



EFFECTIVENESS OF ANNUAL PUBLIC SERVICE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL IN SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Bureaucracy is characterized with rigidity and stable ordered rules, while the job conditions and work environment that determine employees' job satisfaction and performance keep changing. Thus; it is imperative to assess periodically, how appraisal tool reflects the vagaries. Hence; the paper examined the effectiveness of annual public service performance appraisal on the three (3) core variables: performance management, career development and accountability at the local government level in Lagos State. The paper adopted survey design; population of study was the local government employees of Lagos State, while the sample was 200 respondents selected through simple random technique in 6 local governments of the state. The state is divided into three senatorial zones and two local governments were randomly selected from each. The respondents were purposely selected among the senior employees because of their experiences on the job. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire and the data analysis tools include: mean for descriptive statistics and chi-square for inferential statistics. The findings from test of hypotheses validated the three alternative hypotheses, that the performance appraisal has effect on the three variables but not significant. The identified reasons for this include, lack of objectivity, bias, inadequate information, and lack of transparency among others. The implication of this to policy makers includes, the need to link appraisals with development, designing how to improve accountability mechanisms, formulating the policy on the regular review of appraisal systems. Therefore, the paper recommended standardizing appraisal processes, linking appraisals to professional development, enhancing accountability mechanisms, and regular monitoring and evaluation.

Keywords: Accountability, Career Development, Civil Service, Employees'

Introduction

Local governments play a pivotal role in rural development, facilitating inclusive governance, and serving as the bedrock for economic growth at the local level (Aderogba, 2023). Ensuring that

local government workers operate under satisfactory conditions is crucial to achieving the indicators outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, which focuses on promoting inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all by the year 2030. Performance appraisal is a critical tool used to evaluate the extent to which employees meet their assigned duties and contribute towards the organizational goals within a specified time frame. The Nigeria's federal system provides a decentralized approach to performance appraisal across public institutions. In Lagos State, the Public Service Rules (2015) outline the procedures and guidelines for staff performance evaluation. Hence; there is the need to review periodically, the effectiveness of the framework, particularly at the local government level. In 2018, the Lagos State Government decides not to promote its civil servants based on career progression any more, in order to enhance better service delivery in the state. Rather, the performance of all government officials would be assessed against their clearly-defined job schedules as a means to addressing the 'fixed mindset' of civil servants and ensure a 'growth mindset' that would institutionalize the optimization of service delivery in Lagos State (Nigerian Tribune, 2018). This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of performance appraisals in achieving its core objectives within Lagos State's local governments.

Despite the established guidelines for performance appraisals within Lagos State's public service, questions persist about their effectiveness in achieving the intended outcomes. Specifically, there is the concern that performance appraisals may not be contributing adequately to performance management, career development, and accountability among local government employees. Given the critical role that local governments play in economic development and service delivery, ineffective appraisals could have far-reaching consequences for the efficiency and productivity of the public sector. Therefore, the research questions for the study are: how effective is the public service appraisal on local government organizational performance management in Lagos State, how effective is public service appraisal on local government employees' career development in Lagos State, and how effective is public service appraisal on holding local government employees' accountable for their official duties in Lagos State. Thus; the objectives are: to examine the effectiveness of the public service appraisal on local government organizational performance management in Lagos State, to investigate the effectiveness of the public service appraisal on local government employees' career development in Lagos State, and to determine how effective is the public service appraisal on holding local government employees' accountable for their official duties in Lagos State. The remaining sections of the paper are: conceptual review, theoretical review, methodology, results, discussion, implications for the findings, recommendations, and conclusion.

Conceptual Review

Public service refers to the services and facilities the government or its agencies provide. It may be to the individuals, groups, a community or a country. It is a fundamental of democracy and serves as a vehicle to facilitate the general welfare and prosperity of a nation (Brown & Milne, 2019). Public service specifically involves providing basic services, which include health care, education, housing, maintaining infrastructure and public facilities and protection of lives and properties, by strengthening the law enforcement and the justice system. Public service ethics guide the conduct of such services and assigned officials have a moral obligation to act in the best interest of the public. The ethics depend on four basic principles of trustworthiness, responsibility, respect, and fairness (Thompson, 1985). The concept of public service is closely related to the idea of social responsibility and the common good, which are critical to the socio-economic development of a country (Olowu, 2002). The colonial experiences influence the

