PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT TO WORK IN THE NIGERIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: A STUDY OF BWARI AREA COUNCIL, NIGERIA

OTU, JOSEPH AYI
Department of Public Administration, University of Abuja
Otu.ayi2020@uniabuja.edu.ng ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-4903-0133

YUSUF LAWAL (PhD)
Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Management Sciences
University of Abuja
Yusuf.lawal@uniabuja.edu.ng ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-0746-9512

OKAFOR IKECHUKWU JOSEPH (PhD)
Department of Public Administration, University of Abuja
Joseph.okafor@uniabuja.edu.org ORCID:https://orcid.org/0009-0007-4469-6379

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Keywords

Performance, Performance Appraisal, Employee Commitment, Procedural justice

Abstract

Research Problem: *A considerable number of employees within the Bwari Area Council perceive the appraisal process as vulnerable to various forms of bias. Evaluator bias, whether deliberate or unintended, has the potential to compromise the fairness of performance assessments in organisations.*
Methods/Theory: *A sample of 293 employees was selected from a total population of 1,500 using the Research Advisor Table and simple random sampling technique. The study employed a descriptive survey research design, with data collected through structured questionnaires administered to employees of Bwari Area Council. Chi-square was used to test the hypotheses. The theoretical underpinning of the study was based on Procedural Justice Theory.*
Results: *Findings revealed that staff generally held negative perceptions of the performance appraisal process, primarily due to managerial interference and inadequate responses to post-appraisal complaints. These issues were found to negatively impact both employee motivation and commitment to organisational goals.*
Key Contributions to Knowledge/Recommendations: *This study provides localized empirical evidence from the Bwari Area Council demonstrating that Nigerian local government employees negatively perceive performance appraisals primarily due to systemic managerial bias and*

favoritism. By applying Procedural Justice Theory, the research establishes a statistically significant link showing that compromised perceptions of appraisal fairness directly degrade employee commitment and hinder the attainment of organizational goal. The study recommends that management refrain from manipulating appraisal ratings to favour preferred individuals, establish a transparent and responsive appeal system, and ensure that performance appraisal outcomes are objectively linked to clearly defined organisational goals to foster fairness and accountability.

Introduction

The operational effectiveness of public sector institutions in Nigeria has for many years been associated with numerous enduring challenges and, in several instances, has become synonymous with corruption, inefficiency, and unethical conduct. Human resource management constitutes a vital aspect of overall organisational administration. Within a properly managed organisation, employees are widely regarded as key drivers of productivity and service quality, often contributing more significantly to organisational success than financial or physical resources. The performance of an organisation is generally measured by its ability to achieve its established goals and objectives. Organisations that perform effectively typically promote collaboration, mutual understanding, and a shared commitment to organisational goals across all functional areas. In an era marked by increasing competition for skilled personnel, organisations must prioritise employee retention through the implementation of fair, transparent, and effective performance appraisal systems (Dare, 2012).

Organisations pursue their objectives through the coordinated utilisation of both human and material resources. However, unlike technological or physical resources, human resources are dynamic, subjective, and influenced by a variety of social, cultural, economic, and personal factors. Owing to these complexities, many organisations have embraced performance appraisal as a strategic management mechanism aimed at enhancing workforce productivity and organisational effectiveness while recognising the unique behavioural characteristics of employees (Oyadiran, 2010).

Despite its intended benefits, the performance appraisal process has often been undermined by unethical practices and administrative irregularities. Employees are generally more motivated to perform effectively when they believe that organisational processes are transparent, impartial, and free from favouritism, with promotions, rewards, and recognition determined by merit rather than personal influence. Where grievances are addressed fairly and organisational justice is evident, employees are more likely to demonstrate commitment and productivity (Cole, 2002). Perceptions of fairness within appraisal systems have also been linked to desirable organisational outcomes, including reduced employee turnover, lower rates of absenteeism, and improved future job performance (Nzuve, 2007). Fletcher (1997, cited in Oyadiran, 2010) further argues that when employees view the appraisal process positively, they are more likely to accept performance evaluations constructively, thereby minimising resistance and conflict while enhancing motivation and overall effectiveness.

The overall performance of an organisation is largely dependent on the contributions of its employees at every level. Consequently, organisations seeking sustained improvement must establish and maintain robust performance appraisal mechanisms. The effectiveness of these systems, however, is significantly influenced by employee attitudes and perceptions. Performance appraisal can only achieve its intended objectives when employees have confidence in the process and actively support its implementation. Therefore, examining staff perceptions of appraisal practices is essential for identifying weaknesses and areas requiring improvement (Armstrong, 2001).

Public institutions, including the Bwari Area Council, face distinctive challenges in the administration of performance appraisal systems. One recurring issue relates to the absence of clearly defined performance standards, which often results in supervisors applying different interpretations of what constitutes satisfactory or exceptional performance. Such inconsistencies can lead to disparities in evaluation outcomes. Additionally, concerns regarding objectivity continue to affect the credibility of appraisal exercises. Conventional appraisal techniques, particularly rating scale methods, frequently assess subjective factors such as attitude, loyalty, and personality traits, which are difficult to measure accurately and may not necessarily reflect actual job performance. This dependence on subjective criteria often diminishes the validity and reliability of appraisal outcomes.

Furthermore, a considerable number of employees within the Bwari Area Council perceive the appraisal process as vulnerable to various forms of bias. Evaluator bias, whether deliberate or unintended, has the potential to compromise the fairness of performance assessments. For example, where supervisors hold preconceived opinions or discriminatory attitudes towards particular ethnic groups, such predispositions may influence evaluation decisions and result in unjust ratings. Although it is widely recognized that performance assessments are susceptible to deliberate and unintended biases, existing literature has not adequately explored how these specific subjective perceptions of injustice influence the broader metric of employee commitment. A conceptual gap exists in understanding the precise mechanisms through which perceived ethnic discrimination and evaluator bias in appraisals degrade or alter an employee's commitment to their work, a dynamic this study aims to clarify within the Bwari Area Council.

