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Performance Appraisal and Employee Development in Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board, 2015 - 2025

[1]Dukori, Promise Meneborlo; [2]Chukwunonye Abovu Akujuru, Ph.D & [3]O.J. Osai, Ph.D

Department of Political Science,
Faculty of Social Sciences,
Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, Port Harcourt, Nigeria
[1]Email: dukori.meneborlo@rsu.edu.ng
[2]Email: chukwunonye.akujuru1@ust.edu.ng

ABSTRACT
The overall success of any organization depends on the quality of human resources and the approaches adopted to develop their skills and capabilities towards performance and productivity. The performance appraisal exercise is aimed at assessing employees' performance while acquainting workers with the necessary skills required for improving staff performance and organizational productivity. However, this study examined performance appraisal management and employee development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board, 2015 – 2025. The study adopted the survey research design with a population of 133. Victor Vroom's expectancy theory and goal-setting theory were used as the theoretical frameworks. Data were analyzed using the 4-point Likert scale options of strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test hypotheses. Findings reveal, amongst others,that performance appraisal criteria often focus too much on short-term targets rather than growth; employees prioritize tasks over skill enhancement, leading to stagnation and disengagement. Unclear or biased criteria also demotivate staff, reducing productivity. Also, the board is sometimes influenced by external political factors rather than systematic talent development; a structured appraisal feedback mechanism is often lacking, which then creates leadership vacuums and skill shortages. Meanwhile, misaligned career paths and limited growth opportunities have led to disengagement, high turnover, and stagnant skill development, hindering organizational productivity, corporate objectives, overall efficiency, staff morale, and innovation. Finally, political influence, subjectivity and bias in evaluation, poor communication, overemphasis on quantitative metrics, inadequacy in addressing career development, low reliability and validity of the performance appraisal technique, negative ratings that affect interpersonal relations and industrial relations systems, influence of external environmental factors and uncontrollable internal factors, and poor feedback are the major outcomes affecting employees' professional development in performance appraisal in the Rivers State Primary HealthCare Management SystemThe study recommended, amongst others, that the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board should train appraisers or superior managers to combat subjectivity and mitigate their biases to enhance staff development programmes. Also, the Board should decouple leadership advancement from political favour. The Board should also redesign appraisal feedback systems to include measurable performance indicators, periodic feedback sessions, supervisor accountability, and direct linkage between performance outcomes and incentives. The Board must shift from rigid, vertical hierarchies to dynamic, skill-based growth models
Keywords: performance appraisal exercise, skill-based growth, workers

INTRODUCTION

One of the undeniable and critical factors in employees' development programmes is a purposeful or result-oriented appraisal exercise conducted by an organization to unravel the skills required to drive the performance of the workforce, leading to organizational productivity. An organization such as the Rivers

State Primary Healthcare Management Board is established to initiate a sound and healthy system that is result-oriented through a viable workforce tied to efficiency in service delivery. Service delivery is usually the result (good performance, staff productivity and good governance) of any administrative action, and this is dependent on established procedures, policies, and the existence of extant rules and regulations in the civil service (Ugben & Egobueze, 2021). To achieve service delivery, employee performance is an integral part of career development, a strategic mission that every meaningful management board must consider. It is interesting to note that performance appraisaland employee productivity are conventional components of any personnel cycle (Andrius & Vladimiras, 2014). The activation of employee development is therefore hinged on a carefully thought-out appraisal system, which invariably leads to the achievement of some specific goals through the utilization of materials such as financial and personnel resources. These materials are further condensed into energy, talent, creativity, and effort to which the organization maintain its existence (Eunice & Hazel, 2016). Igbuzor (2015), notes that:

> The dynamic issues confronting appraisal exercise and employee development are poor management and political affiliation of staff, leading to a decline in the quality of service delivery with a triple down effect traced to poor recruitment policies, poor capacity building, political patronage, quota system and lack of democratic practices in the management of the public service (p.2).

According to Eneanya (2013), performance appraisal system has a substantial impact on every aspect of an organization. Human resource capacity building is believed to be a potent strategy that could have a positive impact on the performance of any management board. Moreover, Obi (2016), contends that performance appraisal is amongst the most complicated issues in managing and exerting human resource development. This is because the success of an employee in an organization relies heavily on the nature of the appraisal system that is inherent in the organization. Hunnes, Kvaloy and Mohn (2012), opine that the basis of performance appraisal is to institute a compensation system that improves the contribution of managers and employees towards the attainment of the organization's goals and objectives. Similarly, Laschchnau, (2015), opines that performance appraisal is one of the fundamental tools that have been adopted in measuring, evaluating, and determiningthe strength and performance of employeesin an organization.The essence of performance appraisal, according to Onah (2018), is to assess the strengths and weaknesses of staff in a work situation.

According to Cole (2002), employee performance appraisal is one of the numerous personnel functions that evaluate personnel or employees as individuals, and important because it is sensitive. In his words, this is a task that is delicate as well as complex. In Nigeria, this "task has been carried out at one time as a confidential annual report," i.e, done by the manager/supervisor without the knowledge or any input from the employee being appraised, and at another time as an "open performance appraisal" system. Atiomo (2000) aptly notes that:

> Performance appraisal is a system which provides an organization with a means of identifying not only what people's performance levels are but also in which areas these levels need to be improved if maximum use is to be made of human resources (p.92).

The civil service is a legal entity established to achieve multidimensional objectives, primarily focused on maximizing the welfare of the masses (Onah, 2015). The Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board aims to bring happiness to the greatest number of staff. Performance appraisal is a process that allows employees to understand their performance, identify areas of weakness, and develop strategies for improvement. Abaraoye (1991) defines performance appraisal as a review of an individual's performance and progress, highlighting strengths and weaknesses.Human resources are crucial to an organization's growth, and performance appraisal is a management technique used to evaluate employee performance (Disu, 2018). It provides opportunities to identify barriers to effective performance, improve motivation, and address employee development needs. Effective appraisal considers employees' legitimate desires for professional progress (Nwachukwu, 1985). It's usually done periodically, examining work performance to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

Performance appraisal is a structured interaction between subordinates and supervisors, typically annual, discussing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (Onah, 2008). Attributes appraised vary by job and organization, including honesty, adaptability, and leadership. Good appraisal ensures qualified individuals advance, while those with lesser qualifications don't exceed their capacity (Nwachukwu, 1985). It monitors performance, rewarding extraordinary efforts and addressing subpar performance. Modern performance appraisal involves annual interactions between superiors and subordinates, analyzing employee

performance (Singh, Kochar & Yuksel, 2010). It's used to reward employees monetarily and non-monetarily, developing employees and driving growth (Mathew & Johnson, 2015). However, biases and prejudices can lead to negative consequences for employees (Selvarajan, Singh & Solansky, 2018).

The Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board faces challenges with its appraisal system, including high staff turnover and unfair pay systems (Adegoroye, 2015; Oluwayemisi & Taiwo, 2021). A weak appraisal system affects performance, and there's a need for a fair system that recognizes employee efforts and compensates them appropriately.

It is for the above reason that organizations, including the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board, engage in training and development of staff and have departments and units in charge of training and development. In Nigeria public sector, performance appraisal is an institutional mechanism for capacity building to be observed in the staffing of any organization. There have been a number of complaints that personnel appraisals are subjective and impressionistic. The subjectivity can be drastically reduced if appraisers avoid some of the common mistakes that result ina poor state of performance and productivity in any organization (Disu, 2018). It has been observed that the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board is an arm of the civil service that is characterized by acute lateness, absenteeism, and poor commitment to work, where most senior managers are reported to be biased in appraisal ranking.

Interestingly, Oluwayemisi and Taiwo (2021) noted that the survival of the public sector depends on the attraction, acquisition, retention and development of employees to prepare for meeting the present and future needs in the workplace; however, it seems that existing staff are ill-prepared to fill future positions in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board due to sharp political reasons. The current global business environment has become dynamic, and there is a vital need for a flexible, innovative and rational approach to the management of human capital, particularly regarding high-talent professional employees (Nwachukwu, 1985). The way to achieve this platform of talented and skilled employees is the introduction of a sound career development and performance management system where staff are trained to overcome their weaknesses and contribute meaningfully to service delivery (Ugben & Egobueze, 2021). It is therefore imperative to note that political influence, rating bias, and favouritism most of the time constitute the behaviour of appraisers during the appraisal exercise. It is against this backdrop that this study examines performance appraisal and employee development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board, 2015 - 2025.

This study aims to examine performance appraisal and employee development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board, 2015 – 2025. Flowing from the aim, the specific objectives are to:

i. Examine the relationship between appraisal criteria and employees' skill development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board

ii. Determine the impact of appraisal feedback on employee training and capacity development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study:

i. What is the relationship between appraisal criteria and employees' skill development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board

ii. What is the impact of appraisal feedback on employee training and capacity development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated from the study.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between appraisal criteria and employees' skill development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board

Ho2: Appraisal feedback has no significant impact on employee training and capacity development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board

Theoretical Review

Expectancy Theory

Expectancy theory of performance management was proposed by Victor Vroom in 1965. According to him, individuals behave in a specific manner because they get motivated by the desirable outcome of such behaviour. Performance of an individual should always be aligned with organizational expectations regarding achievement of identified goals in future (Oliver, 1974). The motivation that influences individuals to behave in a particular manner over other forms of behaviour is their expectancy. This

expectancy is regarding the effect of the selected behaviour (Salaman et al. 2005). The theory is anchored on three cardinal points:

a. Expectancy: It is determined by an individual's belief that the performance of a specific type of behaviour will certainly help the individual in attaining desired performance goals. Thus, this property helps individuals in determining if they have the required skill sets for accomplishing a work accurately. However, when performance goals are beyond the achievement, the corresponding motivation also declines.

b. Instrumentality is connected with the process of rewarding for desired performance outcome. Thus, individuals are motivated to perform works that would provide greater rewards after successful accomplishment. However, when the instrumentality or reward for a number of organizational performances is same, motivation to perform different kinds of work declines.

c. Valence is the significance of the reward individuals get for exhibiting desired performances. Thus, individuals evaluate the rewards given to them for performance based on various aspects. This includes differential needs, values, goals and sources of motivation. On the basis of valence, the motivations to accomplish different tasks also vary (Kroth 2007). Thus, while deciding to perform in a particular way, individuals give importance to the variable that has the greatest motivational force.

Expectancy theory is applied practically in almost all types of organisations. This is primarily used in all aspects of employment relationship with the main focus on monitoring employee performance (Eisenberger et al. 1990). Implementation of expectancy theory is seen in organisational processes such as recruitment and selection of employees for a particular job. Similarly, it is also used in order to analyse the outcome of organisation training and assessment of employee performance as per organisational goals (Hillman & Dalziel, 2003).In large firms, there are separate department as well as a systematic formal procedure to undertake the assessment process. In addition, the large organization also take notice of personal appraisal of the employee including its emotional and intellectual conduct (Gresty, 2010).Also, it is easy to measure performance in a small-scale organization. This is because the nature of work is constant for a long time. Thus, the assessment of an employee against their historic data is enough to evaluate their present status of performance.

However, the performance of one individual impact such organizations. In addition, the reward mechanism is not well written and are perceived on the supervisor's thoughts but somewhat based on employees' needs, unlike the process in large organizations whereby a uniform and impersonal criterion is followed that in turn could be less effective in comparison to small organizations(Ghanbarpour & Najmolhoda, 2013).On the other hand, this theory is also applied to identify the variables that motivate individual employees in the organisation. Specifically, in case of recruitment and selection of employees, this theory helps in determining the motivators that influence people to join an organisation based on needs, goals and past experiences.

In case of assessment of organisational performance, this theory works towards interpreting the specific behaviour that the employees exhibit based on their individual expectancy calculations. Here, it needs mentioning that expectancy theory also postulates that different people want different things from their organisation. This ranges from good salary to job security to scopes for professional enrichment. Consequently, this theory helps to map behavioural outcome in respect of organisational training. In other words, this theory helps in identifying specific determiners behind a particular behavioural outcome of individual trainees (Lunenburg, 2011).

Expectancy theory is advantageous over other theories in a number of ways. For example, it helps in identifying self-interested individuals in an organisation who are willing to perform at their best (Kanfer, 1990). These employees can achieve maximum job satisfaction if the right motivator is provided to them. Thus, the theory helps in interpreting individual psychologies. This in turn helps in recognising the individual motivators that influence people to make choices based on their specific expectations (Ramlall, 2004). Moreover, this theory centres upon expectations of people and perceptions of the organisation about their corresponding organisational behaviour. Therefore, it helps in making individual employees aware about organisational behaviour and consequent expectations from the organisation. On the other hand, organisations are able to identify actual performance of their employees using this theory. So, this theory helps them in retaining employees who can add value to their firm by recognising their respective intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (Samuel & Chipunza, 2009).

