

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PERSONNEL (AEP) PERCEPTION OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL AND ITS IMPLICATION ON THE COMMITMENT TO THE JOB IN OGUN STATE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to examine the perceptions of Agricultural Extension Personnel (AEP) of the Performance Appraisal System (PAS) and its implication on AEP commitment to the job in Ogun State Agricultural Development Program (OGADEP), Nigeria. The sample frame, which is the list of employees in the organisation, consists of 296 employees, out of which 44% of the employees (130) were randomly selected to participate in the study. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Results revealed that PAS had an effect on the commitment of AEP to the delivery of extension services to farmers with the regression analysis revealing that the PAS method of application contributed 61.3% to affective commitment, 18.9% to continuance commitment, and 59% to normative commitment. In conclusion, the study indicated how far PAS has benefited both the AEP and the organisation, hence, it is recommended that there should be an effective appeal process or committee to review appraisal results to help unsatisfied employees to seek redress of final appraisal results so as to give room for efficient and effective production.

Keywords: Performance appraisal, Agricultural Extension Personnel, Perception and commitment

1. INTRODUCTION

The Agricultural Extension Personnel (AEP) is responsible for the speedy transfer of information and technology to farmers. They reduce the time lag between generation of technology and its transfer to the farmers for increasing production, productivity and income from agriculture and allied sectors on a sustained basis. They also work with other experts in agriculture to learn more or even develop new methods that could advance production. Hence, in designing the organisational structure of the Agricultural Development Program (ADP), the extension arm of the Ministry of Agriculture; apart from agricultural extension information service provider department which is the core department, there are other auxiliary departments such as planning and evaluation, technical services, as well as account and administrative departments. These departments work as a team to deliver relevant agricultural information to farmers. Therefore, team action of these various departments depicts them as agricultural extension personnel service providers. Their team action plays a crucial role in promoting agricultural productivity, increasing food security, improving rural livelihoods, and promoting agriculture as an engine of pro-poor economic growth. The success of any organisation depends on the quality and characteristics of its employees because an organisation cannot achieve their goals and objectives without them. Hence, the performance of an organisation is dependent upon the total performance of its members. Performance of an individual can be defined as the record of outcomes produced as specified

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by job functions or activities during a specified period (Bernardin, 2007). The evaluation of employee's performance reveals the contribution of an individual to the organisation's objectives. The performance appraisal is the periodic evaluation of an employee's performance measured against the job's stated or presumed requirements (Terry & Franklin, 2003). The success of an organisation, therefore, depends on its ability to measure accurately the performance of its members and use it objectively to optimise them as a vital resource. Biswajeet (2009) stated that the organisation's ability to measure the performance of its members would give room for efficient and effective production. Employee commitment can be defined as the degree to which the employee feels devoted to their organisation. Employee commitment is an effective response to the whole organisation and the degree of attachment or loyalty employees feel towards the organisation (Akintayo 2010; Ongori, 2007). This is important as employees who have less commitment are likely to engage in withdrawal behaviour and will be more willing to accept change (Lo, Ramayah & Min, 2009). Moreover, in the current global economic scenario, organisational change is a continuous process that requires the support of all employees in the hierarchical structure. Thus, annual staff performance appraisal has been discovered to be a systematic evaluation which helps in motivating employees to be committed and achieve more organisational goals.

2. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

Performance appraisals happen to be one of the most dreaded and horrific responsibilities assigned to any manager in any organisation. Burdensome as performance appraisals may be, performance appraisal systems that are properly designed and implemented are reflections of employee performance over a specific period, the structure where a manager can meet and discuss performance with an employee, of the opportunity to provide the employee with feedback about their performance as well as how well the employee's goals were accomplished. Hence, it is not the performance appraisal that is a problem, but the perception and handling of the instrument by the employees and managers. The literature review has also confirmed that there is little empirical evidence on the relationship between perception of employee performance appraisal and employee commitment to the job. The concern of this research is to underscore the perceptions of the employees about performance appraisal and the extent to which it affects employee job commitment in the organisation. This research was guided by the following research objectives and hypotheses:

1. Examine the perception of employees on the objectives of annual staff performance appraisal.
2. Ascertain the perception of the employees on the annual staff performance appraisal methods used in Ogun state agricultural development program.
3. Ascertain the perceived effects of annual staff performance appraisal on employees' commitment to the job.

A null hypothesis of the study is: there is no significant relationship between perceived annual staff performance appraisal methods and employee commitment to the job.

