



doi:10.5281/zenodo.15192300

Performance Appraisal As Strategy For Effective Accountability And Leadership Effectiveness In The Niger Delta Development Commission

AUGOYE Ojaduvba James

**Department of Political Science
Novena University, Ogume, Delta State, Nigeria**

ABSTRACT

This study examines performance appraisal as a strategy for enhancing accountability and leadership effectiveness in the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). Performance appraisal systems are essential tools for improving transparency, accountability, and employee productivity in public institutions. The study explores the historical evolution of performance appraisal, its impact on organizational performance, and the challenges associated with its implementation in the NDDC. Using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 320 respondents across various departments within the NDDC Delta State office. Findings reveal that performance appraisal positively influences accountability, enhances leadership decision-making, and fosters employee development. However, challenges such as political interference, lack of clear performance criteria, and inadequate training hinder its effectiveness. The study recommends strengthening training programs, establishing objective appraisal criteria, and minimizing political interference to improve the appraisal system's efficiency. These measures will enhance accountability and leadership effectiveness, ultimately improving service delivery in the NDDC.

Keywords: Performance Appraisal, Accountability, Leadership Effectiveness, Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), Public Sector Management

INTRODUCTION

Performance appraisal systems are critical tools for enhancing accountability and leadership effectiveness within organizations. In the context of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the implementation of robust performance appraisal mechanisms is essential to fulfill its mandate of developing Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta region. Traditionally, performance appraisal in Nigeria's public sector was characterized by subjective evaluations, focusing on personal traits such as honesty and loyalty. This approach often led to challenges in promotions, wage increases, and training selections, thereby hindering organizational efficiency (Ekpe, Daniel, & Ekpe, 2013). Recognizing these issues, the 1988 Civil Service Reform introduced a target-setting and performance appraisal system emphasizing measurable job performance and professional competence. This shift aimed to align individual performance with organizational goals, promoting a culture of accountability and effectiveness.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that effective performance appraisal systems positively impact employee performance. For instance, research conducted in selected ministries in Enugu State revealed that performance appraisal significantly influences employee productivity, competence, and workload delivery. The study recommended that management should establish channels for employee feedback and conduct periodic training to enhance appraisal effectiveness (Eze & Ishiwe, 2023). Similarly, another

study concluded that performance appraisal significantly affects employee productivity, commitment, and innovativeness, underscoring the importance of effective appraisal systems in improving staff performance (Egwuagu & Chikeleze, 2023). Despite the recognized benefits, the effectiveness of performance appraisal systems in Nigeria's public sector is often hindered by various factors. These include lack of objectivity, personal biases, and politicization of the appraisal process. A study examining the effectiveness of performance appraisals in the Nigerian public sector identified these challenges and concluded that while appraisal systems exist, their implementation is often ineffective (Sakpere, 2021).

The NDDC has acknowledged the importance of transparency and accountability in achieving its developmental goals. The Commission's leadership has emphasized the need for a transparent operational framework to enhance service delivery. Initiatives such as engaging KPMG to design a corporate governance system with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) aim to internally regulate activities and boost stakeholder confidence. The Managing Director of NDDC highlighted that transitioning from transactional to transformational leadership requires transparency and accountability for more efficient service delivery (Ogbuku, 2024). In line with the Federal Civil Service Strategy and Implementation Plan (FCSSIP) 2021–2025, the Ministry of Niger Delta Development organized a workshop on Performance Management Systems (PMS) for its staff. The Permanent Secretary emphasized that PMS has become the new standard for appraising civil servants, aiming to improve performance and productivity. This initiative reflects a broader commitment to institutionalizing performance management practices within organizations involved in Niger Delta development (Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation, 2024).

Objectives

Here are three key objectives for the study on Performance Appraisal as a Strategy for Effective Accountability and Leadership Effectiveness in the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC):

- i. To examine the impact of performance appraisal on accountability within the NDDC
- ii. To assess the relationship between performance appraisal and leadership effectiveness in the NDDC
- iii. To identify the challenges affecting the implementation of performance appraisal in the NDDC and propose strategies for improvement

Performance Appraisal

The focus of the performance appraisal is measuring and improving the actual performance of the employee and also the future potential of the employee. Its aim is to measure what an employee does. Shelley (1999) considered performance appraisal as a systematic way of reviewing and assessing the performance of an employee during a given period of time and planning for his future. Performance appraisal (PA) is a formal system of review and evaluation of individual or team task performance. A critical point in the definition is the word formal, because in actuality, managers should be reviewing an individual's performance on a continuing basis. Although evaluation of team performance is critical when teams exist in an organization, the focus of PA in most firms remains on the individual employee. Regardless of the emphasis, an effective appraisal system evaluates accomplishments and initiates plans for development goals and objectives. Performance appraisal is a process in performance management function. Longenecker defined that performance appraisal influences one's career and corporate capacity. In performance appraisal, the employee is appraised by her/his knowledge, skill, and ability in performing the assigned tasks.