establishment and operation of the public services after Nigeria's independence. The British established a centralized colonial administrative system with various departments, such as the police, judiciary, health, education, and agriculture. Nigeria's adoption of federation, necessitated the creation of three tiers of government: federal, state, and local, with federal and state public services (Thompson, 2015). The federal government is responsible for providing national-level services on items in the exclusive legislative list such as defense, foreign affairs, and monetary policy, while jointly with the states provide public services on items in the concurrent legislative list, such as chieftaincy affairs and land matters, however, the local government is responsible for providing basic services, such as water supply, sanitation, and waste management (Aderogba, 2023). The public service is the instrument by which the government implements policies, delivering services, and ensuring good governance (Olaopa, 2013).

It is important to note that the public service in Nigeria is structured into three categories: the civil service, the paramilitary service, and the military service, but the civil service is the largest category, implementing policies, delivering services, and managing government programs (Public Service Institute of Nigeria, n.d.). The federal civil service is headed by the Head of Service of the Federation, who is the most senior civil servant in Nigeria. The state civil service is headed by the Head of Service of the State, while the local government civil service is headed by the Director of Local Government Administration (DLGA). The paramilitary service comprises agencies, such as the police, immigration, customs, prison service, and civil defense maintaining law and order, border control, and national security. On the other hand, the military service comprises the Army, Navy, and Air Force that are responsible for national defense and security (Public Service Institute of Nigeria, n.d.). Public service appraisal is a critical tool in evaluating the performance of public servants on assigned services to the public. It is a systematic and objective assessment of the performance of public servants based on set criteria and standards. Public service appraisal is a critical component of public administration identifying the strengths and weaknesses of public servants and providing feedback on their performance. It also identifies training and development needs and setting performance goals (Kernagan, 2015). It reveals the areas where public servants need improvement and guides in achieving quality results (Bartle, 2018). More importantly, it promotes accountability and transparency in the public service, thus; public servants are responsible and answerable to the public. The main objectives of public service appraisal are to improve the performance of public servants, enhance their skills and knowledge, and ensure that they are accountable to the public (Ugwuanyi, 2018).

Performance management in the public sector ensures public servants are accountable for their performance in their official duties. Performance appraisal helps in evaluating an employee's performance goals, identifying key performance indicators, and measuring, monitoring and improving an employee's performance and impact on organizational goals (Guzzo & Noonan, 2016). Career development is another reason for engaging in public service appraisal. It identifies where employees can improve their skills and gain further knowledge and experience and how they can access necessary resources and information to enhance their professional development and setting realistic expectations for each employee's career path, providing employees a sense of direction, clarity of purpose, and relating their work to organizational goals (Lloyd, 2015). Effectiveness of public service appraisal also requires accountability of the employees on their duties as a response to the desire of the public for government accountability. Hence, performance appraisal ensures transparency and accountability of the civil servants to the public.

It enhances detecting of corruption and irregularities within the public sector, identifying weaknesses in public service systems, alerting on potential problems, and encouraging corrective measures to gain public confidence (Hutchinson, 2020). There are different methods, approaches and criteria for public service appraisal but each have strengths and weaknesses, hence, the specific needs of different organization determine the choice that is appropriate. The models of public service appraisal include the traditional trait-based model, the behavior-based model, and the results-based model (Behn, 2002). The trait-based model focuses on evaluating an individual's personal traits, such as knowledge, skills, and abilities. The behavior-based model emphasizes measuring an individual's observable behaviors, such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. The results-based model assesses an individual's contribution to achieving organizational objectives, such as meeting targets and delivering high-quality services (Behn, 2002).