3. DATA COLLECTION/ PROCEDURE

3.1. Study focus site

This study was carried out amongst extension service delivery personnel of Agricultural Development Program Ogun state (OGADEP). The organisation consists of four zones, namely Egba zone, Remo zone, Yewa zone, and Ijebu zone as indicated in Figure 1. The four zones consist of 20 blocks and 146 cells. There are seven departments in OGADEP and they

include Administration and Supplies, Finance and Accounts, Extension Services, Technical Services, Engineering Services, Research and Training, and Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation.

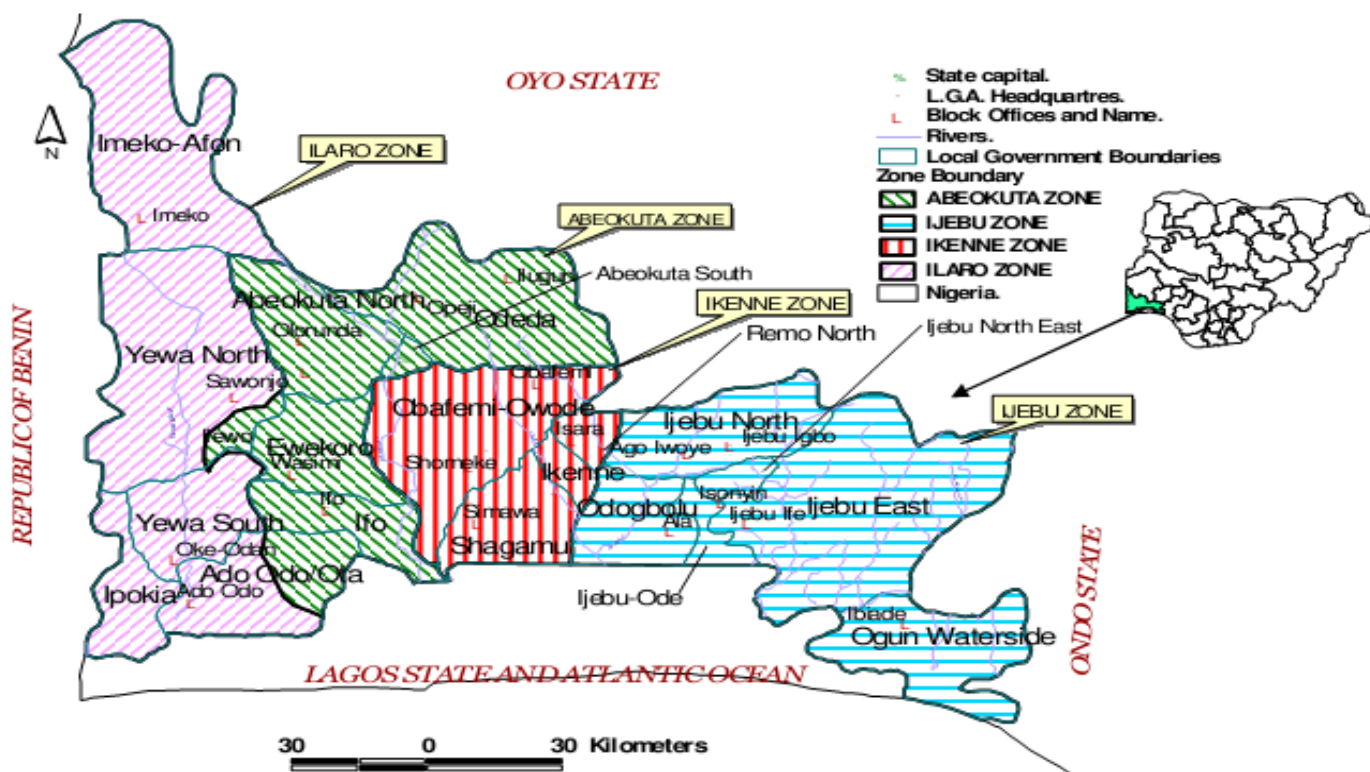


Figure 1. Map of Agricultural Development Programme showing agricultural zones in Ogun State, neighbouring states and country: ADP annual Report 2015

3.2. Sampling procedure and data collection

The sampling technique used was the simple random sampling technique to select the participants. The sample frame which is the list of employees in the organisation consists of 296 AEP, out of which 44% (n=130) of the employees were randomly selected to participate in the study. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire that was used to obtain information from the AEP. Perception of AEP on the objectives of annual staff performance appraisal was measured by a listing of seven items, using a five-point rating scale of which the mean cut-off point to decide whether the perception is high or low is a mean value of 3.0. The perception of the AEP on the annual staff performance appraisal methods satisfaction level: This was measured by adapting the 5-point rating scale of Abraham, Assegid, & Assefat (2014). The mean cut off point to decide whether the perceptions of PAS method satisfy employees is a mean value of 3.0. Finally, employee commitment to the job dependent variable of the study was measured and rated by adapting a 5-point scale by Allen and Meyer (1991) which divided employee commitment to the job into three dimensions (affective, continuance, normative) which contained four items, each having 12 items in total. Data collected for the study were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The perception of AEP about the purpose/reasons for annual staff performance appraisal

