

**IDENTIFICATION OF RATERS OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE FOR IMPROVED
PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIAN ORGANISATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

The work focused on the identification of raters of employee performance in organisations. Rater is used to denote the person doing the appraising and ratee is used to refer to the employee whose performance is being appraised. Past studies were reviewed to obtain information relevant to the research. The information gathered was critically analysed qualitatively. The study identified several potential sources for performance ratings, which include employees themselves, peers, subordinates, and customers who are internal or external to the organisation. The study also recommended that management of Nigerian organisations should sometimes ask employees to evaluate themselves, since individuals would be the best judges of their own performance.

Keywords: Identification, Raters, Employee, Performance, Organisations

INTRODUCTION

Productivity improvement concerns almost all organisations, especially during period when the rates of productivity of most organisations is a function of technological, capital, and human resources, many organisations have not sought to increase productivity by improving the performance of their human resources. Nevertheless, Okere (2019) observed that what employees do or do not do influences the productivity of organisations, and this behaviour can be measured and evaluated, particularly job performance and absenteeism. Employee job performance describes how well an employee performs his or her job. Job performance can be measured by an employee's job-related attributes, behaviours and outcomes. Although employees may learn how well they are performing through informal means such as co-workers telling them what a great job they are doing or their superior, giving them an occasional pat-on-the-back. In most organisations, supervisors provide subjective ratings

of employee performance (Okere, 2019). However, Joann (2001) asserted that there are several other potential sources for performance ratings, including employees themselves, peers, subordinates and customers. A consistent finding in the performance assessment literature by Michael et al (1998) is that ratings obtained from different rating sources have only partial agreement. Self-ratings tend to be most dissimilar from those of other sources, probably the result of individuals rating themselves higher than other comparison groups (Thornton, 1993; Mount, 1994). In a study Harris and Schaubroeck (1988) found that peer ratings correlated 0.62 with those of supervisors, while in another study by Conway and Huffcutt (1997) the correlation was 0.79, both very substantial degrees of relationship. Also, a further study by Jeffrey and Bartholomew (2001) involve a single instrument containing forty-eight behaviourally oriented items representing ten dimensions of managerial performance. The items were represented separately rather than as scales. The study found no difference in the way self, peer, supervisor, and subordinate groups organized the item to the scales. In other words the ten scales were seen as analogous irrespective of the group doing the rating.

Self-Evaluation

Employees according to Joann (2001) are sometimes asked to evaluate themselves. It seems logical says Okere (2019) that individuals would be the best judges of their own performance, particularly if supervisors cannot observe them on a regular basis. If employees are asked to evaluate themselves, they may respond by becoming more motivated and involved in the evaluation process. In the words of Brain and Dirk (1996) self-ratings tend to show more leniency error than supervisor ratings, although halo errors are lower. Self-evaluations have become popular as a part of the management by objectives process, when the supervisor and the subordinate jointly evaluate goal attainment. Self-evaluation seems most appropriate when it is used as an employee development tool rather than to make administrative decisions (Brain & Dirk, 1996). It also may serve as an important input into a supervisory assessment. An employee's self-assessment may provide important information of which the supervisor was not aware. The supervisor can then factor this information into his or her performance ratings of the employee.

Peer Evaluation

Compared with supervisory ratings, peer or coworker evaluations are more stable over time, can tap more dimensions of performance, are better able to distinguish effort from performance, and can focus more on task-relevant abilities (Mount, 1994). Kenneth and Richard (1984) study concluded that peer ratings may be the most accurate evaluations of employee performance. Donald and Cynthia (1988) argued that peer evaluations can be particularly useful when supervisors do not have the opportunity to observe an individual's performance but fellow employees do. Peers sometimes resist evaluating one another. Michael et al. (1998) observed that an individual may not want to give a fellow employee a favourable evaluation for fear of looking inferior in comparison. On the other hand, an individual may not want to jeopardize a good working relationship by giving an unfavourable rating to a colleague. Friendship bias may lead an employee to rate his or her friends higher than other employees. If resources are finite, as for salary increases, workers in a unit may see peer evaluation as a win-lose scenario. In a survey of 218 industrial employees who had used a peer evaluation system for more than a year by Glenn and Paul (1987) discovered a high degree of user acceptance. It seems, however, that peer assessments,

like self-evaluations, are best used for employee development rather than for administrative decisions. The same study found that users were more favourable in their attitudes toward peer assessments that were used for developmental rather than for evaluative purposes. When teamwork, participation, and cohesiveness are part of the organisation's culture, peer evaluations can work well (Mark, 2001). In organisations that are competitive and have a low level of trust among employees, evaluations may be little more than a way for employees to enhance themselves by belittling their fellow employees.

Subordinate Evaluation

Evaluation by subordinates in Nigerian organisations may provide valuable information (Okere, 1995). Subordinates know how well a supervisor performs with respect to leading, organizing, planning, delegating, and communicating. In fact, evaluating the boss is becoming a popular mechanism in many organisations (Joann, 1994; Sue 1994; Joyce, 1992; Oren, 1992). Subordinates, however, may inflate their rating of a supervisor, especially if they think that the supervisor will be able to discern who has given a particular rating. Complete anonymity is essential if this technique is to provide valid ratings (David, 1994). However, some systems of subordinate evaluation tend to compromise anonymity. Thus, open channels of communication and an abundance of trust between supervisors and subordinates are also needed if this type of evaluation is to be worthwhile. Like self and peer evaluations, subordinate evaluation is useful for development but historically has not been used widely for making administrative decisions (Jeffrey & Bartholomew, 2001). In a research James et al. (1995) look at subordinate ratings and found that managers whose initial level of performance was moderate or low improve overtime, thus showing that upward feedback has the desired effect.