Despite the acknowledged presence of subjective and ethnic biases in performance evaluations, current administrative frameworks lack localized, evidence-based recommendations to mitigate these issues in Nigerian local councils. There is a critical gap in actionable research that not only investigates the prevalence of these specific evaluator biases in the Bwari Area Council but also translates these findings into practical strategies to restore the fairness, credibility, and overall effectiveness of the appraisal system. Against this backdrop, the present study titled Staff Perception of Performance Appraisal and Employee Commitment to Work in Bwari Area Council, Abuja seeks to investigate these concerns and generate recommendations aimed at strengthening the fairness, credibility, and effectiveness of the performance appraisal system.

Statement of the Problem

The performance of Nigeria’s public service has remained a significant concern for both policymakers and scholars. This is primarily due

to the persistent failure of various reform measures aimed at addressing the inefficiencies and systemic collapse of capacity within the public sector (Dare, 2012). According to Akpanim et al. (2013), one of the key human resource management challenges confronting public sector organisations in Nigeria is the absence of an effective performance appraisal system. The subjective methods of staff appraisal previously employed in the Nigerian public sector largely focused on personal attributes such as drive, honesty, initiative, foresight, loyalty, industriousness, and courage. This approach has led to serious human resource management issues in critical areas such as promotions, salary adjustments, selection for training, job descriptions, and staff deployment.

As a result, the Nigerian public sector has been plagued by inefficiency and ineffectiveness, thereby obstructing the progress of this vital segment of the nation's governance structure. In response to these issues, the 1988 Civil Service Reform introduced a performance appraisal system based on target setting and objective assessment, requiring measurable job performance and professional competence, with corresponding rewards and sanctions. Despite this reform and subsequent efforts, the appraisal process in the Nigerian public service continues to face numerous challenges (Akpanim et al., 2013).

In Bwari Area Council, for instance, the performance appraisal system is beset by issues such as perceived bias in employee evaluations, a weak feedback mechanism, and other procedural deficiencies. These shortcomings have the potential to demotivate employees, thereby reducing their overall commitment to organisational goals. In light of these concerns, this study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

Research Questions

a) How does staff perception of the performance appraisal process influence employee commitment in Bwari Area Council?

b) What is the impact of performance appraisal on employee commitment in Bwari Area Council?

Objectives of the Study

The general aim of this study is to evaluate the relationship between performance appraisal and staff commitment to work. The specific objectives are to:

i. Investigate staff perceptions of the performance appraisal process and how these perceptions affect their commitment to work.

ii. Examine the impact of performance appraisal on the level of employee commitment within Bwari Area Council.

Statement of Hypotheses

This research is guided by the following null hypotheses:

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between employees' perception of performance appraisal and their commitment to work.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between performance appraisal and employees' commitment to work.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Review

The concept of performance appraisal has been interpreted in various ways by scholars and practitioners within the field of public

administration. Armstrong and Taylor (2014) define performance appraisal as a structured practice that outlines job expectations and governs employment relationships to attract and retain suitable personnel in alignment with organisational demands. According to Majumder (2012) and Cheng (2014), one of the core functions of performance appraisal is to assist organisations in making decisions concerning remuneration, promotions, identifying training needs, providing feedback, and recognising employee achievements.

As observed by Robert and Pregitzer (2007), performance appraisal is often viewed as a daunting annual organisational ritual, even by experienced managers. This perception reflects a general apprehension towards the process among evaluators. In an effort to address this, organisations have attempted to refine appraisal methods by linking them to administrative functions such as rewards, promotions, and staff development. Kennedy and Dresser (2001) argue that performance should not only be assessed but also actively managed. Despite historical improvements, performance appraisal remains both universal and contentious, with ongoing debates about its effectiveness across academic and professional spheres.

In essence, performance appraisal serves as a mechanism for assessing employees' accomplishments over a specified time frame using defined criteria, with the overarching aim of enhancing individual and organisational productivity. The term is often used interchangeably with performance management, evaluation, or review. Akata (2003) describes it as a comprehensive and systematic process of planning, monitoring, and evaluating work output to continually improve team and individual contributions towards organisational goals. This implies that performance appraisal helps to define future objectives, monitor progress based on job descriptions, and assess outcomes in relation to set targets.

Ikramullah et al. (2011) note that performance appraisal is a formal method of gauging employees' efficiency and contributions, while Fletcher (2001) highlights its role in developing competencies, motivating employees, and ensuring fair resource allocation. Thus, performance appraisal serves multiple functions ranging from evaluation to motivation and decision-making. Similarly, Bassey, Esu, and Inyang (2009) describe it as a system for tracking employee performance over time to aid in organisational goal attainment.

Methods of Performance Appraisal

Oyadiran (2010) identifies two broad categories of performance appraisal systems: **open** and **closed**. In an open system, the employee being appraised is given an opportunity to discuss their performance with the supervisor and contribute to the appraisal record. In contrast, a closed system involves unilateral evaluation by the supervisor without input or feedback from the employee.

Beyond these two types, several specific appraisal methods are widely used:

(a) Comparison Methods

These include ranking, alternative ranking, and paired comparison:

- **Ranking:** This is the oldest and most straightforward approach, where employees are ranked from best to worst based on overall performance. Though simple, this method becomes cumbersome with large staff numbers and may lack nuance.
- **Alternative Ranking:** The appraiser identifies the best and worst employees from

a list, continuing the process until all staff are ranked.

- **Paired Comparison:** Each employee is compared individually with every other team member. Rankings are derived from the frequency with which one employee is judged superior to another. While this reduces certain rating biases, it lacks precision in highlighting the extent of differences among employees.

Despite their benefits in limiting certain errors (such as central tendency bias), these methods suffer from the absence of a uniform standard, which can lead to inconsistencies in rankings.

(b) Linear Rating Scale (Graphic Scale)

This widely used method involves rating employees on various traits and job-related behaviours using a pre-designed form. Criteria may include initiative, leadership, dependability, creativity, quality of work, and interpersonal relations. Supervisors rate each attribute on a defined scale, providing a quantitative assessment of performance.

(c) Grading Method

Under this approach, employees are rated against predetermined categories such as "Outstanding," "Very Good," "Good," "Fair," and "Poor." Attributes evaluated may include judgment, job knowledge, leadership, and communication. The employee is assigned a grade that best describes their overall performance.