In the same vein, there are several techniques used in public service appraisal, and the choice of any government depends on expectation and outcomes. Also, each has its own strength and weaknesses. They include; 360-degree feedback, ranking, forced distribution, and graphic rating scales, among others (Noel et al., 2017). 360-Degree Feedback technique according to Maurer and Tarulli (2014) is common in public organizations due to its multi-source approach. The 360-degree feedback technique depends on feedback from multiple sources about an employee's performance thereby providing diverse perspectives to the appraisal process for a holistic assessment of the employee's behavior, skills, and performance. The feedback sources include peers, supervisors, clients, and self-assessment. Ranking appraisal technique involves identifying the high and low performing employees in a set or group, through forced choice or paired comparisons, to identify potential employees for promotion or leadership in the organization. Though, it is more comprehensive, it is time-consuming and requires significant resources. The Forced choice ranks depend on specific set of criteria, while paired comparisons depends on performances in a particular area in matching or comparing employees (Ingraham and Eaton, 2016). Furthermore, Forced Distribution as a technique ranks employees' performance based on a bell curve. It involves creating a performance scale and thereafter rates employees on the basis of their performance's percentile rank. It is deficient for disregarding individual differences and the possibility of discouraging low performers. The Graphic Rating Scale is also a rating technique usually used to evaluate performance in public organizations. It relates to performance rating based on specific criteria such as teamwork, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities, which may be either numerical or descriptive to provide an overview of the employee's performance level (Ingraham and Eaton, 2016). On the contrary, the critical incident technique emphasizes appraising and resolving employee's specific performance situations which may be exemplary or below performance. It requires keeping a record of specific incidents during the appraisal period and engages the employee to reinforce or improve the performance. It identifies the employee's strengths and weaknesses for purpose of determining future performance target (Noe et al., 2017).

Although, there is no single fix-all-technique, but mixed techniques can reveal a diverse insight into the employee's performance, for improved organizational performance. Though, it is more comprehensive, it is time-consuming and requires significant resources. Performance appraisal is a widely studied tool in both public and private sectors, often linked to organizational performance, employee development, and accountability. According to Aguinis (2013) effective performance appraisals are critical for aligning individual employee goals with organizational objectives, providing feedback, and identifying areas for development. In the public sector, performance appraisals are also seen as instruments for ensuring accountability

and transparency (Boyne, 2003). However, challenges such as bias, lack of training for appraisers, and inadequate follow-up on appraisal outcomes have been noted as factors that undermine the effectiveness of appraisals (Murphy & Cleveland, 1995). In Nigeria, studies have shown mixed results regarding the effectiveness of performance appraisals in the public sector. Some studies highlight the positive impact of appraisals on employee motivation and performance (Akinyele, 2010), while others point to systemic issues such as corruption, lack of transparency, and the politicization of appraisal outcomes (Adamu, 2014). The decentralization of the appraisal process in Nigeria, as provided by the federal system, adds another layer of complexity, with variations in how appraisals are conducted across different states and local government areas. Some of these strains corroborate observed challenges of public policy as an instrument of governance in Nigeria (Aderogba, 2022).

Methodology

The study employed a survey research design to gather data from senior staff members of selected local governments in Lagos State. This design was chosen for its effectiveness in capturing the perceptions and experiences of respondents regarding the effectiveness of performance appraisals. The population of the study consisted of senior staff members across the 20 local governments in Lagos State. A purposive sampling technique was used by selecting senior staff members due to their extensive experience and familiarity with the appraisal process. The sample was 210 senior staff from six local governments, randomly selected from the three senatorial zones: Lagos Central (Lagos Island and Eti-Osa), Lagos East (Ikorodu and Ikorodu North), and Lagos West (Agege and Oshodi-Isolo). Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire designed in a Likert format, ranging from "strongly agree" (5) to "strongly disagree" (1). The questionnaire was divided into three sections; each with 5 variables corresponding to the three main objectives and hypotheses of the study; performance management, career development, and accountability. The reviewed literatures provided relevant secondary data and validated the questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) for exploratory data analysis, chi-square for inferential statistical tests to assess the relationships between the variables, chart for illustration, and SPSS for analyses.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of measured variables

Items	SD	D	U	A	SA	Sum	Mean	Std. Dev.
Performance Management								
It ensures that public servants are accountable for their performance in their respective roles.	-	-	-	93	117	957	4.56	.498
It adequately measures the achievements of key performance indicators.	-	-	5	165	40	875	4.17	.433
Improves an employee's performance.	-	10	15	85	100	905	4.31	.803
It ensures that the public servants achieve their objectives.	-	10	15	85	100	905	4.31	.803
It ensures that public servants contribute to organizational goals.	5	-	5	96	104	924	4.40	.759
Career Development								
It guides in identifying areas where employees can improve their skills and gain further knowledge	-	-	5	47	158	993	4.73	.497

