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PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL PRACTICES OF LIBRARY STAFF IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY OWERRI, IMO STATE

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Abstract

The study focuses on performance appraisal practices of library staff of Federal University of Technology Owerri. Four specific objectives and four research questions were posed to guide the study. The study adopted survey research design. This study was carried out in Federal University of Technology Owerri, Library. The population of the study is 123 library staff. This consists of library staff of Federal University of Technology, Owerri which include professional, para-professional and support staff of the library. The entire population of 123 library staff was used as the sample size. Sampling technique adopted is total enumeration technique. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. For the purpose of data analysis, the researcher used descriptive statistics. The findings revealed among others that punctuality, productivity, discipline, qualifications, years of service and conference attendant are the factors considered in performance appraisal of library staff of Federal University of Technology; ranking, graphic rating, open reporting and confidential appraisal are the methods of appraising library staff in the library studied. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the library management should include other factors that should be looked out for to ensure thorough appraisal of the library staff; the academic libraries should adopt appraisal methods that are acceptable

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to all the members of staff and that will best suit their daily performances so as to ensure that they are properly guided in their job performances.

Keyword: Academic library, information resources, methods of organizing information resources, impact of organizing information resources.

Introduction

University libraries are established to support the teaching, learning, and research objectives of universities. According to Ekere (2014), a university library exists primarily to facilitate academic activities by providing information resources and services to students, lecturers, researchers, and other members of the university community. To achieve these objectives, university libraries perform various functions such as acquisition, cataloguing and classification, reference services, institutional repository management, inter-library loan, and document delivery services. The successful execution of these functions depends largely on the availability and effectiveness of library staff.

Library staff comprise the workforce responsible for the daily operations of the library. They include professional librarians, para-professional staff, and support personnel who work together to provide services and ensure efficient management of library resources. As noted by Williams (2018), library staff coordinate and carry out library operations, while Tracey (2012) describes them as the human resources that constitute the workforce of the library. The whole activities of the library revolve around them.

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To ensure that staff perform their duties effectively, libraries periodically conduct performance appraisals. Performance appraisal is the systematic evaluation of an employee's job performance to determine the extent to which organizational goals are being achieved. Armstrong (2006) defines it as a structured review of an employee's performance and potential, while Fletcher (2001) views it as a periodic and objective assessment of an employee's effectiveness and future capabilities. Performance appraisal commonly considers factors such as punctuality, productivity, adherence to regulations, and quality of service delivery.

Various methods are employed in performance appraisal, including ranking, checklist, essay appraisal, field review, work standards, assessment centres, and management by objectives (Ekwochi, 2012). The outcomes of appraisal often influence decisions relating to promotion, salary increment, training, demotion, or disciplinary actions. Despite its benefits, performance appraisal is often challenged by issues such as favoritism, irregular implementation, and inadequate financial resources to support appraisal outcomes. Nevertheless, it remains an essential tool for enhancing staff performance and achieving the goals of the university library.

Statement of the Problem

Employers are constantly observing the manner in which employees are carrying out their work in the organization. Management of organizations tend to view staff

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performance appraisal as a disciplinary measure which makes it loose its objectives and focus. The aim of every organization is to achieve its objectives and goals successfully. The university library is an organization and as a result, its staff are appraised. However, it seems that performance appraisal of the library staff are not followed duly. Either the necessary factors are not considered, or the appropriate methods are not used or the right person is not used or the library staff do not know why appraisals are done, hence the essence of this study to ascertain performance appraisal if library staff of Federal University of Technology.

Research questions

The following research questions were posed to guide this study

1. What are the factors considered in performance appraisal of library staff of Federal University of Technology?

2. What are the methods of appraising library staff?

3. Who are responsible for the appraisal of library staff?

4. What are the challenges faced in the appraisal of library staff?

Literature Review

Library Staff

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Library staff constitute the human resources of the library and are widely regarded as its most valuable asset. They are responsible for managing library operations, organizing information resources, and delivering services that support the teaching, learning, and research functions of academic institutions. The effectiveness of a library depends largely on the quality, competence, and commitment of its personnel. According to Akanwa (2016), although financial, material, and human resources are essential for library management, human resources remain the most critical because they transform other resources into meaningful services for users. The human resources are made up of the library staff.