(d) Behavioural Method

This method focuses on observable behavioural traits that contribute to performance outcomes. Supervisors document specific instances of behaviour, the context in which they occurred, and the resulting consequences. While this method is valuable for individual counselling and development, it can be misused if only negative behaviours are recorded without supportive interventions.

(e) Management by Objectives (MBO)

MBO involves a collaborative process between employee and supervisor to set clear, measurable goals. These objectives are work-related and may also support career development. Progress is reviewed periodically, with opportunities to revise goals as necessary. The supervisor plays a supportive and mentoring role throughout the process.

(f) Forced Distribution Method

In this system, employees are grouped into performance categories (e.g., top 10%, middle 70%, bottom 20%), often using a five-point scale. It presumes a fixed distribution of performance across the workforce. This method can reduce rating inflation but may demotivate employees if they perceive the rankings as arbitrary.

(g) Checklists

Here, the appraiser does not provide direct ratings but instead responds to a series of yes/no questions about the employee's behaviour and performance. The completed checklists are assessed by the HR or personnel department to derive performance ratings. Sample questions include:

- Is the employee genuinely interested in their job?
- Is the employee punctual?
- Does the employee maintain composure under pressure?
- Is the employee respected by peers?

- Is the employee open to assisting colleagues?

This method provides a structured but somewhat superficial overview of performance and relies heavily on the clarity and relevance of the checklist items.

Characteristics of a Good Appraisal

The fundamental objective of performance appraisal in organisations is to enhance employee performance in their respective roles. However, this goal is unlikely to be achieved unless the working environment enables employees to understand the specific requirements of their positions. As Oyadiran (2010) emphasises, a clear definition of job responsibilities is essential for conducting an effective appraisal. Employees should agree on specific objectives or performance targets with their line managers, which will then serve as the basis for evaluation.

Furthermore, employees must be made fully aware of the performance standards expected of them, and these should be aligned with broader organisational objectives. Job roles should be structured to ensure that employees can utilise their intellectual and physical abilities to the fullest. Supervisors and managers must serve as role models by demonstrating efficiency and administrative competence, which can inspire subordinates especially newer staff to perform well. Importantly, appraisal should not be a one-off event but rather a continuous process.

Once objectives are established, it is the responsibility of supervisors to ensure that employees possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies to meet them. This also includes providing opportunities for on-the-job learning, guidance, and coaching. Supervisors must maintain close communication with their team members and engage in both job-specific and general discussions.

Appraisal systems should take a holistic view of personal development, extending beyond technical job competencies or promotion-related skills. They must be free from any form of discrimination based on age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability, or other protected characteristics.

According to Oyadiran (2010), effective performance appraisal should fulfil the following criteria:

- It must be systematic and applied consistently across all relevant personnel.
- It should occur regularly as an ongoing process.
- Appraisal should inform managerial and developmental initiatives.
- Evaluations must focus on job performance rather than personal attributes.
- There should be mutual agreement between supervisor and employee on performance targets.
- Bias and subjectivity must be avoided.
- Appraisers should be trained in conducting appraisal interviews.
- Reviews should be subject to cross-checking, such as through Performance Appraisal Review (PAR).
- Job responsibilities must be clearly defined.
- Performance standards should be established for each role.
- Employees should be encouraged to self-assess.

- Jobs should be structured to allow optimal use of employee capabilities.
- Employees should be granted autonomy within the scope of supervisory guidance.
- Managers must demonstrate efficiency and strong leadership skills.
- Employees must possess the requisite skills, knowledge, and attributes to achieve set goals.
- Appraisals should be directly linked to job requirements and responsibilities.
- Performance appraisal should be regarded as a means to an end, not an end in itself.
- It must be integrated with all aspects of human resource management.
- Appraisal should involve assessing an individual's value and performance.

Objectives of Performance Appraisal

The importance of systematically managing and evaluating staff performance cannot be overstated. As Oyadiran (2010) outlines, performance appraisal serves several key purposes:

(a) Managerial Information

Appraisal provides critical information to management regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the current workforce. This information informs human resource planning, identifies training needs, and supports decisions concerning salary adjustments, promotions, transfers, and terminations. It also serves as an audit tool to assess the adequacy of personnel practices.

(b) Motivation

Performance appraisal acts as a motivational mechanism by enabling employees to understand their performance levels, strengths, and areas for improvement. When executed effectively, it encourages higher productivity, the development of potential, and enhanced job satisfaction—especially when rewards or advancement opportunities are involved. Conversely, a poorly managed appraisal process can have a demoralising effect and reduce employee performance.

Appraisals play a crucial role in developing staff attitudes and behaviours, aligning personal goals with organisational objectives, and fostering positive relationships between staff and management. They are fundamental to both individual development and organisational growth, forming a part of strategic business planning. In most organisations, formal appraisals are conducted annually, typically involving direct line managers. Senior executives may be appraised by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who, in turn, is evaluated by the board or owners, depending on the organisational structure.

Annual appraisals help standardise expectations, delegate responsibilities, and track progress towards objectives. They also identify individual and organisational training needs, feeding into broader training and development plans. Appraisals commonly influence decisions around pay scales, grades, and planning for the subsequent year. Furthermore, they are essential for succession planning at both individual and organisational levels, providing a structured, documented review of an employee's performance and a roadmap for future growth.

Benefits of Performance Appraisal

Despite the challenges that often accompany the appraisal process, the long-term advantages of a well-structured and properly implemented system significantly outweigh the time and effort required. A well-conceived appraisa system benefits all parties involved the employee, the appraising manager, and the organisation at large by enhancing productivity and clearly conveying performance expectations. As noted by Appelbaum et al. (2003), constructive feedback can lead to improved employee productivity.

Moreover, performance appraisals can foster a sense of commitment, mutual understanding, and the development of constructive workplace relationships. They can strengthen ties between institutions and clients, management and employees, as well as among colleagues, thereby supporting the achievement of organisational goals. According to Otley (2000), a high-performing organisation is one that is effectively implementing a suitable strategy and successfully meeting its objectives. On the contrary, a negative appraisal outcome can lead to termination of employment. Within civil service structures, for example, it is commonly accepted that two successive unsatisfactory evaluations may result in dismissal.