The performance appraisal also evaluates the employee's commitment and communication skill. Performance appraisal makes a significant contribution to the development of a working culture including ethical, equitable and performance oriented. Moreover, the performance appraisal process must be appropriate and suitable, and the superior has to demonstrate an effort to reduce potential biases that always happen in appraising workers' performance. Even though, there is a freedom and flexibility in the manner, in which leaders can implement and manage performance appraisal. In the same context Kluger

developed Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT). For Tarigan, et al. (2023), argued that “in the realm of organizational management, performance appraisals function as a cornerstone, enabling the evaluation of employee performance, identification of strengths and areas for development, and provision of constructive feedback”. These assessments profoundly influence an array of organizational outcomes, including employee engagement, motivation, job satisfaction, and, ultimately, overall productivity. Acknowledging the weight of performance appraisals, researchers have embarked on diverse avenues to unravel strategies for optimizing their efficacy and augmenting their impact on both individual and organizational performance (Iqbal et al., 2015; Ikramullah et al., 2016; Kharub et al., 2023). Armstrong and Taylor (2014) described performance appraisal as a standard of practices that outline the kind of occupation and regulate the engagement relation in order to induce and maintain the appropriate worker, according to its demand.

The Traditional Performance Appraisal Model

Performance appraisal can be traced back to Ancient China, where it was believed that the workers' performance should be assessed periodically. The earliest documented systematic performance appraisal took place in 1883 by the US government, which implemented a rank-based appraisal system to evaluate federal employees based on their job performance and service to the government. In the early 20th century, performance appraisal became popular in the private sector, and managers began developing various appraisal methods to evaluate employee performance. The first modern performance appraisal model was introduced by Frederick Taylor in 1911, where he proposed that employees should be evaluated based on their output. Starting from the 1930s, education and research in personnel management and industrial relations led to the creation of new appraisal methods, including the critical incidents technique, which emphasizes employees' exceptional performance or behavior. By the 1960s, there was a shift from traditional methods of performance appraisal to more objective and comprehensive assessments, including Management by Objectives (MBO). In the 1980s and 1990s, performance appraisal was linked to strategic human resource management practices, which contributed to the development of 360-degree feedback and Competency-based assessments. Today, performance appraisal continues to evolve, with greater attention being placed on employee engagement, talent development, and continuous performance improvement.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive survey design to investigate performance appraisal as a strategy for effective accountability and leadership effectiveness in the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC). The population comprised 2,500 employees, including board members, top management, and staff from the 12 departments of the Delta State office. A sample size of 320 managerial and non-managerial staff, representing 92.7% of the population, was selected using the purposive sampling technique. The primary research instrument was a questionnaire titled "Leadership Performance Appraisal for Effective Administration of NDDC Delta State Office (LPAEA)", developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A focused on the demographic profile of respondents, while Section B contained items designed to assess the key variables of the study. To ensure validity, the instrument was reviewed by three senior lecturers from the college of management and Social Sciences, Novena University, Ogume. Reliability was confirmed using the test-retest method, yielding a coefficient of 0.78. A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed, fully completed, and returned for analysis. Data were analyzed using percentage, mean, and standard deviation, with a criterion mean score of 2.5 used to interpret respondents' perceptions.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Respondents’ responses on The impact of performance appraisal on accountability within the NDDC

S/N	Items	SA(%)	A(%)	UD(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	Mean
1	The NDDC’s performance appraisal system enhances transparency in decision-making processes.	135 (45.59)	61 (17.94)	17 (5)	66 (19.41)	41 (12.06)	3.66
2	Regular performance evaluations contribute significantly to holding employees accountable for their duties.	85 (25)	98 (28.82)	25 (7.35)	42 (12.35)	70 (26.47)	3.14
3	Feedback provided during performance appraisals leads to improved accountability among staff.	103 (30.29)	104 (36.47)	27 (7.94)	75 (22.06)	11 (3.24)	3.69
4	The appraisal process effectively identifies and addresses underperformance, thereby strengthening accountability.	130 (44.12)	122 (35.88)	0 (0)	68 (20)	0 (0)	4.04

The findings show that respondents generally view the NDDC’s performance appraisal system as a positive tool for enhancing accountability. For instance, regarding transparency in decision-making, 63.53% (45.59% strongly agree and 17.94% agree) felt that the appraisal system was effective, with a mean of 3.66 indicating a favorable perception. However, opinions were more divided on whether regular evaluations hold employees accountable, with only 53.82% supporting the statement and a lower mean score of 3.14, suggesting some skepticism. Meanwhile, feedback during appraisals was seen as beneficial, with about 66.76% in agreement and a mean of 3.69. The strongest support was for the appraisal system’s ability to identify and address underperformance, as 80% agreed on this aspect, reflected in the highest mean score of 4.04. Overall, while the system is viewed positively, especially in identifying underperformance and providing feedback, there is some concern regarding the consistency of regular evaluations in promoting accountability.

