



UTILIZATION OF JOB PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL ON STAFF MORALE IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN EDO STATE, NIGERIA



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Abstract

This study examined utilization of job performance appraisal on morale of staff in public universities in Edo State, Nigeria. The study covered three (3) public universities in Edo State, Nigeria. The study adopted correlation research design. The population of the study was two thousand one hundred and fifty- nine (2,159) academic staff the public universities in Edo State. A sample of 431 academic staff (lecturers) the public universities in Edo State were drawn for the study. Two sets of questionnaire were developed by the researcher titled: Appraisal Practice for Academic Staff Questionnaire (APASQ) and Job Morale Questionnaire (JMQ). The questionnaires were validated by experts in Education. Cronbach Reliability Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instruments, which yielded 0.78, 0.75 and 0.73 reliability and useable. A response rate of (100%) was recorded. Data collected were analyzed using frequencies, percentage (%) Mean X Standard Deviation (SD) while hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment (PPMC) and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (MLRA). Results revealed that appraisal practices/ quality of teaching, length of service and quality of research publication significantly predicted job morale of academic staff in universities in Edo State. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that government should endeavour to provide a healthy work climate and participatory decision making at all levels of the university to promote the job morale of academic and non-academic staff in the discharge of their duties

Keywords: Job Appraisal Performance, and Staff Moral

Introduction

Staff of universities refers to both academic and non-teaching workers who perform their duties with expectation of high morale and effective performance of their duties (Britt & Dickinson, 2016). Morale refers to a feeling of enthusiasm, zeal confidence in individuals or groups that enable the individuals to be able to cope with the tasks assigned to them. It is a concept that embodies five

components: (a) a feeling of togetherness or belongingness to a group and not being isolated; (b) a clear goal which will be the target of production set before them; (c) an observed or perceived progress towards the attainment of the goal, that is, expectation of success; (d) within the group each member feels that he/she has a meaningful task to perform, and (e) a supportive or stimulating leadership (Ojoade, 2016).

Therefore-going clearly indicates that a worker's job morale from these five mentioned components can be measured in relation to four (4) major variables namely: their enthusiasm towards their job, attitude of mind to work under control, leadership in an organization, social integration with others within their work environment as well as the willingness to attain the goals set for them by the organization in which they are employed. They represent the attitudes of individuals and groups in an organization towards their work environment and towards voluntary cooperation to the full extent of their capabilities for the fulfillment of organisational goals. Hence, the term morale can be seen as a synthesis of workers' connectedness with their superiors, their organization, their fellow-employees, take home pay among others

Morale is of two types namely: individual morale as it relates to a person and group morale which implies the collective zeal or enthusiasm of a group of persons. Both types possess some basic characteristics which are: (a) it is a relative term, and could therefore be good/high or poor/low, (b) morale influences human behaviour and performance; (c) it is a psychological feeling; (d) it is intangible that is, cannot be increased or lowered directly (e) It is a contagious phenomenon that could be transmitted among persons in a group (Aswathappa, 2005). These show clearly that morale is a state of the mind. It reflects mental health, enthusiasm or zeal of an individual or group. If employees appear to feel enthusiastic and optimistic about group activities, if they have a sense of mission about their job, if they are friendly with each other, they are described as having a low or high morale. If they seem to be dissatisfied, irritated, cranky, critical, rustled and pessimistic, they are described as possessing a high or low morale.

Low/high morale is evidenced by employee enthusiasm, voluntary conformity with regulations and orders, and willingness to co-operate with others in the accomplishment of an organization's objective while high/low morale is evidenced by surliness, insubordination, a feeling of discouragement and dislike of the job, company and associates. To boost the morale of staff for maximum productivity, the Appointments and Promotions Committee (AP&C) of universities are charged with the responsibility of evaluating the performance of staff from year to year (Akinyele, 2017). The strings or processes involved in assessing workers are described as appraisal practices or performance appraisal.