Annual appraisals can serve as opportunities for learning and development, encouraging employees to reflect on their growth \ambitions and career paths. Research by Ashford and Cummings (2003) shows that feedback positively influences both individual and group performance by clarifying roles, enhancing self-efficacy, reinforcing desired behaviours, and boosting self-regulation.

In a similar vein, Armstrong and Baron (2004) argue that comparing actual performance with expected performance helps evaluate outcomes and identify areas for development. This feedback process is further supported by coaching and training, which are crucial for learning and professional advancement. Coaching, in particular, aims to enhance an individual's skills and knowledge, thereby improving job performance and contributing to the achievement of organisational goals. Managers should identify and initiate necessary training and development actions to support individual progress (Bevan & Thompson, 2001).

Challenges of Performance Appraisal in Nigeria's Public Sector

Ideally, performance appraisals should be entirely objective, reflecting an employee's actual performance rather than a supervisor's personal biases. In practice, however, many appraisers whether deliberately or not introduce inaccuracies into the process. Recognising and mitigating these biases is essential for maintaining the integrity of appraisals.

According to Mohman et al. (1989), performance ratings in Nigeria's public sector are frequently inflated to favour certain individuals, while others receive insufficient or misleading feedback. This often stems from the perception that appraisal is a managerial tool for rewarding loyalty and punishing dissent rather than a mechanism for employee development. Consequently, the developmental purpose of appraisal is overlooked, with the evaluative aspect receiving disproportionate focus. Compounding the issue is the lack of training and competence among supervisors, who typically adhere to entrenched bureaucratic norms rather than conducting meaningful evaluations.

Akpanim et al. (2013) identified a range of issues undermining effective performance appraisal in Nigeria's public service, including:

1. Supervisors failing to conduct appraisal and follow-up interviews.
2. Appraisal results largely influenced by personal bias rather than objective assessment.
3. Techniques used often lack reliability and validity.
4. Poor ratings negatively affect workplace and industrial relations.
5. External and internal factors disrupt accurate evaluations.
6. Feedback sessions may disrupt productivity.
7. Management often prioritises punishment over development.
8. Potential appraisals are frequently based on speculation.
9. No significant link between appraisals and post-promotion performance.
10. Some appraisals are completed hastily, within minutes.
11. Lack of consistency between different appraisers (low inter-rater reliability).
12. Feedback interviews often generate discomfort or resentment.
13. Supervisors lack tact when providing constructive criticism.
14. Confusion among appraisers due to conflicting appraisal objectives.

Employee Commitment to Work

Employee commitment has become an area of growing interest in contemporary organisational research. Colakoglu, Culha, and Atay (2010) observed that securing employee loyalty remains a major challenge for modern organisations. They posited that fostering a sense of value and appreciation among workers is key to enhancing their commitment.

Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1982) described commitment as an employee's belief in and alignment with organisational goals, coupled with a willingness to exert considerable effort and remain with the organisation for the long term. Similarly, Allen and Meyer (1996) defined it as a psychological bond between an employee and the employer, characterised by a lack of intent to leave the organisation. Commitment, therefore, denotes a strong emotional and cognitive attachment to the workplace.

According to Redmond (2010), employee commitment reflects an individual's physical, mental, emotional, and psychological engagement with their organisation. Muthuveloo and Rose (2005) added that it involves employees' willingness to embrace organisational objectives. Porter et al. (1974) linked commitment to trust and belief in the organisation's purpose. Mullins (1999) identified three key principles of organisational commitment: a sense of belonging, organisational citizenship behaviour, and trust in leadership. Martins and Nicholls (1999) further emphasised that committed employees demonstrate attention to detail and strive to accomplish corporate objectives.

Meyer and Allen (1997) proposed a tripartite model to measure employee commitment:

1. **Affective commitment** refers to the emotional attachment and identification an employee has with the organisation.
2. **Continuance commitment** denotes an individual's perception that leaving the

organisation would be more costly than remaining.

3. **Normative commitment** reflects an employee's sense of obligation to remain with their employer (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in Procedural Justice Theory**,** originally developed by Thibaut and Walker in 1975. According to George and Jones (1999), this theory focuses on the perceived fairness of the processes used in decision-making regarding the distribution of outcomes. It emphasises the fairness of procedures used to evaluate employee performance, handle grievances or disputes, and allocate outcomes among employees.

A central premise of procedural justice theory is that employee perceptions are critical. That is, employees respond more to how fair they *perceive* procedures to be rather than the actual content of those procedures. The theory posits that when workers believe that the decision-making processes such as performance appraisals are fair, they are more likely to be motivated and perform at higher levels. For instance, employees are more driven if they believe their performance will be evaluated accurately and objectively.

In the context of Bwari Area Council, performance appraisal is used to assess employee performance. However, if employees perceive that their performance assessments are influenced by bias or subjectivity, their motivation to perform may decline. This could manifest in increased absenteeism or suboptimal task execution. Hence, procedural justice theory helps to explain employees' perceptions of fairness in performance appraisal processes and the subsequent impact on their commitment to work.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey design**,** which is a methodological approach used to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon under investigation. This design is suitable for studies involving human behaviour and is particularly appropriate here due to time constraints. Descriptive research involves the systematic collection and presentation of data to portray an accurate picture of the existing situation. One of its key advantages is flexibility, as it can be conducted on both small and large population samples.

The term population refers to the total group of individuals from whom data for the study are to be collected. The population for this study comprises employees of the Bwari Area Council Secretariat**.** According to official records from the Secretariat's Information Unit, the total number of staff stands at 1,500**.** This research utilised a simple random sampling technique. This method ensures that every member of the population has an equal and independent chance of being selected. As explained by Champion (1976), an independent chance implies that the selection of one individual does not influence the selection probability of another.