Expectancy theory is often criticised for being too idealistic. The attributes for performance measurement in expectancy theory is motivation, employee effort, value of rewards, etc. However, these variables are quite difficult to measure. Hence, managers often need to incorporate additional performance measurement theories along with expectancy theory in order to measure and monitor individual performances (Parijat &

Bagga, 2014). Moreover, as the model makes a hypothetical assumption that people are too rational and logical in calculating these variables. However, in reality the theory fails to provide specific solution to specific motivational problems. Secondly, involvement of a number of variables makes the theory complicated in nature. This not only makes it difficult to test the variables of employee motivation but also pose difficulty in implementing them in many situations (Parijat & Bagga 2014). Similarly, the implication of the multiplier effects of more than one motivator on employee performance cannot be accurately calculated (Shermerhorn et al., 2002).

According to Bashir (2021), high degree of job satisfaction is expected to be present amongst medical employees, even though the working conditions that are not as good as in multinational companies. The relatively close working relationships in small and medium scale enterprises to contribute to job satisfaction. Also, the improvement in job satisfaction is also facilitated by lower employee expectations.Thus, owing to lower levels of expectations, as per the expectancy theory, the employees can be motivated to perform better small-size organizations. This is due to limited resources, do not have formal policies in place or to monitor or review their practices in this regard. Further, the employees of the small and medium scale enterprises are the most likely to express trust in their managers (Fadel, 2019). Thus, the medical organization should use a more formal process. By this, the employees are able to understand the increment or degradation in their performance. The trust that the employees have in their superior managers in such systems can be a motivator for them to perform better. Herein, the managers can lure them with the rewards that are expected to be acquired if the performance is improved (Ikonne, 2015).

Therefore, the performance management system serving different organization objectives according to the nature of the firms. It accompanies different practices though with the sole objective of enhancing the employees' productivity (Disu, 2018). However, some unsuitable trends of practices may let organizations face undesired achievement. Hence, ineffective performance management system (PMS) can disrupt the productivity of the organization as a whole. Finally, the application of expectancy theory to PMS motivates the employees to perform better. Thus, effective performance appraisal systems motivate the employees to improve their performance.

Conceptual Review

Performance Appraisal

The term performance appraisal cannot be expressly defined because different scholars and authors have offered a variety of definitions depending on their perspectives. For this study, the term "performance" refers to the result of an activity conducted by an organization during a given period of time. Similarly, Onah (2015), opines that it is presented after an organization completes a series of tasks, involving staff contribution that is comprehensively predicted and evaluated in aspects of skills, opportunity, motivation, environment, etc.

Having provided a synoptic view of performance, the term "performance appraisal" has been viewed bythe 7th edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary as a judgment of the value, performance or nature of something/somebody. Also, Fakhimi and Raisy (2013) suggest that"as a reference for moral and financial appreciation of employees and because of the development of continuous communication between employees and the organization, it improves employees' performance" (p.23). Thus, employees' activities, performance and outcomes are the organization's expectations that the performance appraisal process assists in explaining them. Performance appraisal is defined by Malik and Aslam (2013), as a formal process that allows for determining the extent organization's current employees have been able to manage their jobs in line with the organization's predefined criteria. It is the degree to which an organization fulfils its pre-agreed set of objectives. Performance appraisal evaluates every employee's real performance with the assigned job against the organization's performance standards (Dessler, 2013).

Sansongu (2005, p.75), aptly opines that "performance appraisal is an input to management decision as regards promotion, demotion, transfer, pay increase, Training and termination of appointment of employees". It could also provide vital information as regards skills and knowledge to be emphasized when next considering the employment evaluation of new ones. "Performance appraisal is the process of systematically evaluating each employee's job-related strengths, developmental needs and progress towards meeting goals and determining ways of improving the employee's job performance" Obiekeze and Obi, (2005, p.119). Performance appraisal is the most widely used management activity because it pinpoints the strengths and weaknesses of individuals and groups, and as well see as an information source for rewards and punishments, change, development, structural modification and job design. According to Blumenthal

(2003), performance appraisal is a formal judgment of the value, or nature of a person's work, s usually after a discussion. Performance appraisal data about the past, present, and anticipated future performance so that appropriate decisions can be made. It is used to determine if employees are performing well on their jobs or not and what needs to be done to improve productivity, perhaps, retraining or position of employees.

Therefore, recognizing the appraisal system and the benefits the organizations supposed to achieve from using it. Performance appraisal is, therefore, a significant effort that search for better, right, and cost-efficient process of measuring employee's work performance and motivation (Dilawari, 2015). In the same vein, Kemboi (2015), stated that the systematic examination of work performance and understanding of a person's talents for future success is known as performance appraisal. Eisalou (2014), asserts that performance appraisal as a continuing method where employee's behaviour and results are supervised and assessed in an organization. It is a recurring evaluation that is done either monthly or quarterly (but usually yearly) where the standard and efficiency of accomplished task of an employee is measured. Ibeogu and Ozturen (2015), stated that performance appraisal is done yearly to ascertain the total contribution of employee to the organization's performance. Though, long time ago, traits, deficiencies and abilities were given much emphasis by appraisal systems. But now, the result of employee – organization relations, contemporary appraisal concept stress more on jointly set goals with superior, and on current performance and future objectives (Kumari, 2013).

However, human resource issues within an organization are interrelated to performance appraisal system, and therefore its dimensions can influence a significant part of the system usage irrespective of its purpose. Therefore, it is pertinent to ascertain the factors that influence the design of the appraisal system. Furthermore, performance appraisal can boost employee and organization performance in such areas of productivity and or customer services (Hunnes, Kvaløy & Mohn, 2012). Chen (2011) described the information generated during performance appraisal process as the basis for recruitment and selection, staff training and development, and for compensating employee's performance to motivate them for higher efficiency in the organization. According to Disu (2018), there are components of the appraisal system thus include:

i. Objective assessment practice: Performance appraisal system that is effectively linked with objective assessment practices can influence the performance of the organization. Objective assessment is also known as performance-based system. This involves a system that takes an objective analysis of the effort of employees that commiserate with the payment over a period (Hunnes et al., 2012).

Hanley and Nguyen (2005), described performance-based system as involving an assessment based on the contribution of individuals in achieving the overall goal of the organization over a period. Salvarajan et al., (2013), opined that objective assessment supports a performance-related pay is a catch-all phrase for compensation packages in which rewards are given depending on the performance of a person (on that pay) or a team of people (team achievement pay) (team achievement reward). Therefore, a pay scheme that is associated to employee's performance and implemented through appraisal system could use as administrative purpose of performance appraisal, and it is regarded as simple and more standardized (Bayo-Moriones, Galdon-Sanchez & Martinez-de-Morentin, 2019). Further, they maintained that it is helpful to build uniform framework for determining employees whenever the HR manages compensation professional, since they have a stronger insight of how overall salary is calculated. That is why organizations are emphasizing more on performance-based payment (Hanley & Nguyen, 2005).