Table 2: Respondents’ responses on the relationship between performance appraisal and leadership effectiveness in the NDDC

S/N	Items	SA(%)	A(%)	UD(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	Mean
1	The performance appraisal system at the NDDC plays a crucial role in developing effective leadership skills.	126 (37.06)	101 (29.71)	15 (4.41)	78 (22.94)	20 (5.88)	3.69
2	Regular performance evaluations contribute to improved decision-making and leadership effectiveness.	130 (38.24)	89 (26.18)	20 (5.88)	58 (17.06)	43 (12.65)	3.60
3	Feedback from performance appraisals assists leaders in identifying areas for personal and professional growth.	132 (38.82)	126 (37.06)	18 (5.29)	36 (10.59)	28 (8.24)	3.88
4	The performance appraisal process is a reliable tool for recognizing and nurturing leadership potential within the NDDC.	85 (25)	98 (28.82)	25 (7.35)	42 (12.35)	70 (26.47)	3.14

The table explores the relationship between performance appraisal and leadership effectiveness in the NDDC. Findings indicate that most respondents believe the performance appraisal system enhances

leadership skills, with a mean score of 3.69. Similarly, regular evaluations are seen as beneficial for leadership decision-making, reflected in a mean of 3.60. The strongest agreement (mean = 3.88) is on the role of feedback from appraisals in fostering personal and professional growth. However, opinions are more divided on whether appraisals effectively identify leadership potential, as shown by a lower mean of 3.14. Overall, while performance appraisals are viewed positively, their effectiveness in recognizing future leaders remains a concern.

Table 3: Respondents’ responses on the challenges affecting the implementation of performance appraisal in the NDDC and propose strategies for improvement

S/N	Items	SA(%)	A(%)	UD(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	Mean
1	Political interference significantly undermines the objectivity of the performance appraisal process at the NDDC.	132 (38.82)	126 (37.06)	18 (5.29)	36 (10.59)	28 (8.24)	3.88
2	The absence of clear and measurable performance criteria is a major challenge to effective appraisal implementation.	130 (38.24)	89 (26.18)	20 (5.88)	58 (17.06)	43 (12.65)	3.60
3	Limited resources and inadequate training hinder the full realization of the appraisal system’s potential.	126 (37.06)	101 (29.71)	15 (4.41)	78 (22.94)	20 (5.88)	3.69
4	Enhancing training programs and establishing clear guidelines could improve the overall efficiency of the performance appraisal process.	85 (25)	98 (28.82)	25 (7.35)	42 (12.35)	70 (26.47)	3.14

The table highlights key challenges in implementing performance appraisals at the NDDC. Political interference (mean = 3.88) and unclear performance criteria (mean = 3.60) are major obstacles, while limited resources and training (mean = 3.69) further hinder effectiveness. Although enhancing training and clear guidelines are suggested solutions (mean = 3.14), opinions remain divided. Overall, addressing political influence, improving evaluation standards, and increasing resources are crucial for strengthening the appraisal system.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings indicate that respondents generally perceive the NDDC’s performance appraisal system as a tool for enhancing accountability, leadership effectiveness, and employee performance. However, challenges such as political interference, unclear evaluation criteria, and inadequate training hinder its full potential. These findings align with established theories and studies on performance appraisal and organizational effectiveness.

1. Performance Appraisal and Accountability

The study reveals that the performance appraisal system is seen as a mechanism for enhancing transparency in decision-making, with 63.53% of respondents agreeing to its effectiveness. The mean score of 3.66 suggests a favorable perception. Feedback during appraisals is also viewed positively, with 66.76% agreement and a mean of 3.69. Most significantly, 80% of respondents believe appraisals help identify and address underperformance, reflected in the highest mean of 4.04. This aligns with Aguinis (2019), who states that performance appraisals foster transparency and provide structured feedback, improving employee accountability. Similarly, Armstrong & Taylor (2020) argue that an effective appraisal system enhances accountability by setting clear expectations and consequences for performance. However, concerns remain regarding the consistency of evaluations in enforcing accountability, as seen in the lower mean score of 3.14 for regular evaluations holding employees accountable. This suggests that while appraisals provide feedback, their actual enforcement may be inconsistent, a challenge noted in DeNisi & Murphy (2017), who emphasize the need for structured follow-ups after appraisals.