A *sample* is a representative subset of the population, used to minimise the time and cost of studying the entire population while still producing generalisable results. Based on the Research Advisor Table, and using a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error**,** the determined sample size for this study is 306 respondents from the total population of 1,500. Both primary and secondary data sources were employed in the study. Primary data were obtained directly through the administration of

structured questionnaires and observation. The use of questionnaires was favoured due to its cost-effectiveness and ability to reach a large number of respondents. Secondary data were gathered through a review of relevant literature, including academic textbooks, official reports, newspapers, and scholarly journals.

Data were analysed using a combination of cumulative frequency tables, mean values, and simple percentages to address the research questions. To test the hypotheses, the study applied Chi-Square statistical analysis, which is appropriate for examining relationships between categorical variables.

Data Presentation and Analysis

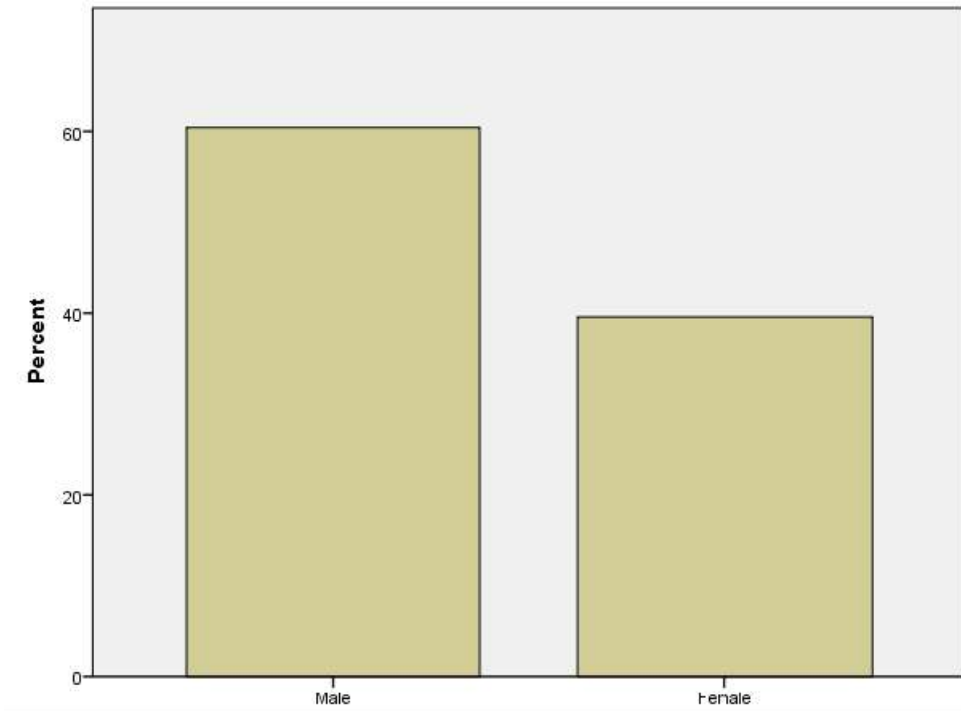
Demographic Analysis of Respondents

Table 1: Gender distribution of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	177	60.4	60.4	60.4
	Female	116	39.6	39.6	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Figure 1: Showing Gender Distribution of Respondents



Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

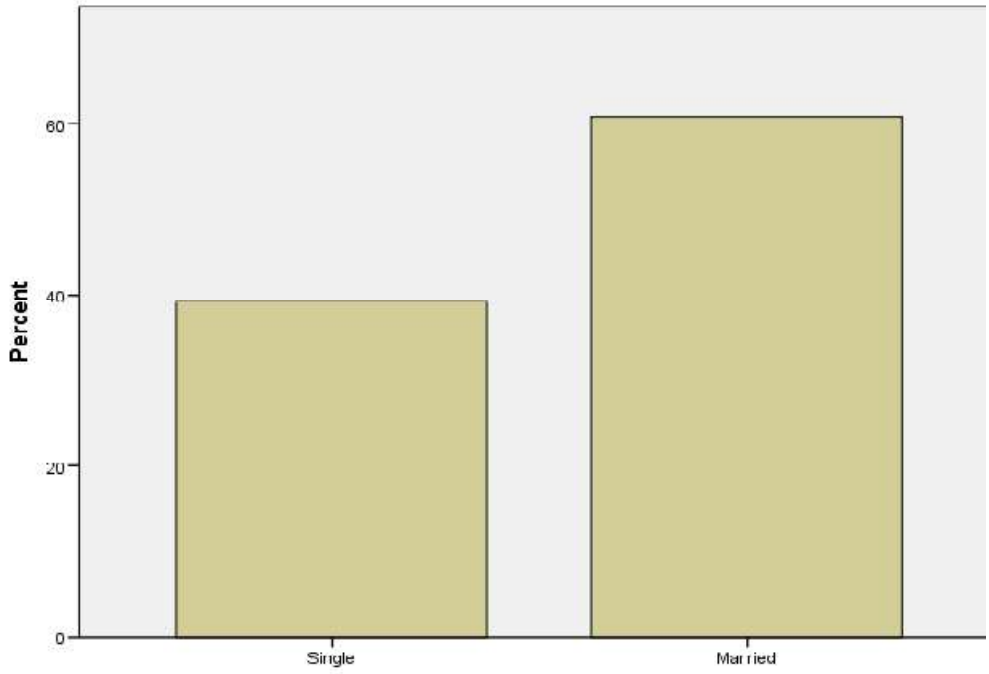
Table 1 and figure 1 showed the gender distribution of respondents. The result showed that 177 respondents (60.4%) were male staff while 116 respondents (39.6%) were female staff of the organisation. It means that male staff were the majority in the study sample.