Academic library staff are generally categorized into professional librarians, para-professional staff, library assistants, administrative personnel, and support staff. These personnel work collectively to ensure the efficient provision of information services and the achievement of institutional goals. The university librarian serves as the head of the library and coordinates the activities of all staff categories. The availability of competent and qualified personnel has been identified as a key factor influencing the quality of library service delivery and user satisfaction (Mada, 2025). The nature of services delivered by the library staff determines users satisfaction.

Effective library services require not only adequate staffing but also continuous professional development and performance monitoring. Stewart (2013) observed that organizational effectiveness is largely determined by how well human resources are

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utilized and developed. Employees can only perform optimally when they possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and competencies required for their duties. Consequently, regular performance appraisal is essential for evaluating staff contributions, identifying training needs, motivating employees, and enhancing productivity. According to Adeyemi and Olatunji (2023), through performance appraisal, library management can ensure accountability, improve service quality, and promote the achievement of organizational objectives.

Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal is a systematic process of evaluating employees' job performance against established standards to determine their effectiveness and contribution to organizational goals. It involves assessing employees' strengths, weaknesses, achievements, and areas requiring improvement. According to Bernard and Wiatrowski (2013), performance appraisal is the systematic evaluation of employees' performance and capabilities for the purpose of facilitating growth and development. Similarly, Armstrong (2021) describes performance appraisal as a structured process through which organizations assess employees' performance, provide feedback, and identify opportunities for improvement.

Performance appraisal serves as an important human resource management tool that enables organizations to make informed decisions regarding promotion, training,

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compensation, retention, and career development. The process also helps employees understand performance expectations and align their efforts with organizational objectives. Contemporary appraisal systems emphasize objectivity, accountability, punctuality, discipline and continuous feedback to enhance employee productivity and organizational effectiveness (Aguinis, 2023). Involving these components of appraisal system, help the organization to effectively and efficiently appraise the staff well.

Performance appraisal may be conducted formally or informally. Informal appraisal involves continuous feedback on employees' day-to-day performance, while formal appraisal follows a structured and periodic evaluation process. Formal appraisal systems are particularly useful in identifying employees who deserve promotion, require additional training, or merit recognition for outstanding performance. They also provide a basis for evaluating employee competencies and addressing performance deficiencies.

In academic libraries, performance appraisal serves both administrative and developmental purposes. Administratively, it supports decisions relating to promotion, salary increment, staff retention, and training opportunities. Developmentally, it helps library managers identify strengths and weaknesses among staff, improve service delivery, and formulate strategies for professional growth. Effective appraisal systems encourage accountability, motivation, and improved job performance among library personnel.

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The benefits of performance appraisal extend beyond individual employees to the organization as a whole. Regular evaluation enables library management to monitor staff productivity, identify areas requiring improvement, and enhance the quality of services provided to users. According to Lopata (2015), performance evaluation provides managers with valuable information for decision-making and organizational planning. Consequently, an effective performance appraisal system contributes significantly to improved staff performance, organizational efficiency, and the achievement of library objectives.

Methods of Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal can be conducted through various methods depending on the objectives of the organization and the nature of employees' duties. The choice of appraisal method significantly influences the effectiveness of the evaluation process and the achievement of organizational goals (Mone & London, 2018). Effective appraisal methods provide accurate information about employees' performance, identify developmental needs, and support decision-making regarding promotion, training, and rewards.

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One commonly used method is the field review method, in which a human resource specialist evaluates employees by consulting supervisors and reviewing performance records. This approach promotes fairness and objectivity, especially where employees work under multiple supervisors (Prowse & Prowse, 2009). The essay appraisal method requires supervisors to provide written descriptions of an employee's strengths, weaknesses, achievements, and potential for future development. Although it offers detailed information about employee performance, its effectiveness depends on the writing ability and objectivity of the evaluator (Macey et al., 2009). Consulting supervisors and reviewing performance records makes the appraisal of staff easy.