and experience.								
It provides feedback on coaching, training, and development programs for public servants.	11	-	10	149	40	837	3.99	
It ensures that employees have access to the necessary resources and information to enhance their professional development.	5	-	10	125	70	875	4.17	.845
It helps set realistic expectations for each employee's career progression.	5	15	20	90	80	855	4.07	.988
It provides employees a sense of direction, clarity of purpose, and knowledge about how their work relates to organizational goals.	-	-	5	96	109	944	4.50	.547
Accountability								
It ensures that employees are held accountable for their performance.	-	-	-	93	117	957	4.56	.498
Public servants remain transparent and accountable to the public they serve.	-	-	5	165	40	875	4.17	.433
It provides a basis for detecting corruption and irregularities within the public sector.	-	10	15	85	100	905	4.31	.803
It identifies weaknesses in public service systems, and alerting management teams to potential problems	-	10	15	85	100	905	4.31	.803
It helps instilling public confidence in the public sector.	5	-	5	96	104	924	4.40	.759

Finding: The descriptive statistics reveal that respondents generally perceive performance appraisals as effective across the three objectives. High mean scores indicate strong agreement that appraisals contribute to performance management (mean = 4.56), career development (mean = 4.73), and accountability (mean = 4.56).

Inferential Statistical Analyses

Hypotheses Testing:

H₀₁: Public service appraisal is not effective on local government organizational performance management in Lagos State.

H₁: Public service appraisal is effective on local government organizational performance management in Lagos State.

Table 2: Appraisal for Performance * Performance Management Crosstabulation

		Performance Management			Total
		Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Appraisal for Performance	Undecided	0	8	16	24
	Agree	5	18	63	86
	Strongly Agree	0	23	77	100
Total		5	49	156	210

Table 3: Chi-square of Appraisal for Performance * Performance Management

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.754 ^a	4	.068
Likelihood Ratio	10.364	4	.035

Linear-by-Linear Association	1.667	1	.197
N of Valid Cases	210		

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .57.

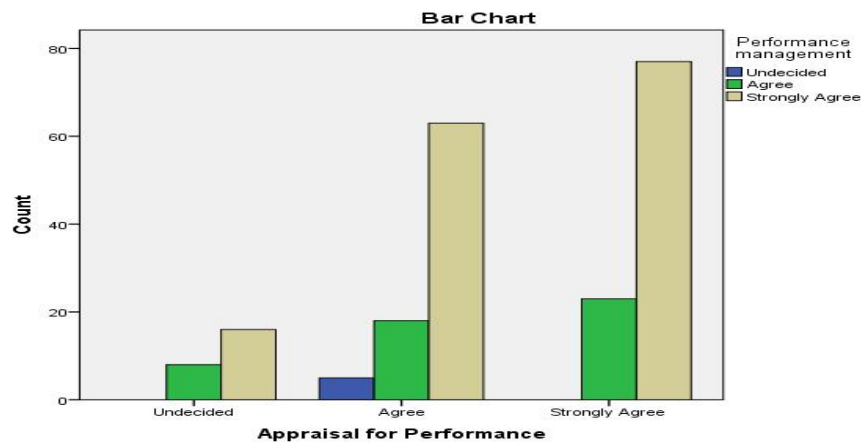


Figure 1: Cluster Bar Chart of Appraisal for Performance Management

H₀₂: Public service appraisal is not effective on local government employees' career development in Lagos State.

H₂: Public service appraisal is effective on local government employees' career development in Lagos State.

Table 4: Appraisal for Development * Career Development Cross Tabulation

		Career Development		Total
		Agree	Strongly Agree	
Appraisal for Development	Disagree	0	2	2
	Undecided	6	20	26
	Agree	18	129	147
	Strongly Agree	4	31	35
Total		28	182	210

Table5: Chi-Square Appraisal for Development * Career Development

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.704 ^a	3	.439
Likelihood Ratio	2.654	3	.448
Linear-by-Linear Association	.889	1	.346
N of Valid Cases	210		

a. 4 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .27.