Table 2: Marital Status of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	115	39.2	39.2	39.2
	Married	178	60.8	60.8	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Figure 2: Showing marital status of Respondents



Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

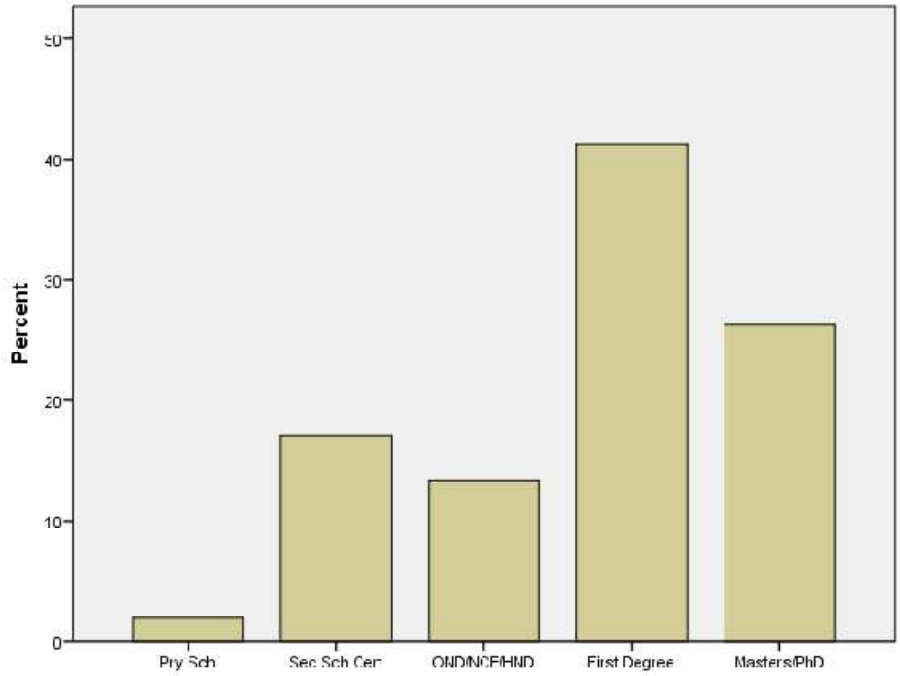
Results of respondents marital status are shown in table 4.1.2 and figure 2. From the analysis, 115 respondents (39.2%) were single while 178 respondents (60.8%) were married. This implies that majority of the respondents were married.

Table 3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Pry Sch	6	2.0	2.0	2.0
	Sec Sch Cert	50	17.1	17.1	19.1
	OND/NCE/HND	39	13.3	13.3	32.4
	First Degree	121	41.3	41.3	73.7
	Masters/PhD	77	26.3	26.3	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey (2026).

Figure 3: Showing educational qualification of Respondents



Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

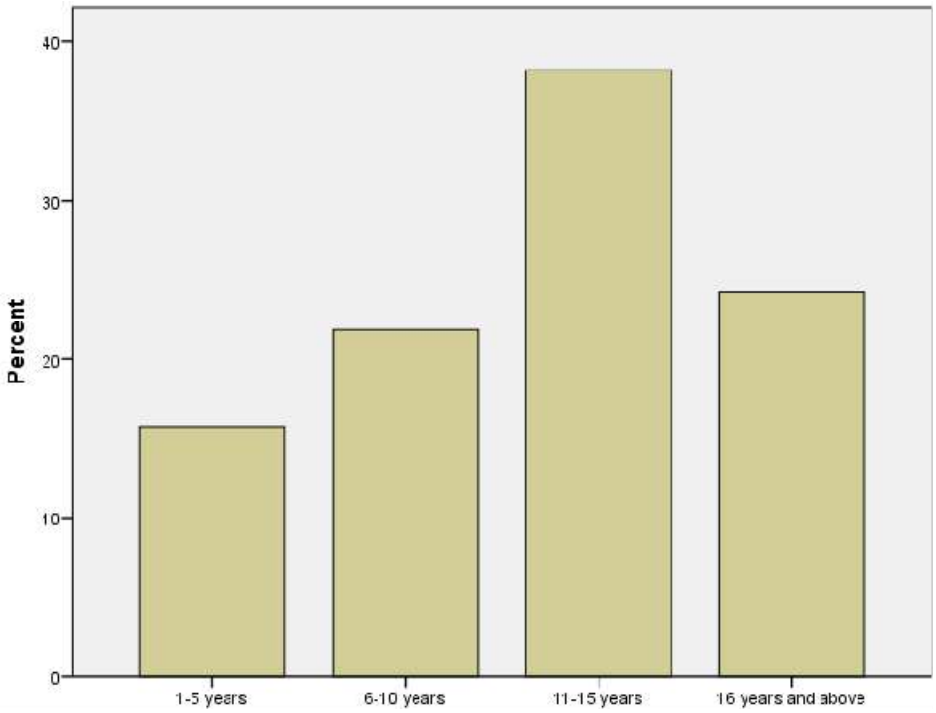
Table 3 and figure 4 displayed the results for respondents' educational qualification. It showed that 6 respondents (2.0%) were primary school certificate holders; 50 respondents representing (17.1%) where holders of senior secondary school certificate; 39 respondents (13.3%) were holders of OND/NCE/HND certificates; 121 respondents (41.3%) were holders of first degree certificates while 77 respondents (26.3%) were holders of Masters/PhD certificates.

Table 4: Respondents' Years of Experience

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-5 years	46	15.7	15.7	15.7
	6-10 years	64	21.8	21.8	37.5
	11-15 years	112	38.2	38.2	75.8
	16 years and above	71	24.2	24.2	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Figure 4: Showing years of experience of respondents



Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

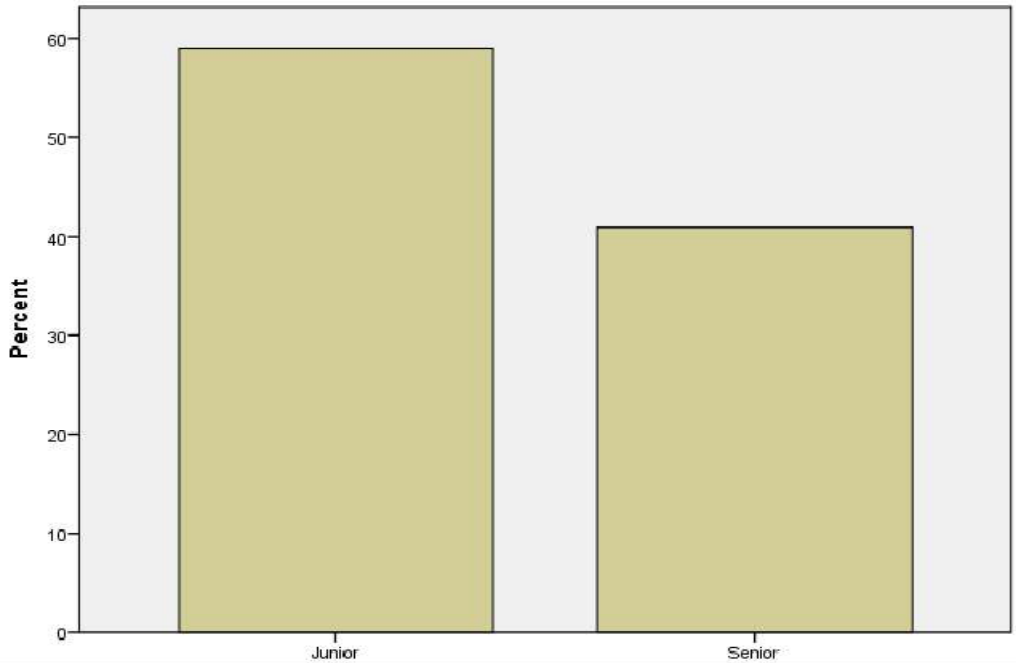
The figure 4 and table 4 displayed the results of years of experience of respondents. 46 respondents (15.7%) fall between the working experience of 1-5 years; 64 respondents (21.8%) fall between the years of experience of 6-10 years; 112 respondents (38.2%) fall between 11-15 years while 71 respondents representing (24.2%) fall between the years of 16 years and above. From the results, it showed that majority of the respondents have been working in the organization for between 11-15 years.

Table 5: Respondents' Cadre

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Junior	156	53.2	53.2	53.2
	Senior	137	46.8	46.8	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Figure 5: Showing cadre of Respondents



Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

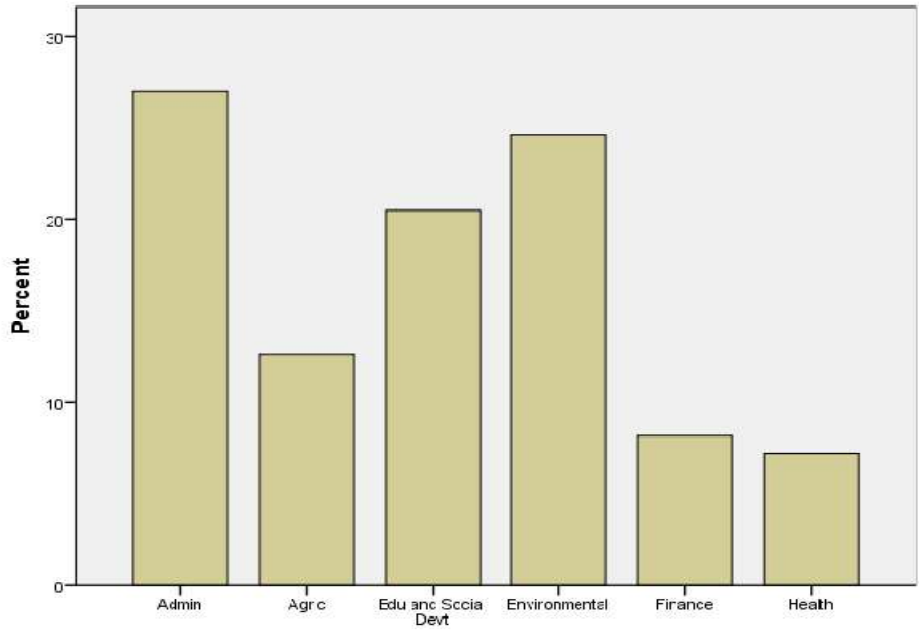
The analysis of respondents' cadre is displayed on table 5 and figure 5 above. According to the result, 156 respondents (53.2%) were junior staff while 137 respondents (46.8%) were senior cadre. This implies that majority of respondents were junior staff however there is no wide margin.

Table 6: Departments of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Admin	79	27.0	27.0	27.0
	Agric	37	12.6	12.6	39.6
	Edu and Social Development	60	20.5	20.5	60.1
	Environmental	72	24.6	24.6	84.6
	Finance	24	8.2	8.2	92.8
	Health	21	7.2	7.2	100.0
	Total	293	100.0	100.0	

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Figure 6: Showing departments of Respondents



Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Table 6 and figure 6 showed the distribution of respondents according to their departments. 79 respondents (27.0%) were in administration department; 37 respondents (12.6%) were in education and social development; 60 respondents (20.5%) were in education and social development department; 72 respondents (24.6%) were in environmental and sanitation department; 24 respondents (8.2%) were in finance department while 21 respondents (7.2%) were in primary health department. This implies that majority of the respondents were in administration department.

Analysis of Research Questions

Table 7: Performance appraisal exercises carried out in the past were fairly satisfactory

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean/Decision
Valid	Strongly Disagree	105	35.8	35.8	35.8	1.9 (Disagree)
	Disagree	140	47.8	47.8	83.6	
	Undecided	15	5.1	5.1	88.7	
	Agree	16	5.5	5.5	94.2	
	Strongly Agree	17	5.8	5.8	100.0	
	Total	293	100.0	100.0		

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

From the analysis on table 7, it was revealed that performance appraisal exercises carried out in the past were not fairly satisfactory as showed by the mean score of 1.9 which signifies Strongly Disagree.

Table 8: The current performance appraisal process in my organisation is biased

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean/Decision
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	1.7	1.7	1.7	4.1 (Agree)
	Disagree	8	2.7	2.7	4.4	
	Undecided	18	6.1	6.1	10.6	
	Agree	168	57.3	57.3	67.9	
	Strongly Agree	94	32.1	32.1	100.0	
	Total	293	100.0	100.0		

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Table 8 showed the view of respondents on whether the current performance appraisal process in Bwari Area Council is biased. Majority of the respondents were of the view that the current performance appraisal process in their organization is biased as displayed by the mean score of 4.1 which signifies Agree.