Another widely used technique is the ranking method, which involves arranging employees according to their level of performance, from highest to lowest. This method is useful for promotion and reward decisions but may create unhealthy competition among employees if not properly managed (Mansor, 2011). It also motivates the staff to put in their efforts in order to perform well at their work places.

The graphic rating scale method assesses employees against predetermined criteria such as job knowledge, quality of work, dependability, cooperation, and initiative. It is one of the most popular appraisal techniques because it is easy to administer and allows for comparison among employees (Aguinis, 2023). Also, the checklist method involves the use of a structured list of employee behaviours or job characteristics. Supervisors indicate

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whether specific behaviours are present or absent, making the method relatively simple and objective.

A more comprehensive approach is Management by Objectives (MBO**)**, a results-oriented appraisal method in which supervisors and employees jointly establish performance goals and evaluate achievement based on predetermined objectives. Choon and Embi (2012) noted that MBO enhances employee participation, accountability, and motivation. The process involves setting measurable objectives, implementing action plans, monitoring progress, and reviewing outcomes. Contemporary organizations increasingly adopt MBO because it aligns individual performance with organizational goals and promotes continuous feedback (Aguinis, 2023). The adoption of MBO promotes effective performance as efforts will be geared towards meeting up with the already set out goals.

Other appraisal methods include peer group comparison**,** person-to-person comparison**,** and multi-source or 360-degree feedback, where performance information is obtained from supervisors, colleagues, subordinates, and other stakeholders. According to Gupta and Upadhyay (2012), multi-source appraisal provides a broader and more balanced assessment of employee performance by incorporating diverse perspectives. These diverse perspectives facilitate thorough appraisal.

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Performance Appraiser

A performance appraiser is the individual or group responsible for evaluating employees' job performance and providing objective assessments of their effectiveness. An ideal appraiser is expected to evaluate employee performance fairly, accurately, and without bias. Ikonne (2015) noted that in academic libraries, the university librarian often serves as the chief appraisal authority; however, appraisal committees may also be constituted to ensure greater objectivity and fairness in the evaluation process.

In many organizations, supervisors are commonly assigned the responsibility of appraising employees because they interact closely with subordinates and are familiar with their work behaviours, achievements, and challenges. Effective appraisal requires continuous observation of employees' performance over time and the ability to translate observations into meaningful assessments that can support personnel decisions and professional development (Milkovich & Boudreau, 2017). There is need for effective observation by the supervisor as this is an easy way to determine the level commitment of the staff so as to adequately appraise them.

For performance appraisal to be effective, appraisers must possess certain qualities. First, they should have adequate opportunity to observe employees and gather relevant information about their performance through direct observation, review of records, and

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feedback from other stakeholders. Secondly, Aguinis (2023) stated that appraisers must have a thorough understanding of job requirements and performance standards to ensure accurate evaluation. Thirdly, they should maintain an objective and unbiased perspective when assessing employees, avoiding personal prejudices, favoritism, or subjective judgments that may affect the credibility of the appraisal process.

Performance appraisal in libraries is typically based on established criteria such as punctuality, productivity, discipline, dedication to duty, quality of service delivery, interpersonal relationships, professional competence, years of experience, and commitment to organizational goals (Ikonne, 2015). These criteria enable management to assess employee contributions, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions regarding promotion, training, rewards, and career development. Consequently, the effectiveness of the appraisal process depends largely on the competence, fairness, and objectivity of the appraiser.

Challenges Faced in the Appraisal of Library Staff

Despite its importance in improving employee performance and organizational effectiveness, the appraisal of library staff is often confronted with several challenges that can affect the accuracy and credibility of evaluation outcomes. According to Lopata (2015), one of the major challenges is rating bias, which occurs when appraisers allow personal

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opinions, preferences, or prejudices to influence their assessment of employees. Such bias may result in unfair ratings and dissatisfaction among staff members.