Customer Evaluation

According to Dick (2000), another source of assessment information comes from customers or clients. Such assessments are popular in the context of service delivery, where there is a high degree of client involvement and when the service employee is relatively removed from other employees or supervisors (Leonard & Parasuraman, 1991). Customers can be internal or external to the organisation. For example, the "customer set" for human resource professionals includes the employees of the organisation. As an example of external customers, it would be difficult for the owner or manager of a carpet-cleaning company to know whether the service was performed to the company's standards and to customer's satisfaction in the absence of feedback from the customer. This feedback could be obtained through a phone interview with the customer or a formal survey. Alternately, customer feedback can be through "shoppers", individuals who appear to be regular customers but who are actually hired to carefully observe and rate the service using a predefined protocol (Dick, 2000).

360-Degree Appraisal

Leanne and David (1998) established that an estimated 90% of fortune 1000 firms use some form of 360-degree assessment, where performance ratings are collected simultaneously from subordinates, peers, supervisors, and employees themselves. Richard and Anntoinette (1997) argued that when done well, 360-degree feedback is like that truth-telling magic mirror in that it gives us information we did not expect and possibly did not want to hear, but information that can help us grow and be more effective. Although we

generally view enough snapshots of ourselves that there are few surprises, a profile or the view from the back may show us some features about ourselves we had not expected. In David (1996) study, those appraised using the 360-degree approach reported that 25% of the feedback was expected positive feedback, 30% was unexpected positive feedback, 20% to 30% was expected negative feedback, and 15 to 20% was unexpected negative feedback. David et al. (1998) discussed that 360-degree approach works best when results are filtered through a coach and combined with self-evaluation. Although many organisations are using 360-degree assessments, they are most successful in organisations that offer open and participative climates as well as active career development systems.

Many researchers such as David et al. (1997); Ellen et al. (1997); Walter and Manuel (1998), and practitioners like Brain (1994); Peter (1997); Susan (1999), maintained that it is best for development and feedback purposes rather than for salary or other administrative uses. The focus on development assures those participating groups such as subordinates, peers, and customers, that the 360-degree assessment is being done to improve all involved and is not part of the competitive win-lose scenario that so often accompanies salary and promotion decisions. The focus is on evaluation of skills and competencies that are relevant for job performance in useful behavioural terms. Information can be collected through rating forms, open-ended comments, or some combination of both. Researches like the ones conducted by Atwater et al. (1995); Vasilopoulos (1996); Johnson and Forstl (1999) reported improvement in performance following 360-degree feedback, with the most notable results for those who initially rated themselves higher than the ratings they received from others. The assumption of the 360-degree feedback process is that negative or discrepant feedback, that is ratings that are lower than one's self ratings, can create an awareness of the need to improve in specific ways. Although this is certainly the desired result, other studies have shown that it is not always the case. Some researchers like Kluger and DeNisi (1996); Joan and Leanne (2001) discovered that in approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of the cases, negative feedback caused those who received it to be discouraged or to see the results as less accurate, particularly when the feedback concerned personal characteristics rather than task behaviours. David (1994) believed that 360-degree system have a number of advantages over traditional assessment system. Supervisors, peers, subordinates, and employees themselves typically differ in their ability to appraise various dimensions of performance. These raters observe different behaviours and may interpret them with divergent standards. Thus, each source has access to unique information about performance. Perhaps the best approach is to use as many different sources as possible to maximize the breadth of information and cancel out biases unique to a particular source. Okere (2019) observed that multiple sources can be used regardless of which specific subjective method of measuring performance is adopted.

Method Adopted

The study adopted literature survey method, whereby past works were reviewed to obtain accurate information needed in the areas of the research. The information gathered were qualitatively analysed.

CONCLUSION

Traditionally, when one thinks of performance appraisal it is in terms of supervisors evaluating subordinates. However, in addition to supervisors, raters of employee

performance include the employees themselves, peers, sub-ordinates, and customers, including customers internal and external to the organisation. A new approach to performance appraisal or assessment is 360-degree assessment, using many or all of the sources of feedback.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The research recommends the following for improved employees, performance rating in Nigerian organisations.

1. Management of organisations in Nigeria should sometimes ask employees to evaluate themselves, since individuals would be the best judges of their own performance.
2. Self-evaluation should be used as an employee development tool rather than to make administrative decisions.
3. Peer evaluation can be applied when teamwork, participation, and cohesiveness are part of the organisation's culture.
4. Subordinate evaluation should be adopted to evaluate supervisors, since they know their performance with respect to leading, organizing, planning, delegating, and communicating.
5. Customer evaluation should be applied in service delivery, where there is a high degree of client involvement and when the service employee is relatively removed from other employees or supervisors.
6. 360-degree system should be used to rate performance simultaneously from subordinates, peers, supervisors, and employees themselves.

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