Feedback practices: Direct communication between supervisor and employee is one of the significant aspects of performance appraisal process. Samuel (2013), opined that these responses are used as a communication mechanism to help the evaluator and the individual under assessment build a stronger interaction and knowledge of the role requirements. Therefore, employee's feedback is essential for the success of the appraisal process (Paul, Olumuyiwa& Esther, 2015) and it enhances the organization efficiency and assists in decision making process (Obi, 2016). However, the approval of the method determines the effectiveness of the feedback. The source of the feedback must be regarded as honest, authentic, dependable, unbiased, and adequately driven by the recipient. Paul et al., (2015) opined that there should be a workflow for tracking of feedback sessions. The scholars further affirmed that through feedback, remedial steps can be taken quickly to correct the mistake spotted to minimize the company's loss.

Employees' Performance

The term "employees" has been used widely to mean workers, personnel and/or officers and staff in the civil or public service. While performance has been viewed variously by scholars and authors to mean the execution of tasks assigned. From the brief illustration, "employees' performance" can simply mean the

execution of tasks assigned to personnel by the management of an organization. According to Bates and Holton (1995), there are different views on what performance is. It can be regarded as simply the record of outcomes achieved. It can also be viewed as a multi-dimensional construct, the measurement of which varies depending on a variety of factors. It is important to determine whether the measurement objective is to assess performance outcomes or behaviour. On an individual basis, according to Bates and Holton (1995, p.27), "it is a record of the person's accomplishments". Kane (1996), argues that performance is something that the person leaves behind and that exists apart from the purpose. Hence, the Oxford English Dictionary defines performance as "the accomplishment, execution, carrying out, working out of anything ordered or undertaken". This refers to outputs/outcomes (accomplishment) but also states that performance is about doing the work as well as being about the results achieved. Thus, Wettstein (2002), defined performance as the degree of stakeholders' satisfaction. Similarly, Dwight (1999), noted that performance can be viewed as the level to which an organizational or staff goals are achieved.

To Hoffmann (1999), performance simply goals based on evaluated contributions. According to Kasmir (2016), performance is the outcome of a person's job and work behaviour throughout an interval, often one year. It can be assessed in terms of productivity inside the organisation, work efficiency and quality, and service delivery. The calibre of an organization's employees determines how well it can deliver services (Emmanuel & Philip, 2013). Similarly, Bernardin and Russell (1993),viewed performance as an outcome record produced by a certain task or activity within a given time frame. A person's performance is the outcome of his or her ability to complete tasks given to them according to their level of training, experience, sincerity, and time. Organizational workers are hired to carry out certain tasks that will aid in the achievement of the company's declared objective (Hasibuan, 2012).

Employee performance is the degree to which a worker in a specific organisation fulfils his or her responsibilities in accordance with the standards set out by the organisation (Byar & Rue, 2008). One can quantify and qualify an employee's performance. A person's ability to succeed in reaching a goal is judged in terms of quantity, whereas a person's capacity for making mistakes, self-control, and punctuality are indicators of quality. According to Mangkunegara (2009), working time includes an individual's attendance record, tardiness, and duration of employment from the prior year. Increasing employee capacity and competence has a significant impact on the organization's service efficacy, target attainment, employee production, and efficiency (Efenji, 2023). Following the above, Cascio (1992), opined that an employee's fulfilment of particular responsibilities entrusted to them is referred to as their performance. This view reveals that performance evaluation is challenging in the absence of any measurement guidelines since actual performances are evaluated against pre-established benchmarks. On this note, Hasibuan (2012),defined performance as the result of the interaction of three key elements:

a. An individual's capacity and motivation for work,
b. Their capacity and willingness to understand the rationale for task delegation, and
c. Their role in the workplace (p.26).

The performance of the employee increases with the three aforementioned factors. Performance is done or goods/services are created and offered by an individual or group, according to Lina (2014).]

Empirical Review

Ikonne (2015) aimed to explore the effect of feedback on the efficiency of library staff at chosen university libraries of South western Nigeria. The data for this study was obtained through a survey research method; 186 employees were selected for the study using Taro Yamane formula for sample determination- It was revealed that employees saw such appraisal as periodic quantification of their progress; not a managerial forum intended to enhance workers' output; approach for deciding employee remuneration but not a platform for fostering effective service delivery. My input to this finding is that employees should be educated about the intent of performance appraisal system, and also their work responsibility should be unambiguous so that they will know what is expected of them in their workplace.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design and employed both primary and secondary data to investigate the research problem. The study was conducted within the Rivers State Primary Health Care Management Board (RSPHCMB), which administered primary healthcare activities across the 23 local government areas of Rivers State through various departments and administrative structures. The study population comprised 200 staff, including 18 management staff, 36 senior staff, 60 junior staff, and 86 support staff. Using Taro Yamane's formula, a sample size of 133 respondents was obtained, while purposive sampling was applied in

selecting participants across the different staff categories. Primary data were collected mainly through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, while secondary data were obtained from relevant publications, reports, policy documents, textbooks, and other academic materials. Twenty key informants were purposively selected for interviews to obtain deeper insights. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale and was pilot-tested, producing a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.85, while expert review established content validity. Data collection also incorporated document analysis and qualitative interviews to strengthen triangulation. Quantitative data were analysed using mean statistics, while hypotheses were tested using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Analysis of Response Rate (Population = 133)

Administration of Questionnaires	Frequency	Percentage
Number of questionnaires administered	133	100%
Number of questionnaires not returned	3	2%
Number of questionnaires retrieved	130	98%
Number of questionnaires valid for the study	130	98%

Source: Field Work, 2026

The table above reveals that out of the 133 questionnaires administered to respondents, 3 representing approximately 2% were not returned, while 130 questionnaires representing about 130% were retrieved, completed, and found valid for analysis. The response rate of 98% is considered very high and therefore suitable for the study.

Data Analysis

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between appraisal criteria and employees' skill development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board?

Table 2: Computation of response rate on the relationship between appraisal criteria and employees' skill development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board

S/N	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total Respondents	Mean	Remarks
1	Result based appraisal criteria has increased productivity through employee development in the board	74	28	18	10	130	3.28	Accepted
2	Behavioural basedcriteria in appraisal have enhanced organizational reward system to productive staff or employees.	35	74	12	9	130	3.04	Accepted
3	Appraisalconduct has impacted on staff discipline and promotion in the board	69	22	25	14	130	3.12	Accepted
4	Staff training and development are enhanced through the periodic staff performance appraisal exercise	76	26	18	10	130	3.29	Accepted
5	The trait-based criteria for performance appraisal exercise have led to the increase and improvement of hazard allowance paid to employees.	28	74	20	8	130	2.94	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The table shows respondents' response rate on the relationship between appraisal criteria and employees' skill development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board. Item 1 showed that result based appraisal criteria has increased productivity through employee development in the board in the board with a mean score of 3.28 indicating strong agreement. Item 2 recorded the mean score of 3.04, indicating

strong agreement that Behavioural based criteria in appraisal have enhanced organizational reward system to productive staff or employees. This was followed by Item 3 with a mean score of 3.12, showing that Appraisal conduct has impacted on staff discipline and promotion in the board. Also, item 4 revealed that staff training and development are enhanced through the periodic staff performance appraisal exercise recorded a mean score of 3.29. Finally, item 5 recorded a mean score of 2.93, suggesting that trait-based criteria for performance appraisal exercise have led to the increase and improvement of hazard allowance paid to employees.