Performance appraisal is a process of assessing, summarizing and developing the work performance of staff in the university. Every university staff in Nigeria receives a written performance appraisal for manually which provides a feedback on performance and justifies personnel decision such as promotion and compensation (Ofili, 2016). This official form includes a self-assessment page for the staff to fill out and it is in turn sent to the respective Departmental heads who state their perception. The completed form is then forwarded to the Appointments and Promotions Committee where it is reappraised and action recommended. The recommendations could be in terms of promotion, incremental credit in salary, warning, or demotion among others. The behaviour standards that form the core of the performance appraisal expected of university staff are set out in the Staff Regulations and these standards relate to tasks that determine excellence and output. Academic peers apply these standards through collegial review of course syllabi, research methods and professional publications. Evaluation of teaching and research is a tool for quality improvement. The procedure for non-teaching staff is also established and indicated in the appraisal forms.

Igbojekwe and Ugo-Okoro (2015) noted that there are numerous criteria for measuring staff performance in the university education process. The criteria for academic or teaching staff can be divided into three groups: teaching, research and community service. There may be a focus on particular stages of the education process such as: 1) on input e.g. length of service, qualification of staff, workload, nature of students and material resources; 2) on processes e.g. approaches to teaching, student involvement and feedback; and 3) on output e.g. qualifications of teaching, quality of

publication, contribution to the university, society or country at large among others. In addition to this, quantitative data such as examination pass rates; citation levels for research articles among others may also be available. In some cases, survey data from students or other colleagues might be collected to ensure a holistic appraisal of the workers' work quality and performance.

The criteria for assessing the performance of non-teaching or non-academic staff are not only slightly different from that of the academic but may also differ from one institution to another. Just as a secretary to a Head of Unit/Division can only be appraised based on their clerical/secretarial duties and Divisional heads can be appraised on the basis of their managerial and administrative duties; the job performance of a non-academic staff can be adjudged - highly effective, Effective, Ineffective and Highly Ineffective based on their specific job functions and duties. In Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma for instance; the performance appraisal criteria for senior staff covers: initiative, integrity, acceptance of responsibility, output of work, quality of work, application of rules, commitment to duties, comprehension, expression on paper, oral expression relation with super-ordinate staff, relation with colleagues, relation with the public, reliability under pressure, appearance, application of professional/technical knowledge, management of staff (if applicable), regularity and punctuality to work (Akinyele, 2017). The foregoing can be classified into six appraisal criteria and nineteen indicators as follows: work qualities, work delivery, expressions, work relations indicators, internal work controls and dutifulness.

Work qualities for a non-academic staff cover the initiative, integrity, acceptance of responsibility, comprehension of the worker. The second -work delivery refers to the output of work, quality of work, and application of rules. The third - expressions can be seen to cover expression on paper, oral expression and appearance. Work relations indicators may include one or more of relation with super-ordinate staff, relation with colleagues, and relations with the public. Internal work controls cover reliability under pressure, application of professional/technical knowledge, and management of staff while dutifulness refers to commitment to duties, regularity and punctuality to work. As noted by Oladejo, Akinpelu, Fagunwa & Morakinyo (2011), the manner in which non-teaching staff are appraised on their work qualities, work relations or dutifulness could affect their enthusiasm, job interest, commitment or morale.

The purposes of carrying out performance appraisal practices are: 1). administrative – promotion, dismissal, organizational planning; 2). motivational – self appraisal and acts as an incentive to hard work; 3). Developmental– identifying one's training needs; 4). Performance improvement – through Management by Objective (MBO), participative goal setting and other work planning processes (Igbojekwe & Ugo-Okoro, 2015). Hence, this shows that the appraisal of staff is generally intended for something productive. Due to the divergent weight and score points assigned to various appraisal criteria such as length of service, qualification of staff, quality of teaching, quality of publication, contributions to the university, society or country; many staff of universities challenge the validity of these criteria with displeasure. For instance, many lecturers have contended that the use of research publications and paper presentation at conferences by the Appointments and Promotions (A&P) team of the universities as the main performance indicators for lecturers while neglecting in-class effectiveness is nothing but counter-productive. On the part of non-teaching, many Heads of Department have been accused of being too sentimental to focus on work relations and internal work controls while other aspects such as work delivery and dutifulness of senior non-teaching/academic staff are not usually considered when accessing their staff (Frederick, 2016).