Another challenge is the halo effect, where an appraiser's positive or negative impression of an employee in one area influences the assessment of other aspects of performance. Similarly, Lopata (2015) noted that the recency effect occurs when appraisers place excessive emphasis on an employee's recent behaviour or performance while ignoring performance demonstrated throughout the appraisal period. These tendencies can lead to inaccurate evaluations and undermine the effectiveness of the appraisal system.

In addition, inconsistencies in rating standards among supervisors may result in unequal treatment of employees performing similar tasks. Some appraisers may be excessively lenient, while others may be overly strict, thereby affecting the reliability and fairness of appraisal outcomes. Communication barriers between appraisers and employees also constitute a significant challenge, as inadequate feedback can limit employees' understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, and areas requiring improvement (Ahmed & Bujang, 2013). Ahmed and Bujang (2013) further observed that many appraisers lack adequate training and appraisal skills, which can result in inaccurate assessments, bias, and unreliability in performance ratings. Similarly, Rahil (2017) identified unclear performance standards, personal interests, favoritism, and subjectivity

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as factors that hinder effective staff evaluation. In academic libraries, these challenges may reduce employee confidence in the appraisal process and limit its usefulness for decision-making, staff development, and organizational improvement.

To enhance the effectiveness of performance appraisal, library management should establish clear performance standards, provide adequate training for appraisers, ensure transparency in the evaluation process, and promote objective assessment practices. Addressing these challenges will contribute to more accurate evaluations, improved staff motivation, and better service delivery in academic libraries.

Methodology

The study adopted survey research design. This study is carried out in Federal University of Technology Owerri, Library. The population of the study is 123 library staff. This consists of library staff of Federal University of Technology, Owerri which include professional, para-professional and support staff of the library. The entire population of 123 library staff was used as the sample size. Sampling technique adopted is total enumeration technique. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. For the purpose of data analysis, the researcher used descriptive statistics.

Results and Discussion

Data Analysis Based On Research Questions

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Research Question 1: What are the factors considered in performance appraisal of library staff of Federal University of Technology?

Table 1: Factors Considered in Performance Appraisal of Library Staff

(**N=120**)

S/N	Items	Freq.	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Decision
1	Punctuality	Freq.	50	63	5	2	401	3.3	Positive
		score	200	189	10	2			
2	Productivity	Freq.	47	53	10	10	377	3.1	Positive
		Score	188	159	20	10			
3	Discipline	Freq.	95	15	9	1	444	3.7	Positive
		Score	380	45	18	1			
4	Qualifications	Freq.	100	10	8	2	448	3.7	Positive
		Score	400	30	16	2			
5	Years of service	Freq.	62	58	0	0	422	3.5	Positive
		Score	248	174	0	0			
6	Conference attendant	Freq.	95	15	9	1	444	3.7	Positive
		Score	380	45	18	1			

The analysis of Table 1 revealed that punctuality, productivity, discipline, qualifications, years of service and conference attendant are the factors considered in performance appraisal of library staff of Federal University of Technology. This is evident in their response rates which are above 2.5 average.

This is in line with the findings of Aguinis (2023) who asserted that some of the factors to be considered in staff appraisal include punctuality, productivity, discipline, qualifications and years of service.

Research Question 2: What are the methods of appraising library staff?

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Table 2: Methods of Appraising Library Staff

(N=120)

S/N	Items	Freq.	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Decision
1	Ranking	Freq.	47	53	10	10	377	3.1	Positive
		score	188	159	20	10			
2	Graphic rating	Freq.	35	35	30	20	325	2.7	Positive
		Score	140	105	60	20			
3	Open reporting	Freq.	100	10	9	1	449	3.7	Positive
		Score	400	30	18	1			
4	Confidential	Freq.	100	10	8	2	448	3.7	Positive
	appraisal	Score	400	30	16	2			
5	Weighted	Freq.	15	18	62	25	263	2.2	Negative
	checklist	Score	60	54	124	25			

Ranking, graphic rating, open reporting and confidential appraisal are the methods of appraising library staff in the library studied. This is evident in their response rates which are above 2.5, while weighted checklist is not applicable in the library studied as its response rate is below 2.5 average.