Research Question 2: *What is the relationship between fairness/objectivity of performance appraisal and employee career development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board?*

Table 3: Computation of response rate on the relationship between fairness/objectivity of performance appraisal and employee career development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board.

S/N	Statement	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total Respondents	Mean	Remarks
1	Fairness and objectivity of performance appraisal focus on training needs to develop employee's technical ability for effective performance	28	74	18	10	130	2.92	Accepted
2	Objective assessment of employees' performance raises staff motivation through training and development	32	72	16	10	130	2.97	Accepted
3	Appraisal management creates a communication link between supervisors and employees through the feedback mechanism to enhance staff performance	74	29	17	10	130	3.28	Accepted
4	Staff performance assessment is conducted to ascertain the level of efficiency in service delivery through training and development	26	74	20	10	130	2.89	Accepted
5	Appraisal planning engenders talent management and improves staff performance.	78	28	16	8	130	3.35	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The table 3 presents respondents' views on the impact of fairness/objectivity of appraisal on employee training and capacity development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board. Item 1 showed that fairness and objectivity of performance appraisal focus on training needs to develop employee's technical ability for effective performance in the Board with a mean score of 2.92 indicating strong agreement. Item 2 recorded the mean score of 2.97, indicating strong agreement that objective assessment of employees' performance raises staff motivation through training and development. This was followed by Item 3 with a mean score of 3.28, showing that appraisal management creates a communication link between supervisors and employees through the feedback mechanism to enhance staff performance. Also, item 4 revealed that staff performance assessment is conducted to ascertain the level of efficiency in service delivery through training and development recorded a mean score of 2.89. Finally, item 5 recorded a mean score of 3.35, suggesting that appraisal planning engenders talent management and improves staff performance.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between performance appraisal criteria and employees' skill development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board.

Table 4.7: Performance Appraisal Criteria and Employees' Skill Development

		Result-based, trait-based and behavioural-based criteria	Employees' Skill Development
Result-based, trait-based and behavioural-based criteria	Pearson Correlation	1	.964**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	143	143
Employees'Skill Development	Pearson Correlation	.964**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	143	143

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 21.0 data Output, 2026

Hypothesis one explains the relationship between performance appraisal criteria and employees' skill development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient is calculated using the SPSS 21.0 version to establish the relationship among the empirical referents of the predictor variable and the measures of the criterion variable. Correlation coefficient can range from -1.00 to +1.00. The value of -1.00 represents a perfect negative correlation while the value of +1.00 represents a perfect positive correlation. A value of 0.00 represents a lack of correlation. In testing hypotheses one to four, the following rules were upheld in accepting or rejecting our alternate hypotheses: all the coefficient values that indicate levels of significance (* or **) as calculated using SPSS 21.0 version were accepted and therefore our alternate hypotheses rejected; when no significance is indicated in the coefficient r value, we reject our alternate hypotheses. Our confidence interval was set at the 0.05 (two tailed) level of significance to test the statistical significance of the data in this study. From the result in table 4.7, it is shown that a very strong positive relationship exists between performance appraisal and employee development. The coefficient value 0.964 indicates the magnitude and strength of this relationship. This relationship is also significant at p 0.000<0.05. Therefore, based on empirical findings they null hypothesis earlier stated is hereby rejected and alternate hypothesis accepted. Thus, there is a significant relationship between performance appraisal criteria and employees' skill development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board.

Hypothesis 2: Fairness/Objectivity in performance appraisal has not impacted training and development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board.

Table 5. Correlations for Performance appraisal fairness/objectivity and employees' training and capacity development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board

		Fairness/Objectivity of Performance Appraisal	*Employees' Training and Capacity Development*
Fairness/Objectivity of Performance Appraisal	Pearson Correlation	1	.988**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	143	143
Training and Development	Pearson Correlation	.988**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	143	143

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 21.0 data Output, 2026

The results shown in Table 5, with a coefficient value = 0.988, mean that a very strong positive relationship exists between fairness/objectivity of performance appraisal and employees' training and capacity development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board. This relationship is significant at the p 0.000 < 0.05 significance level. Based on this result, the stated null hypothesis is hereby rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, which means that a positive significant relationship exists between fairness/objectivity of performance appraisal and employees' training and capacity development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board. The result of the test of hypothesis reveals that fairness/objectivity of performance appraisal has impacted staff training and capacity development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board. Fairness/objectivity of performance appraisal has provided room for technical training of employees, creates a communication link between supervisors and employees through training and development mechanisms to enhance staff performance, and engenders talent management and improves staff performance.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Examine the relationship between performance appraisal criteria and employees' skill development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board, 2015 – 2025.

Data analysis revealed in Item 1 that the criteria for the performance appraisal exercise have increased productivity through employee development in the board, with a mean score of 3.28 indicating strong agreement. This finding is in line with Firman (2021),who revealed that performance appraisal has a direct relationship with employee productivity. An increase in organisational reward for its employees has a bumper effect on their development, as employee productivity has become an important factor to organisations in this era of cut-throat competition. Also, Efenji (2023) noted that there is a linkage between remuneration and profits made by the organisation, in which low income often attracts low morale, lack of commitment and low productivity. An interviewee states that:

> There is a direct relationship between performance appraisal and employee development in the healthcare system. An unbiased performance appraisal system would produce a just and equitable result where every employee participates in the process leading to the result. With this, employees are motivated. As for me, the process in our system here has been fair. This has produced a reasonable level of fair system, leading to effective service delivery (O. Obi, personal communication, June 22, 2026).

This shows that performance appraisal serves as a tool to assess employee contributions and identify those deserving of rewards, which enhances job satisfaction (Nikmanesh et al., 2023). Hence, Ahmed (2021), noted that innovation, largely driven by employees, is key to organisational success, and this success can often be attributed to the productivity of the workforce. For organisations to thrive, it is essential to implement an effective performance appraisal system (Fadel, 2019). Its key relevance is that it forms part of the salient activities and core functions that the human resource manager in an organization exists to perform. It therefore means that appraisal provides a linkage between all other human resources functions.