This view is informed by the fact that the use of these criteria has resulted in the negligence of the primary assignment of both academic and non-teaching staff which is excellence in teaching and quality work delivery. Furthermore, appraisal practice in itself is usually carried out as an event rather than as a process because it occurs at a given time of the year and it is the point at which many academic staff make effort to compile their published papers, certificates of attendance at conferences and seminars. On the other hand, many non-teaching staff seemingly becomes more dutiful and loyal to their superiors/heads in order to get commendable remarks during assessments. Obviously, leaving assessment till a particular time and forwarding to the appointments and promotions team of the

university places a lot of emphasis on promotion rather than on improvement. Lamenting on this situation, Annierah, Kamarulzaman, Maeda and Datu (2013), submitted that the criteria for appraising the performance of staff in most universities has now shifted from what it used to be to involve some elements of politics and “who knows who”.

Quality of teaching refers to the depth of instructional service delivery by a university lecturer. It can be measured in relation to the number of courses taken by a lecturer in an academic programme, the number of classes lecturer takes per week, the pass rate of students in their continuous assessments and examinations in the semester or session. Teaching does not only include what is done, but how it is done. Hence, the quality of performance in teaching requires that higher educational institutions prepare the students for their first position as well as provide the basis for performance in future positions. Part of the quality of performance is to maintain an awareness of the needs of the students who are the direct consumers of services rendered by lecturers in universities (Annierah, Kamarulzaman, Maeda & Datu, 2013). Therefore, it is expected that when a lecturer is well appraised for performance on their teaching duties, the quality of their instructional delivery improves as their zeal and job morale is promoted. Hence, the criteria for assessing the quality of teaching could either promote or lower a lecturer’s job morale. From the foregoing, it is evident that students are the direct consumers of services rendered by staff in universities. Hence, teachers’ feedback on their performance from their students and significant others would not only contribute to quality control but also boost their job morale. In the United States, the researcher has observed that students’ evaluation of teaching is part of the faculty members’ performance evaluation and this holds true of most universities in European countries that use this appraisal model to make staff evaluation, boost their job morale (Igbojekwe & Ugo-Okoro, 2015).

Length of service is another appraisal practice or appraisal method used in universities. It refers to the number of years a lecturer or staff has put into service on a given level of promotion in various capacities in the university. It is often measured in terms of the cardinal number of days, weeks, months or years a worker has served in a given level such as how many years of service a lecturer has put in as a junior lecturer (Lecturer II), (Lecturer I) senior lecturer or even an associate professor. On another instance, such lecturer could have served two or more years as Chairman of Examination and Records officer or even the Head of Department. It is expected that the longer a staff holds a given office and stays in service, the higher he/she would feel a sense of belongingness particularly when longer length of service comes with some fringed benefits, and opportunities (Fapohunda, 2017). Consequently, the length of service could engender enthusiasm for work, promote a sense of job commitment and increase job morale.

Aside length of service, other appraisal practices such as quality of research publication, membership of learned societies/association and contribution to institutional/societal development may further contribute to the job morale of staff in universities. Quality of research publication can be described in relation to the worth of academic papers presented at conferences, and published in refereed journals by a lecturer at the local, national and international levels (Coughlan, 2015). Membership of learned societies/associations measures the number of membership a staff holds of learned societies or association at the local, national and international levels as it relates to their field or discipline or specialization.

Lastly, the contribution to institutional/societal development is the appraisal criteria that helps the university appraisal team to ascertain the extent to which university staff are striving to promote and encourage scholarship and community service which is one of the objectives of university education enunciated in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013). Igbojekwe and Ugo-Okoro (2015) noted that one purpose that appraisals on quality of research publication, membership with learned societies/associations and contribution to institutional/societal development serve is that they promote university workers to job morale through the feedback they get on how much their personal efforts is contributing to university goals.

From the foregoing, it seems that the attainment of university objectives depends largely on the dedication and commitment of workers in the university; and this commitment and dedication could be affected when the job morale of workers is low. Appraisal practices in universities have arguably

remained: one way for workers to get promoted; a medium for identifying one's training needs, determine one's performance improvement and an incentive to boost morale of workers for more hard work. To promote the attainment of university goals through highly dedicated staff with high morale, it is pertinent to investigate whether appraisal practices influence job morale of staff in universities in Edo State.