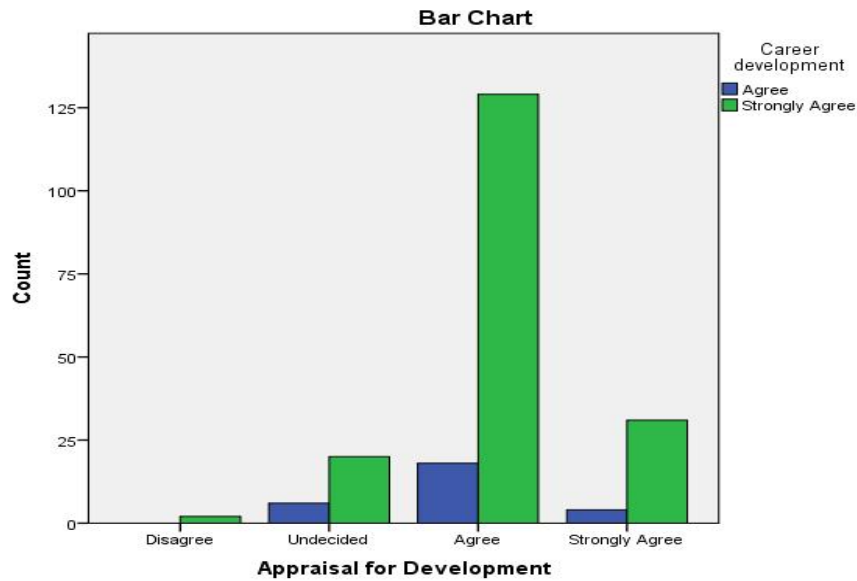


Figure 2: Cluster Bar Chart Appraisal for Career Development

H₀₃: Public service appraisal is not effective on holding local government employees' accountable for their official duties in Lagos State.

H₃: Public service appraisal is effective on holding local government employees' accountable for their official duties in Lagos State.

Table 6: Appraisal for Employees Accountability* Accountability Cross Tabulation

		Employees accountability			Total
		Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Appraisal for Accountability	Undecided	0	8	16	24
	Agree	5	18	63	86
	Strongly Agree	0	23	77	100
Total		5	49	156	210

Table 7: Chi-Square Appraisal for Accountability * Employees Accountability

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.754 ^a	4	.068
Likelihood Ratio	10.364	4	.035
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.667	1	.197
N of Valid Cases	210		

a. 3 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .57.

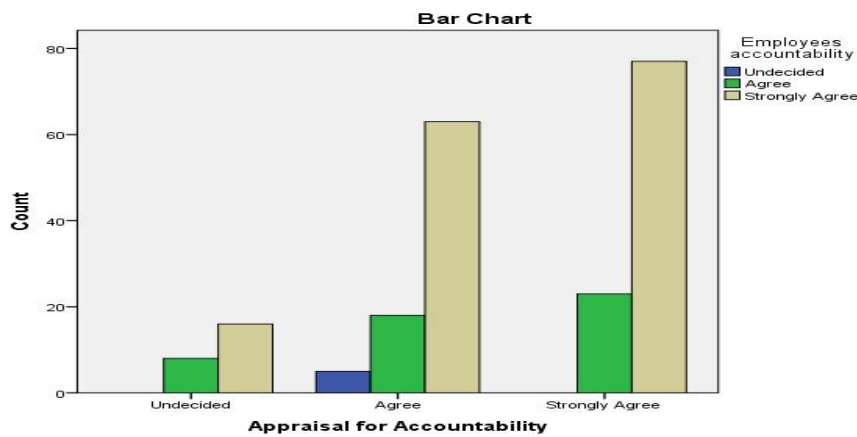


Figure3: Appraisal for Accountability * Employees Accountability

Findings: The chi-square test for the relationship between performance appraisals and performance management shows a Pearson Chi-Square value of 8.754 with a p-value of 0.068, suggesting a borderline association. For career development, the chi-square test yields a Pearson Chi-Square value of 2.704 with a p-value of 0.439, indicating no significant association. The chi-square test for the relationship between appraisals and accountability results in a Pearson Chi-Square value that is not statistically significant.

Discussion

The results suggest that while performance appraisals are generally perceived as effective by senior staff in Lagos State local governments, the statistical analysis indicates that the strength of these relationships varies. The effectiveness of appraisals in performance management is evident, although the association is not strongly statistically significant. The lack of significant relationships for career development and accountability may point to issues in how appraisals are implemented or followed up within these areas.