Also, item 2 recorded the mean score of 3.04, indicating strong agreement that performance appraisal enhances an organizational reward system to productive staff or employees. In line with this claims, Obi (2016), opines that organizational reward system refers to the ways by which workers in organization can be motivated to put more effort that will lead to attainment of organizational goals. The optimum performance of corporate organization, which determines its survival and growth, depends to a large extent on the productivity of its workforce. the views of the respondents are in line with Disu (2018), who avers that because organizations have to perform optimally and compete effectively, they must make optimum use of the resources they have, of which human resources are deemed the most important. The response of an interviewee revealed that:

> Without doubt, it is generally asserted that organizational reward system boost staff productivity. Though, there are certain bureaucratic hiccups but health workers have been motivated through several reward mechanisms to enable us maintain optimum healthcare service delivery. This reward system becomes very instrumental to our development while increasing staff productivity (P. Ginika, personal communication, June 22, 2026).

It is based on this claim that Conner (2014), argues that for any organization to enhance staff productivity and function effectively, it should have an in-depth understanding of the staff's needs that should inform the organization's appropriate reward systems. In order to get the best from the human resource, staff motivation through an effective organizational reward system is essential (Disu, 2018). To this end, health sector

management are always concerned with finding effective ways of ensuring that employees produce their best out of limited resources in a short time; while employees are most concerned with their income and security before other things. It appears that one of (if not) the most undermining factors of staff productivity in Nigeria public sector organizations is that there is no effective rewarding system such as payment of hazard allowances, promotion, job security, adequate medical care, housing, etc. with productivity retarded (Alfa, 2019).

Furthermore, item 3 with a mean score of 3.12, indicated that performance appraisal conduct has impacted on staff discipline and promotion in the board. This response is in consistent with Agbodike and Ugwu (2021), who state that when staff is productive, it contributes other benefits to the organisation. For one thing, lazy employees who do not get disciplined and are otherwise treated the same as hard-working employees de motivate the others. To the same purpose, a highly productive employee, particularly one who is rewarded for his hard work, can motivate other employees, boost morale and making a better environment for the organisation as a whole. When employees are productive, it can increase the organization's revenue, and in turn, the organisation may choose to offer incentives to its employees. An interviewee who responded to questions filtered from this objective revealed that:

> As we know, productivity is the relationship between output of goods and services and input of resources, and human, used in the production process. In order words, productivity is the ratio of output to input. The higher the numerical value of this ratio, the greater the productivity. In our healthcare sector, the issue of staff productivity is sacrosanct. It is taken in high esteemed because it deals with human health and life. As you know, life has no duplicate so staff motivation is always on top gear to deliver the best(A. Amara, personal communication, June 22, 2026).

In line with the response of the interviewee above, Dessler (2013), opines that when employee performance is measured in the appraisal system, it seeks to pursue the development of employees via training and coaching and also enables the management to achieve the purpose of selecting those that will be favoured with promotion, bonuses and other benefits that may not be possible to be allocated to everyone at once. The nature of the relationship between public sector efficiency and appraisal technique is a causal-effect relationship. Thus, appraisal technique is a measurement tool for employees' performance and is usually conducted on a regular basis (Ikonne, 2015). It is merged with training to serve as corrective measures for skill-deficient employees. Thus, continuous appraisal sessions will positively impact the efficiency of the health sector.

Additionally, item 4 revealed that staff training and development are enhanced through the periodic staff performance appraisal exercise recorded a mean score of 3.29. This view is in line with Cole (2002), who states that training of employees is an essential tool in the hands of organisations in achieving their aims, goals and objectives. Couch (2014) explained that human resources are the most dynamic of all the organization's resources. They need considerable attention from the organization's management if they are to realise their full potential in their work. Thus, motivation, leadership, communication, work structuring, payment systems and training and development may all be included in all the issues which have to be faced by management today. An interviewee noted that:

> It is expedient that performance appraisal results dictate the direction of staff development. It is good to know that after the employee has been recruited, selected and inducted, training takes its course to ensure that staff are adequately fit into the job and the organisation; otherwise, it could be difficult to get a perfect fit at the point of hiring. Performance appraisal plays a whole lot of roles in the management of staff and organisational productivity (P. Chuku, personal communication, June 22, 2026).

According to Aakriti (2023), staff training and development are based on the premise that staff skills need to be improved for organisations to grow. Training is a systematic development of knowledge, skills and attitudes required by employees to perform adequately on a given task or job. It can be said to be a process by which an individual improves his skills and also develops new ones. It is a technique of making a job incumbent more effective. Development deals with the activities undertaken to expose an employee to perform additional duties and assume a position of importance in the organisational hierarchy (Nwachukwu, 1988). Training, both physically, socially, intellectually and mentally, is very essential in facilitating not only the level of productivity but also the development of personnel in any organisation. However, knowledge is the ability, the skills, the understanding, the information, which every individual requires in order to be able to function effectively and perform efficiently.

Finally, item 5 recorded a mean score of 2.93, suggesting that the performance appraisal exercise has led to the increase and improvement of hazard allowance paid to employees. In consistent with the work of Bari and Lui (2018), performance appraisal is a kind of motivation for high performers and also serves as a challenge for the low performers. Call-duty allowance in the health sector is often associated with medical doctors, which largely accounts for the upheavals/industrial conflicts in the industry. Consequently, in 2001, the Federal Government readjusted and approved a new and more inclusive call duty allowance for medical and dental doctors, pharmacists, nurses, laboratory and other health workers. It shows that doctors, laboratory scientists, and pharmacists will receive 4 per cent of their basic salary as call duty allowance. Nurses and other health workers will collect 1.7 per cent of their basic salary as call duty allowance (Umar-Omale, 2001).

> Call duty allowance is earned by an officer who performs call duty according to the existing call-duty roster in their organisation. Call duty allowance in the medical field entails privileged remuneration paid to health workers because of the sensitivity and complexity. However, call-duty allowances have become a bone of contention in the health sector where the government has reneged on their promises on several occasions(P. Nwoli, personal communication, June 22, 2026).

Accordingly, Agbaje et al (2017) note thatthe wage structure (including call-duty allowance) as approved by the government in 2001 discriminated against other staff in favour of only doctors, pharmacists, nurses and laboratory scientists. The differentials continue to be a source of industrial conflict in the health sector. The government in 2013 approved a special Consolidated Medical Salary Structure (CONMESS) and associated allowances for medical and dental staff. This approval reduced industrial disputes in the health sector for only a short while but did not remove wage discrimination, as another wage crisis started in 2014 up to 2015 (Medical World Nigeria, 2013). In light of the foregoing discussions, performance appraisal/evaluation breeds distrust and subjective feedback at the expense of skill growth.