The AEP response to the reasons/ objectives for using APS as shown in Table 1 revealed that the majority (89.6%, 82.1%, 79.9% and 78.2%) of the AEP was of the opinion that PAS help in promoting employees to higher ranks, evaluating human resource staff development program, building competencies of employee and give feedback to employees on their performance and grievances respectively. Since the mean score of the three objectives of PAS is greater than 3.0, decision making cut-off point AEP perception about PAS is favourable to the three objectives as shown in Table 1. It can be deduced from the results that the PAS is highly perceived by the AEP as the most effective annual evaluation performance system and the Agricultural Development program is really using PAS as one of the determining factors for employees' development. Contrary to this finding, Ikramullah, Khan, & Zaman (2012) found out in Pakistan that there is a high degree of perception from the employees that the performance appraisal system of the organisation is not used to record their performance accurately. Hence, Youngcourt, Leiva, & Jones (2007) emphasised that for PAS to be effective, AEP's perception about their performance appraisal system should form part of a larger examination of the effectiveness of the appraisal system of the organisation.

Table 1: The perception of AEP on the objectives of annual staff performance appraisal

STATEMENT	5:SA	4: A	3: N	2: Disagree	1: SD	S.D.	Mea n	Rank
Annual staff performance appraisal helps in promoting the employees to higher rank.	46.3	43.3	3.7	4.5	2.2	0.903	4.3	1 st
Annual staff performance appraisal helps in evaluating human resource departmental programs.	24.6	57.5	9.0	5.2	3.7	0.943	3.9	2 nd
Annual staff performance appraisal helps in building competencies of the employees.	25.4	54.5	10.4	8.2	1.5	0.907	3.9	2 nd
Annual staff performance appraisal helps to give feedback to employees on their performance and grievances of the staff	20.3	57.9	12.0	6.8	3.0	0.922	3.9	2 nd
Annual staff performance appraisal helps in training and development of the staff.	25.4	51.5	11.9	7.5	3.7	0.999	3.8	5 th
Annual staff performance appraisal helps to improve communication between employers and employees.	17.9	54.5	18.7	5.2	3.7	0.931	3.8	5 th
Annual staff performance appraisal helps the organisation make compensation reviews.	20.1	47.8	20.9	7.5	3.7	0.990	3.7	7 th

Source: field survey, 2016 SA=Strongly Agree A=Agree N=Neutral D=Disagree SD=strongly Disagree S.D. =Standard Deviation

4.2. The perception of the AEPs about level of satisfaction with the annual staff performance appraisal methods

The result in Table 2 indicates that greater proportions (88.6%, and 87.0%) of the AEP contended that with the PAS rating method and PAS feedback respectively. The PAS method adopted by OGADEP has rated the best method because none of the items in Table 2 mean

score less than 3.0 the cut off mean score for making the decision whether the AEP have low or high satisfaction. The result generally shows that the AEP are satisfied with the methods used in evaluating them, since the satisfaction items rated by the employees mean score is greater than the cut-off point of 3.0 as several researchers have indicated (Kuvaas, 2006; Levy & Williams, 2004; Pettijohn, Pettijohn, Taylor, & Keillor, 2001; Roberts & Reed, 1996). DeNisi & Pritchard (2006), suggested that the performance appraisal system can cripple workflow and employee performance when views and opinions of employees are not incorporated into the appraisal system. Hence, the goal of performance appraisal should be to provide information that will best enable managers to improve employee performance and employee satisfaction in the workplace.

Table2: Perception of the AEP about level of satisfaction with the annual staff performance appraisal methods

S/N	Items	5: SA	4: A	3: N	2: D	1: SD	Mean	Rank
1	I am satisfied with the performance appraisal method used to evaluate and rate my performance.	29.5	59.1	6.8	3.0	1.5	4.1	1 st
2	The feedback I receive on how I do my job is highly relevant.	18.5	68.5	19.8	2.3	0.0	4.1	1 st
3	I think that my organisation attempts to conduct performance appraisal in the best possible way.	18.2	58.3	18.2	4.5	0.8	3.9	3 rd
4	Current performance appraisal method is fair and unbiased.	18.3	61.8	14.5	3.8	1.5	3.9	3 rd
5	I am satisfied with the way my organisation provides me with feedback.	15.9	61.4	15.9	4.3	1.5	3.8	5 th