This finding is in line with the findings of Mansor (2011) who states that ranking requires each rater to arrange his employees in rank order of their respective performance from the best to the poorest and that ranking especially when there is retrenchment is used to compare performance of two or more employees. Also, Aguinis (2023) identified graphic rating scale and noted that it is one of the most popular appraisal techniques because it is easy to administer and allows for comparison among employees.

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Research Question 3: Who are the persons responsible for the appraisal of library staff?

Table 3: Persons Responsible for the Appraisal of Library Staff

(N=120)

S/N	Items	Freq.	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Decision
1	Library management	Freq.	47	53	10	10	377	3.1	Positive
		score	188	159	20	10			
2	University librarian	Freq.	35	35	30	20	325	2.7	Positive
		Score	140	105	60	20			
3	Immediate boss	Freq.	100	10	9	1	449	3.7	Positive
		Score	400	30	18	1			
4	Committee	Freq.	100	10	8	2	448	3.7	Positive
		Score	400	30	16	2			
5	Outside experts	Freq.	35	35	30	20	325	2.7	Positive
		Score	140	105	60	20			

The analysis of Table 3 revealed that library management, university librarian, immediate boss, committee and outside experts are the persons responsible for the appraisal of library staff. This is evident in their response rates which are above 2.5 average.

This finding is in line with the findings of Ikonne (2015) who posited that the university librarian is the chief appraisal authority in academic libraries. He further stated that appraisal committee can be set up by the university management to appraise the performances of the staff so as to determine their level of productivity, growth and development in the university. The study of Milkovich and Boudreau (2017) noted that the

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library management is the principal appraisal authority and can as well serve as the supervisor in staff appraisal.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges faced in the appraisal of library staff?

Table 4: Challenges Faced in the Appraisal of Library Staff

(N=120)

S/N	Items	Freq.	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean	Decision
1	Different rate pattern	Freq.	47	53	10	10	377	3.1	Positive
		score	188	159	20	10			
2	Over emphasis on recent behavior	Freq.	35	35	30	20	325	2.7	Positive
		Score	140	105	60	20			
3	Hall effect	Freq.	100	10	9	1	449	3.7	Positive
		Score	400	30	18	1			
4	Personal bias	Freq.	100	10	8	2	448	3.7	Positive
		Score	400	30	16	2			
5	Central tendency	Freq.	35	35	30	20	325	2.7	Positive
		Score	140	105	60	20			

Data analysis of Table 4 shows that different rate pattern, over emphasis on recent behavior, hall effect and central tendency are the challenges faced in the appraisal of library staff studied. This is evident in their response rates of above 2.5 average.

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This is in line with the finding of Lopata (2015) who stated that some of the major challenges faced in the appraisal of library staff include the following: different rate pattern, over emphasis on recent behaviour, hall effect, personal bias and central tendency.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

1. The library management should include other factors that should be looked out for to ensure thorough appraisal of the library staff.
2. The academic libraries should adopt appraisal methods that are acceptable to all the members of staff and that will best suit their daily performances so as to ensure that they are properly guided in their job performances.
3. The institutional management should involve mostly external bodies in the appraisal of its staff to avoid any form bias.
4. Appraisal should be done on quarterly basis and at the end of the year; an average score should be taken. This will help solve the problems associated with irregular staff appraisal.

Conclusion

The study examined the performance appraisal practices of library staff in the Federal University of Technology, Owerri. It concluded that performance appraisal is an important management tool for assessing staff effectiveness, enhancing productivity, and improving service delivery in the library. Although the appraisal system contributes to staff development and organizational growth, challenges such as bias, inconsistent evaluation

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standards, and inadequate appraisal skills may affect its effectiveness. Therefore, there is a need for a fair, objective, and well-structured appraisal system to promote staff performance and achieve the goals of the university library.

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