Determine the relationship between fairness/objectivity of performance appraisal and employee training and capacity development in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board, 2015 – 2025.

Data analysis revealed in item 1 that fairness/objectivity of performance appraisal has provided room for technical training of employees for effective performance, with a mean score of 2.92 indicating strong agreement. Secondary data showed that performance appraisal is a widely acknowledged and efficient technique employed by organisations to facilitate staff development, incentivization, and evaluation of their personnel. Training and development primarily focus on improving the performance of employees in terms of knowledge, skills, and behavior (Byars & Rue, 2004). Competencies are the knowledge, skills, and abilities that employees require and are a prerequisite to their careers.

Training is defined by Giwanatara and Hendrawan (2021)as the business activities of diverse skills and approaches for executing specific, precise, and routine jobs. According to Tantivitayatan (2018), the more well-trained an individual is, the better the results he produces. Organizations that do not offer training to their employees are on the verge of failing in the market, and this is due to their employees' inability to enhance their performance (Islami & Islami, 2019). Employee training and development initiatives were proven to impact employee performance and productivity positively. Performance appraisal is a crucial method for motivating skilled personnel to be satisfied with the organization (Joarder & Ashraf, 2012).In line with this claim, an interviewee revealed that:

> The absence of an appraisal process is doomed for staff performance and organizational productivity. Staff might be overstretched due to numerous engagements, but as soon as the system prioritizes training and development in the appraisal exercise, staff begin to gain stability and focus after the appointment of a replacement. This is an absolute reality. However, the healthcare sector has lostnumerous staff due to “japa” syndrome, leaving the system with work overload despite training and development programmes adopted by the system. This has adversely affected staff performance(S. Njoku, personal communication, June 29, 2026).

In line with the position above, Conner (2014), opines that performance evaluation is a crucial component of an organizational performance management system that aims to attain targeted outcomes for both individuals and the organization (Gozukara et al., 2017). Ismail and Gali (2017) argue that the main purpose of a performance appraisal system is to inspire employees, enhance their performance by identifying their strengths and weaknesses, cultivate their skills, and establish a connection between high performance and

rewards through the distribution of compensation, bonuses, or promotion opportunities and training and development (p.2). "Performance evaluation encompasses a variety of measures that organizations employ to assess individuals, enhance their abilities, optimize their performance, and distribute rewards" (Fletcher, 2001, p.473). Performance appraisal is an indisputable technique for incentivizing talented workers to experience satisfaction with the organization (Joarder et al., 2012).

Evidence has shown that performance appraisal is a complex procedure, and it is essential for managers to create it in a way that produces advantageous results for the organization (Bayo-Moriones et al., 2020). Previous research investigations have consistently shown a strong association between performance appraisals and organizational performance. Singh et al. (2017) found that formal performance appraisal showed the strongest correlation with company performance compared to other human resource management techniques. Islami and Mustafa (2023) did more research and discovered a direct relationship between performance appraisal and training and development, as well as teamwork and involvement.

Item 2 recorded the mean score of 2.97, indicating strong agreement that objective assessment of employees' performance is based on training and development programmes. According to CIPM (2018, p.21), "training and development is an important succession management and talent management strategy to help identify and foster the development of high-potential employees". Training and development focus on skills, abilities and positions that are the most critical to the future needs of the organisation, whereby the goal is to keep talent in the pipeline and have people in place for future roles in the organisation (Selamat et al., 2018). Assessments can play a crucial role by providing an objective way to evaluate potential leaders, identifying their strengths and blind spots, and determining their readiness for future leadership roles, thus allowing organisations to make informed decisions about who to develop and promote based on merit rather than personal biases. An interviewee responded that:

> The positive effects of training and development on organisational performance were moderated by training and development programs and employee retention strategies. However, the healthcare service delivery is willing to deliver on its mandate, but political interference in our services has further affected the system, as the recruitment and employment process is politically driven(M. Nwida, personal communication, June 29, 2026).

Hence, Ahmed (2021) notes that employees gain knowledge and skills through official and informal training and development opportunities. They are significant in any organisation as they help to produce a highly skilled, motivated and productive workforce. These advancements indicate life events that improve humans. These HR functions play significant roles in achieving organisational goals, and hence, insurance companies should set up regular training and development programs to improve the skills, morale, and productivity of employees. Personnel managers of insurance firms should also involve experts to determine the appropriate initiatives capable of instigating employees' innovativeness to achieve organizational performance (Ugben & Egobueze, 2021). In conclusion, Hamlin and Stewart's study highlights the importance of training and development in enhancing organizational performance. By considering the moderating roles of training and development and employee retention, the study provides valuable insights for organisations seeking to improve their performance through effective talent management practices.

This was followed by Item 3 with a mean score of 3.28, showing that performance appraisal creates a communication link between supervisors and employees through the feedback mechanism to enhance staff performance. Secondary data showed that employers in the industry should prioritise training programs for employees to acquire new knowledge to ensure a high level of productivity. According to Mbah, Egobueze and Davies (2021), additional care should also be taken to design the training and development programs to suit employees' needs, as they believe that these programs provide helpful information and resources for professional development. At the same time, employees are motivated to form networks with related individuals during the training session to receive the support that will help them advance their careers. Furthermore, employees' perceptions of the availability and effectiveness of these types of programs would encourage them to become more active in seeking social support, resulting in higher levels of organisational performance (Dilawari, 2015). The work of Adebayo (2004) emphasised the importance of training and development as a strategic process that helps organisations identify and develop talent to fill key leadership positions. Second, the study identified common challenges faced by organisations in implementing training and development, such as resistance to change, lack of commitment from top management, and insufficient resources (Abaraoye, 2021). An interviewee revealed that:

> Employee retention was measured by analysing turnover rates and employee tenure. The findings of the study indicated a positive relationship between training and development and employee retention. Organisations with formal succession plans and higher levels of employee involvement in training and development processes experienced lower turnover rates and longer employee tenure(C. Ejekwu, personal communication, June 29, 2026).

According to CIPM (2018, p.4), "training and development is not a secret endeavour confined to the boardroom. It is a shared journey that involves the entire organisation". Effective training and development communication engages employees by providing clarity, transparency, and opportunities for input and growth. When employees feel involved and valued, they become active participants in shaping the organization's future. By fostering a culture of communication and engagement, organisations can strengthen their training and development efforts and ensure a smooth transition of leadership for years to come.