The relationship between quality of teaching and job morale of workers has been investigated by scholars with equivocal findings. Fapohunda (2017) examined the performance appraisal practices of academic staff in Lagos State University, Ojo, Nigeria and its influence on their morale, drive and general performance. The result revealed that there was a significant inverse relationship between appraisal of academic staff on their quality of teaching and their job morale. Akinyele (2017) examined the length of service and job morale of workers among private universities in Nigeria. The focus of the study was on the administrative staff of Crawford University, Igbessa, Ogun State. The findings from the study established that performance appraisal system is the only tangible metric way by which an organization can know the level of performance of its diverse members of staff. The effectiveness of performance appraisal systems in private universities are only based on training the members of staff involved in the rating/ appraising process and are multi- rating systems. The result further showed that appraisal of teaching on their length of teaching service influences their job morale in private universities in Nigeria.

Peleyeju and Ojebiyi (2017) examined the influence of teachers' research contributions on total quality management in public universities in South-Western Nigeria. At the end of the study, it was revealed that there are significant relationship among establishing performance standard, communicating performance standard to the lecturers, assessing lecturers by annual performance appraisal and total quality management in public universities. The result further shows that appraisal of teachers' quality in research publication and contributions affected their job morale.

Universities in Nigeria, especially public universities seem to be in a state of decay as poor quality graduates who may not be able to effectively hold executive positions in the public service in the future are allegedly produced or graduated yearly. The decay could be devastating and manifest in diverse forms. Among the academic staff, for instance, it has been observed by the researcher that many of them do not show passion for their jobs and lack the commitment and dedication needed to bring about quality education delivery (Fapohunda, 2017). It has been observed that the university system is currently harbouring nonchalant staff who portray lackadaisical attitude towards their job. In most universities in Edo State, it has been observed that most Heads of Departments have unequal treatment for their staff which results in choice of staff delegated or involved in decision making matters of the Department (Isabu, 2017). This may be responsible for lack of zeal and enthusiasm for work among Departmental staff that neither make meaningful contributions to the development of the Department nor suggest solutions for improvement.

Performance appraisal is an important human resource management tool which provides information to critical human resource decisions such as compensations and benefits, training and development needs, layoffs, staffing, pay raises, and discipline (Akinyele, 2017). Performance appraisal has been studied quite extensively over the last few decades, yet scholars continue to argue about the validity and merits of these systems in boosting job morale of workers and ensuring their commitment. In spite of the importance of performance appraisal, its utilization has caused much challenges and confusion in some large organisations, including the university system (Ogbewere & Olaniyi, 2017). Most universities in Nigeria and other developing countries do little to motivate or prepare personnel to conduct effective appraisals. Only few of these universities conduct rigorous and skills-based training (Ojokuku, 2017).

It has also been the practice that each staff under the appraisal system is supposed to be assessed at least once a year and feedback given on how the employee is performing in practice (Akinyele, 2017). However, appraise conflict and misunderstanding may emanate due to what measurement criteria was used for assessing the performance of employees, thereby creating a source of discontent for the university personnel and the employee being appraised. Scholars made attempt to study the



appraisal practices in universities in Calabar, Delta, Lagos, Ogun and Enugu States Nigeria (Igbojekwe & Ugo-Okoro, 2015 examined Performance evaluation of academic staff in universities and colleges in Nigeria; Annierah, Kamarulzaman, Maeda & Datu, 2013 attempted to find out the relationship between work duties and job morale among teachers of Division of Cotabato City; Fapohunda, 2017 examined the performance appraisal practices of academic staff in Lagos State University, Ojo, Nigeria and its influence on their morale, drive and general performance; Osibanjo, Adeniji, Falola and Heirsmac, 2014 examined the effect of compensation packages, commitment on employees' job morale and retention in selected private universities in Ogun State, South-West Nigeria, but none of the studies attempted to link appraisal practices with job morale of both academic and non-teaching staff in Edo State, Nigeria. Hence, a knowledge gap exists on utilization of performance appraisal practices on job morale of university staff in Edo State. This study seeks to fill this gap.