2. Performance Appraisal and Leadership Effectiveness

Findings indicate that performance appraisals contribute positively to leadership development in the NDDC. A mean score of 3.69 supports the idea that appraisals help develop leadership skills, while a mean of 3.60 suggests they enhance decision-making. The strongest agreement (mean = 3.88) is on the role of feedback in personal and professional growth, affirming that structured feedback mechanisms are essential for leadership development. This supports Yukl (2013), who posits that performance evaluation and feedback are critical for leadership development. Bass & Riggio (2006) also emphasize that transformational leadership thrives on continuous assessment and improvement, which appraisals facilitate. However, respondents were divided on whether appraisals effectively identify leadership potential (mean = 3.14), suggesting that appraisal systems may not always be objective in leadership recognition, a problem also highlighted by Lussier & Achua (2022).

3. Challenges in Implementing Performance Appraisals in the NDDC

The study identifies political interference, lack of clear performance criteria, and limited resources as major obstacles. Political interference had a mean of 3.88, suggesting strong concern among respondents. The lack of clear performance criteria (mean = 3.60) and insufficient training (mean = 3.69) further undermine the system's effectiveness. These challenges are consistent with Murphy & Cleveland (2018), who argue that performance appraisals are often subject to political influence, making objectivity difficult. Brewster et al. (2016) also note that unclear performance criteria reduce the credibility of appraisals, leading to employee dissatisfaction and resistance. Although enhancing training and setting clear guidelines were proposed as solutions (mean = 3.14), opinions were divided. This reflects the argument by Pulakos et al. (2015) that training alone is insufficient; a broader organizational commitment is needed for appraisal effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system in the NDDC:

1. **Establish an independent appraisal committee to ensure transparency and objectivity.**
 - Implement strict policies to prevent external influences from affecting appraisal outcomes.
2. **Develop Clear and Measurable Performance Criteria**
 - Define standardized and quantifiable evaluation metrics aligned with organizational goals.
 - Regularly review and update appraisal criteria to reflect current performance expectations.
3. **Enhance Training and Capacity Building**
 - Organize regular workshops and training sessions for employees and evaluators.
 - Equip managers with skills to conduct fair and constructive appraisals.
4. **Improve Feedback and Follow-Up Mechanisms**
 - Ensure that employees receive timely and constructive feedback after appraisals.
 - Implement structured follow-up actions to support employee development and accountability.
5. **Increase Resource Allocation for Appraisal Implementation**
 - Provide adequate funding for performance appraisal programs, including software and training tools.
 - Allocate resources to improve technological support for efficient and unbiased evaluations.
6. **Strengthen Leadership Development through Appraisals**
 - Integrate leadership assessment into the performance evaluation process.

- Use appraisal results to identify and mentor potential future leaders within the NDDC.

REFERENCES

- Aguinis, H. (2019). *Performance Management* (4th ed.). Chicago: Chicago Business Press.
- Armstrong, M., & Taylor, S. (2020). *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice* (15th ed.). London: Kogan Page.
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational Leadership* (2nd ed.). New York: Psychology Press.
- Brewster, C., Chung, C., & Sparrow, P. (2016). *International Human Resource Management* (4th ed.). London: Routledge.
- DeNisi, A. S., & Murphy, K. R. (2017). *Performance Appraisal and Management: 100 Years of Progress*. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 421–433.
- Egwuagu, U. B., & Chikeleze, F. O. (2023). Imperatives of performance appraisal on employee performance: A study of selected ministries in Enugu State. *Journal of Policy and Development Studies*, 13(4). Retrieved from
- Ekpe, A. N., Daniel, E. E., & Ekpe, M. A. (2013). Analysis of performance appraisal system of the Nigerian public sector organizations. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 18(3), 49–54. Retrieved from
- Eze, C. C., & Ishiwe, M. U. (2023). Effect of performance appraisal on employee performance in selected ministries in Enugu State Civil Service. *Journal of Policy and Development Studies*, 14(2). Retrieved from
- Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation. (2024). Ministry of Niger Delta Development holds workshop on performance management system. Retrieved from
- Lussier, R. N., & Achua, C. F. (2022). *Leadership: Theory, Application, & Skill Development* (7th ed.). Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Murphy, K. R., & Cleveland, J. N. (2018). *Understanding Performance Appraisal: Social, Organizational, and Goal-Based Perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Ogbuku, S. (2024, February 14). Accountability, transparency key to Niger Delta development – NDDC boss. *The Eagle Online*. Retrieved from
- Pulakos, E. D., Hanson, R. M., Arad, S., & Moye, N. (2015). *Performance Management Can Be Fixed: An On-the-Job Experiential Learning Approach for Complex Behavior Change*. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 8(1), 51–76.
- Sakpere, R. O. (2021). Effectiveness of employees' performance appraisal in the Nigerian public sector: An empirical study. *World Journal of Social Science Research*, 8(3), 27–42. Retrieved from
- Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in Organizations* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.