Although Nigerian public service has a long history of performance appraisal, however, the finding aligns with similar findings on the appraisal system for being ineffective and lacking objectivity. According to Okorie et al (2019), the Nigerian public service appraisal system is characterized by subjectivity, bias, inadequate information, and lack of transparency. The authors argue that the appraisal system is often influenced by personal relationships, political affiliations, and ethnic considerations. This interference may be intentional or unintentional and may be due to personal biases or external pressures. In some cases, political leaders may influence the public managers to give favorable evaluations to employees who are loyal to their administrations (Brown, 2015). Also, subjectivity may be due to personal bias or favoritism, instead of objective criteria such as goals, objectives, and outputs (Koppell, 2000). Finding by Calvert and Martin (2002) shows that subjective evaluations can lead to inconsistent rating, and also, undermining the credibility of the appraisal processes. Appraisal Methodology used in the public service can have a significant impact on the outcome of the appraisal process; however, some of these methods may be unsuitable for the public service, leading to poor appraisals and low employee morale (Noe et al, 2017). The use of unreliable or invalid methods may lead to inaccurate results and lack of credibility in the appraisal process (Bartle, 2018). Findings of Arua and Obot (2020) reveal that the Nigerian public service appraisal system is characterized by low levels of trust, poor communication, limited resources, and inadequate training of appraisers.

However, the findings of the study further showed that civil servants generally have a positive attitude towards performance appraisal.

Adeyemo and Adelabu (2017) examined the perceptions of civil servants in Nigeria towards performance appraisal. The findings of the study showed that civil servants generally supported performance appraisal, though there are concerns about a number of challenges affecting the appraisal system such as inadequate training, poor communication, and a lack of clarity around performance expectations. There are other findings from recent studies on public service appraisal in Nigeria. For example, lack of training and development can lead to inconsistencies, inaccuracies, and lack of credibility in the appraisal process (Wong & Cummings, 2009). A study by Adebayo and Ogunlana (2021) reveals that the Nigerian public service appraisal system is characterized by low levels of motivation, inadequate training, and lack of feedback. Lack of transparency in the performance appraisal process can lead to distrust among employees and the public, resulting in decrease in morale and employee motivation (Jin, 2015). Despite the challenges facing public service appraisal in Nigeria, some efforts have been made to improve the system. For example, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced a Performance Management System (PMS), which adopts a combination of technologies and methodologies to improve the appraisal system in the public service (Akinyemi, 2022). The PMS is designed to align employees' performance with organizational goals and objectives; thus, improving transparency, objectivity, and fairness in the appraisal process.

Policy Implications

The implications of the findings from the study for public policy decisions and effective service delivery include:

- i. Enhancing the appraisal process: Given the positive perceptions of performance appraisals, it is essential to strengthen the appraisal process to ensure consistency and objectivity.
- ii. Linking appraisals with development: Lack of statistical significance in the relationship between appraisals and career development suggests the need for a more direct linkage between performance reviews and professional development opportunities by providing clear pathways for career advancement.
- iii. Improving accountability mechanisms: Although appraisals are seen as tools for accountability, their effectiveness can be enhanced by integrating them with broader accountability frameworks within the local government.
- iv. Regular review of appraisal systems to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of performance appraisals and updating the appraisal systems.

Conclusion

The study finds that performance appraisals in the Lagos State local government are generally perceived as effective in managing performance, supporting career development, and ensuring accountability. While respondents overwhelmingly agreed on the positive impacts of appraisals, the statistical analysis shows that the impacts were not significant. This suggests that while appraisals are valued, their effectiveness may vary depending on implementation and other contextual factors within the local government system. Generally, public service appraisal is an important aspect of human resource management in the Nigerian public service. However, there are appraisal challenges, such as subjectivity and lack of transparency, which may have negative impacts on the quality and efficiency of the public service appraisal. Empirical data and recent studies provided insights into the state of the appraisal system in Nigeria and can be used to inform policy decisions aimed at improving the system to ensure objectivity, fairness, and effectiveness. Future research to assist in new policy options may require comparative studies

across states to examine the effectiveness of performance appraisals across different states in Nigeria, identifying best practices and areas for improvement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations will enhance the appraisal:

- i. **Standardization of Appraisal Processes:** To enhance the effectiveness of appraisals, it is recommended that Lagos State local governments standardize the appraisal process across all local government areas. This should include comprehensive training for appraisers to ensure consistency and objectivity.
- ii. **Linking Appraisals to Professional Development:** There should be a stronger emphasis on linking performance appraisals with career development opportunities, ensuring that appraisals lead to actionable outcomes such as training and promotions.
- iii. **Enhancing Accountability Mechanisms:** Local governments should integrate performance appraisals with broader accountability frameworks, including measures to address corruption and promote transparency.
- iv. **Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:** Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the appraisal process is essential in ensuring regular alignment of the organizational goals to the needs of employees.

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