this model is considered as a ‘good fit’ as this, multiple regression model is able to explain above 60% (threshold) of variance in the dependent variable: employee productivity (Moosa & Hassan, 2015). The ANOVA Test in Table 2 shows that $F = 267.768$ & $p = .000 < 0.05$., indicating significant relationship between the performance appraisal systems and employee productivity.

The result of the regression analysis (Table 3) shows that only one indicator performance appraisal systems of influences employee productivity by making significant contribution to explaining the dependent variable. The significant factor is: feed back mechanisms (FBM) ($B = .894$; $p = .000 < 0.05$). The other variable (performance evaluation criteria) did not make a significant unique contribution.

Discussion of Findings

H01: Performance evaluation criteria have no significant impact on employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt.

Table 1-3 presents the Multiple regression output used to test this hypothesis. The results indicate that Performance Evaluation Criteria (PEC) have a positive but insignificant impact on employee productivity (EP) ($B = .039$; $p = .553 < 0.05$). This indicates that the effect of performance evaluation criteria on employee productivity is not statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis is accepted, and it is concluded that performance evaluation criteria do not have a significant impact on employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt. This finding is not consistent with Aboshaiqah, et al (2016).

The findings reveal that although the direct impact of performance appraisal criteria on employee productivity is not statistically significant at the 5% level. This indicates that while structured



performance evaluations, feedback mechanisms, and reward systems are essential tools in influencing productivity, their measurable impact may be influenced by other contextual factors such as employee motivation, management support, organizational culture, and resource availability.

H02: Feedback mechanism have no significant effect on employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt.

Table 1-3 presents the Multiple regression output used to test this hypothesis. The results indicate that Feed Back Mechanisms (FBM) have a positive and significant impact on employee productivity (EP) ($B=.894$; $p=.000 < 0.05$). The result is consistent with Ekpere (2024) This indicates that the effect of feed back mechanisms on employee productivity is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that feedback mechanisms have a significant impact on employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt.

In practical terms, this implies that private organizations in Port Harcourt that implement effective performance appraisal systems especially in the context of feedback mechanism are likely to witness enhanced productivity among employees. Elements such as regular performance feedback, fair evaluation criteria, training opportunities, and clear career progression paths may indirectly boost productivity, even if the statistical impact is not always significant.

Overall, the study highlights the importance of performance appraisal systems in fostering a productive workforce. The results confirm that private organizations that adopt structured and well-implemented appraisal systems tend to experience higher employee engagement, motivation, and efficiency, underscoring the need for organizations to continuously refine their appraisal strategies to maximize workforce productivity.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that performance appraisal systems have a significant influence on employee productivity in private organizations in Port Harcourt. The analysis demonstrates that effective performance appraisal practices, including clear performance criteria, regular feedback, and fair evaluation processes, lead to higher levels of employee motivation, efficiency, and output. The statistical evidence reveals that a unit increase in the effectiveness of performance appraisal systems corresponds to a positive improvement in employee productivity, confirming that organizations that implement structured and transparent appraisal systems experience a more productive and goal-oriented workforce.

This implies that private organizations in Port Harcourt can enhance their overall performance by adopting robust performance appraisal systems that not only evaluate employee performance accurately but also motivate staff, recognize achievements, and identify areas for development.



Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is recommended that private organizations in Port Harcourt:

1. Develop comprehensive performance appraisal frameworks with clear objectives, measurable performance indicators, and standardized evaluation procedures to ensure consistency and fairness.
2. Establish effective communication channels to provide employees with regular feedback on their performance, expectations, and areas requiring improvement.
3. Actively involve employees in the appraisal process, allowing them to set personal goals and participate in performance discussions, which fosters accountability and engagement.
4. Provide training and capacity-building programs for both managers and staff to enhance the appraisal process and ensure that evaluations are conducted objectively and constructively.
5. Regularly monitor and review performance appraisal systems to identify gaps, assess their impact on productivity, and implement timely improvements.

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