Source: field survey, 2016. SA=Strongly Agree A=Agree N=Neutral D=Disagree SD=strongly Disagree

4.3. The effect of annual staff performance appraisal on AEP commitment to the job

The results in Table 3 indicate that PAS had an effect on AEP commitment since the total grand mean score that is the average mean of summation of the commitment sub mean 3.66 is greater than the decision-making cut-off mean score of 3.0. The implication of the result is that the PAS affected the 3 dimension of APE commitment to work in the organisation. However, the specific result revealed that PAS promotes the AEP affective and normative commitment, that is the ability of the AEP to have positive work experience and loyalty, or sense of obligation to remain attached to the organisation respectively as shown in Table 3. Kuvaas (2006) noted that PAS activities can be used by organisations to communicate organisational strategies, goals, and vision to their employees. Hence, it is possible for employees to experience higher levels of commitment as PAS activities can communicate overarching strategies, goals, and vision to them. Thus, the employees may become more effectively committed to their organisation. These competencies, which are identified by PAS in all the hierarchical levels of an organisation, are important aspects concerning the success of an organisation's competitive strategy (Ubeda & Santos, 2007). Agricultural extension personnel are highly committed to the organisation as the PAS met the positive demand of the three dimension of AEP commitment to the organisation. The current results are in line with Levy and Williams (2004) as well as Kuvaas (2006), where both noted that if PAS activities revealed that the employee in the organisation are highly valued and reflect areas in

which employees need development, such employees will show the higher commitment to the organisation.

Table 3: The effect of annual staff performance appraisal on AEP commitment to the job

Type of Commitment	Mean \bar{x}	Standard Deviation	Sub mean	Rank
Affective commitment				
I work in a well-managed organisation because of the way staff performance appraisal is carried out.	3.99	0.89	3.84	1
My organisation inspires the best in me because of the feedback from the annual staff performance appraisal.	3.90	0.82		2
This is the best of all possible organisations for which to work due to their staff performance appraisal.	3.72	0.80		4
This is a good place to work because of the annual evaluation of their staff performance.	3.74	0.75		3
Continuance commitment				
Deciding to work for this organisation was a mistake on my part because of the method of carrying out the staff performance.	3.76	1.04	3.49	2
There is not much to be gained by staying with this organisation due to the feedback from the staff performance appraisal.	3.82	1.04		1
I would accept any kind of job assignment to keep working for this organisation because of their feedback of the staff performance appraisal.	3.40	0.97		3
I would be happy working for a different organisation if the work is similar due to the way annual staff performance appraisal is handled.	2.98	0.98		4
Normative commitment				
I feel very little loyalty for this organisation because of the way annual staff performance appraisal is being carried out.	2.78	1.18	3.65	4
I understand how my work contributes to the organisation objectives and goals from the feedback from the annual staff performance appraisal.	3.96	0.72		2
I am willing to put in a great deal of effort to help this organisation to be successful due to the feedback gotten from the staff evaluation.	4.07	0.77		1
I am confident that the results of the survey will be acted on.	3.79	0.76		3

Source: field survey, 2016

4.4. Test of relationship between the perceived effect of annual staff performance appraisal method and AEP commitment to the job

There is a positive significant relationship between perceived effect AEP performance appraisal method and AEP commitment to the job as shown in Table 4. The results revealed that the percentage contribution of the method of application of PAS on AEP commitment to the organisation. The method contributed 61.3% to affective commitment, 18.9% to

continuance commitment, and 59.0% to normative commitment as shown in Table 4. The results revealed that application of PAS is highly effective to AEP commitment to the organisation

Table 4: Result between the perceived effect of annual staff performance appraisal and AEP commitment to the job

Variables	R	Decision
Affective commitment	0.613**	Significant
Continuance commitment	0.189*	Significant
Normative commitment	0.590*	Significant

r= correlation value

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

*Correlation is significant at 0.05 level

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result of the study revealed that the objective of the PAS perceived by the AEP covered the AEP personnel development since they are receiving the promotion to a higher level and go for training after the PAS has been conducted and they are also satisfied with the method adopted in the application of PAS. The PAS has a positive effect on the AEP commitment to the delivery of extension services. The annual staff performance appraisal is usually well carried out, however, the feedback received from the performance appraisal are not well acted on. Therefore, the organisation still needs to improve on making good use of the annual staff performance appraisal by acting on the results obtained from the evaluation process and rewarding the AEP based on the results so as to further motivate and enhance the commitment of AEP to extension services to farmers.

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