Also, item 4 revealed that staff performance assessment is conducted to ascertain the level of efficiency in service delivery, andtraining and developmentrecorded a mean score of 2.89. Bashir (2021) opines that it enables employees to understand how their role contributes to organisational success and increases motivation. Organisations should provide a well-defined performance appraisal platform to assist employees in creating satisfaction with performance appraisal. The reason being, employees like to work for organisations that can provide an excellent work culture and an attractive performance-based pay package. They also look for growth opportunities since today's employees are much more aware of their surroundings. They want to continuously grow and improve their skills to stay competitive in the market. Under the current market forces and dynamic competition, like other industries, the insurance industry also feels the pressure to be more efficient, flexible, creative and productive to produce greater and qualitative output for the organisations (Byars & Rue, 2004).

The key to the performance evaluation system is to select appropriate indicators that can reflect the organisational performance in all aspects and levels. According to Hasibuan (2012), delivering services is a core function of health systems, and this is influenced by and influences governance, financing and resource generation. Service delivery directly impacts intermediate health system objectives and, ultimately, the achievement of overarching health system goals.

> Quality is central to the performance of health service delivery. There are many different ways to assess the quality of health services and systems. Most frameworks argue that health services should be evaluated according to structure, process and outcome, as "good structure increases the likelihood of good process, and good process increases the likelihood of good outcome. Honestly speaking, when politics enters health service delivery, poor service satisfaction becomes an inevitableoutcome (O. Chinda, personal communication, June 29, 2026).

As noted, a key feature of service delivery is that it is both a health system function and an outcome of the governance, financing and resource generation functions (Kaiwary, 2022). As a result, service delivery links directly into intermediate objectives. In addition to this, decision-making authority, service integration and quality assurance mechanisms are elements of service delivery governance which accesses areas of effectiveness, safety, user experience, efficiency and equity of service delivery in health system intermediate service objectives (Kasmir, 2016). Furthermore, effective training and development protocols foster the creation of learning companies and ensure that personnel have the requisite skills to carry out their responsibilities with proficiency. Consequently, this enables the organisation to acquire a competitive advantage and results in a general enhancement in organisational performance. However, formal training has a stronger influence on corporate performance than informal training. Consequently, service delivery suffers from low employee morale, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and poor servicequality in the healthcare system.

Finally, item 5 recorded a mean score of 3.35, suggesting that training and development engenders talent management and improves staff performance. The best succession systems are developmentally-oriented rather than simply replacement-oriented. Senior executives view effective succession management as a tool for attracting and retaining talent (Ugben & Egobueze, 2021). In Nigeria's health sector, talent management is the foundational engine that powers training and development. Training and development practices may be categorised as investments in human capital that positively impact the strategic benefits and returns of the organisation. Strategic human resource management widely acknowledges employee training and development as crucial elements. It attracts, develops, and retains skilled clinical and administrative staff,

while training and development acts as a subset that specifically prepares high-potential professionals to fill critical leadership roles as vacancies arise (Ammad, 2020). An interviewee reacted as follows:

> Staff training and development continually upskills the broader healthcare workforce. With the severe emigration of healthcare professionals in Nigeria, robust talent management strategies help retain staff, making it possible to have an adequate internal pipeline for succession. Despite these measures, the system still suffers huge emigration of talented staff, possibly due to poor motivation(I. Nda, personal communication, June 29, 2026).

In the work of Aakriti (2023),organisations search for new and/or better means of achieving competitive advantage through optimising the capacity of every functional area to improve organisational performance. Staff training and development programs in Human Resource Management (HRM) systems are an indicative strategic response to these pressures (Ugben & Egobueze, 2021). Training and development programmes in Human Resource Management (HRM) systems are an indicative strategic response to these pressures (Ahmad & Rizal, 2022). Organisations are supported to have timely availability of experienced and diverse employees prepared to fill leadership positions as they become available. Because public tertiary health institutions are sometimes influenced by external political factors or patronage rather than systematic talent development, structured training and development is often lacking, which creates leadership vacuums and skill shortages.

The study found that performance reviews frequently disrupt employee development because of personal biases, a focus on past mistakes rather than future growth, and vague, unmeasurable standards. Without clear and specific feedback, pinpointing actual skill gaps is impossible, which results in irrelevant and ineffective training programs.

Summary of Findings

In our first objective,which examines the relationship between performance appraisal criteria and employees' skill development, the null hypothesis was accepted. The findings revealed that development initiatives within the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board produced moderate yet statistically significant improvements in employee performance, accounting for the overall productivity of staff. However, qualitative evidence indicated that performance appraisal/evaluation breeds distrust and subjective feedback at the expense of skill growth.

The second objective determines the impact of performance appraisalfeedback on employees'training and capacity development; thus, observed that recruitment processes were found to exert a strong and highly significant influence on service delivery, explaining the claims of 65.6% of respondents in service outcomes. Qualitative evidence showed that public tertiary health institutions are sometimes influenced by external political factors or patronage rather than systematic talent development; structured training programs are often lacking, which creates leadership vacuums and skill shortages.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings presented in the study, the research concluded that performance appraisal played a significant role in employees' skill development, training, capacity development, and overall performance in the Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board. The study established a very strong positive and statistically significant relationship between performance appraisal criteria and employees' skill development, with a correlation coefficient of 0.964 and a significance level of $p < 0.05$. Similarly, fairness and objectivity in performance appraisal demonstrated a very strong positive and significant relationship with employees' training and capacity development, with a correlation coefficient of 0.988 and $p < 0.05$. The findings further showed that appraisal criteria, objective assessment, feedback mechanisms, periodic assessment, and appraisal planning contributed to staff training, motivation, talent management, discipline, promotion, and improved productivity. However, the study also revealed that subjective feedback, personal biases, bureaucratic bottlenecks, political interference, inadequate structured training, and staff migration constrained the effectiveness of appraisal outcomes. It was therefore concluded that a fair, objective, transparent, and development-oriented performance appraisal system was essential for identifying skill gaps, guiding training interventions, strengthening employee capacity, improving staff productivity, and supporting effective healthcare service delivery within the Board.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board should train appraisers or superior managers to combat subjectivity and mitigate their biases to enhance staff development programmes. Furthermore, more objective and structured evaluation criteria can be developed to ensure fair assessments. These measures, without doubt, would address the issues of distrust and subjective feedback at the expense of skill growth, which initially makes development programmes ineffective.
2. The Rivers State Primary Healthcare Management Board should replace outdated, penalty-driven annual reviews with an ongoing, growth-oriented process. This transformation relies on data-driven metrics and targeted behavioural feedback, while strictly separating formal performance ratings from everyday career development conversations. It should also decouple leadership advancement from political favour. Medical managers can achieve this by instituting transparent, competency-based frameworks, building distributed talent pools rather than relying on singular succession pipelines, and forcing accountability through external oversight to deal with issues of external political factors or patronage rather than systematic talent development, where structured succession planning is often lacking,creating leadership vacuums and skill shortages.

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