Table 9: Management usually influences the performance appraisal in my organisation to favour their friends or relatives

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean/Decision
Valid	Strongly Disagree	23	7.8	7.8	7.8	3.1 (Undecided)
	Disagree	24	8.2	8.2	16.0	
	Undecided	169	57.7	57.7	73.7	
	Agree	51	17.4	17.4	91.1	
	Strongly Agree	26	8.9	8.9	100.0	
	Total	293	100.0	100.0		

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

The mean score of 3.1 which signifies Undecided showed that there is no general positive confirmation from respondents on whether management usually influences the performance appraisal process to favour their friends and family members.

Table 10: Complaints made after performance appraisal process is not given prompt and adequate attention by management

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean/Decision
Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	1.0	1.0	1.0	4.2 (Agree)
	Disagree	7	2.4	2.4	3.4	
	Undecided	8	2.7	2.7	6.1	
	Agree	160	54.6	54.6	60.8	
	Strongly Agree	115	39.2	39.2	100.0	
	Total	293	100.0	100.0		

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Table 10 showed the responses whether complaints made after performance appraisal process is given prompt and adequate attention by the management of Bwari Area Council. The employees feel their complaints concerning the outcome of performance appraisal exercise is not is usually given prompt attention by the management. This is shown by the mean score of 4.2 (Agree).

Table 11: Performance appraisal helps employees to find out about their level of performance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean/Decision
Valid	Strongly Disagree	4	1.4	1.4	1.4	
	Disagree	13	4.4	4.4	5.8	4.1 (Agree)
	Undecided	19	6.5	6.5	12.3	
	Agree	131	44.7	44.7	57.0	
	Strongly Agree	126	43.0	43.0	100.0	
	Total	293	100.0	100.0		

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Table 11 displayed respondents view on whether performance appraisal helps employees to find out about their level of performance. The mean score of 4.1 (Agree) indicated that majority of the respondents agree that performance appraisal helps employees to find out about their level of performance.

Table 12: Employees will have a strong desire to remain members if they have positive perception of performance appraisal exercise

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean/Decision
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	2.7	2.7	2.7	4.3 (Agree)
	Disagree	7	2.4	2.4	5.1	
	Undecided	9	3.1	3.1	8.2	
	Agree	105	35.8	35.8	44.0	
	Strongly Agree	164	56.0	56.0	100.0	
	Total	293	100.0	100.0		

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Table 12 displayed respondents' view on whether employees will have a strong desire to remain members if they have positive perception of performance appraisal exercise in Bwari Area Council. From the mean score of 4.3 (Agree) it revealed that majority of the respondents agree that they would remain in the organisation if they have positive perception about the performance appraisal exercise.

Table 13: Employees will exert considerable efforts to meet the organization's goals

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean/Decision
Valid	Strongly Disagree	5	1.7	1.7	1.7	
	Disagree	5	1.7	1.7	3.4	4.4 (Agree)
	Undecided	11	3.8	3.8	7.2	
	Agree	116	39.6	39.6	46.8	
	Strongly Agree	156	53.2	53.2	100.0	
	Total	293	100.0	100.0		

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Table 13 showed the respondents' view on whether employees will exert considerable efforts to meet the organization's goals. Majority of the respondents agree that employees will exert considerable efforts to ensure the goals of the organisations are met if they have a positive perception of the performance appraisal exercise. This is shown by the mean score of 4.4 (Agree).

Table 14: Performance appraisal helps employees to see his/her goals clearly defined and enhance his/her commitment to work

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean/Decision
Valid	Strongly Disagree	8	2.7	2.7	2.7	
	Disagree	39	13.3	13.3	16.0	3.3 (Undecided)
	Undecided	114	38.9	38.9	54.9	
	Agree	95	32.4	32.4	87.4	
	Strongly Agree	37	12.6	12.6	100.0	
	Total	293	100.0	100.0		

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Table 14 displayed the results from the analysis on whether performance appraisal helps employees to see his/her goals clearly and enhance his/her commitment to work. The mean score of 3.3 (Undecided) indicated that there was divided opinion to whether performance appraisal helps employees to see their goals clearly and enhance their commitment to work in Bwari Area Council.

Table 15: The results of performance appraisal motivation to higher performance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean/Decision
Valid	Strongly Disagree	85	29.0	29.0	29.0	
	Disagree	150	51.2	51.2	80.2	2.0 (Disagree)
	Undecided	22	7.5	7.5	87.7	
	Agree	21	7.2	7.2	94.9	
	Strongly Agree	15	5.1	5.1	100.0	
	Total	293	100.0	100.0		

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Table 15 analyzed the results of performance appraisal motivation to higher performance. The mean score of 2.0 (Disagree). Indicated that majority of the respondents disagreed that the results of performance appraisal motivate staff for higher performance.

Table 16: Performance appraisal results in Bwari Area Council inspire workers to strive for higher level of efficiency

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean/ Decision
Valid	Strongly Disagree	65	22.2	22.2	22.2	
	Disagree	153	52.2	52.2	74.4	2.3 (Disagree)
	Undecided	25	8.5	8.5	82.9	
	Agree	22	7.5	7.5	90.4	
	Strongly Agree	28	9.6	9.6	100.0	
	Total	293	100.0	100.0		

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

The analysis on table 16 above displayed the respondents view on whether performance appraisal results in Bwari Area Council inspire workers to strive for higher level of efficiency. The mean score of 2.3 (Disagree) clearly indicated that majority of the respondents disagreed that performance appraisal exercise in Bwari Area Council leads to higher level of efficiency.

Table 17: Performance appraisal motivates workers to advance their career in the organization

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean/ Decision
Valid	Strongly Disagree	123	42.0	42.0	42.0	
	Disagree	64	21.8	21.8	63.8	2.3 (Disagree)
	Undecided	20	6.8	6.8	70.6	
	Agree	44	15.0	15.0	85.7	
	Strongly Agree	42	14.3	14.3	100.0	
	Total	293	100.0	100.0		

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

Table 17 displayed that results on whether performance appraisal motivates workers to enhance their career in organisation. The mean score of 2.3 (Disagree) showed that majority of the respondents disagreed that performance appraisal do not motivate workers to advance their career in the organisation.

Table 18: Performance appraisal results in Bwari Area Council could lead to workers demotivation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	Mean/Decision
Valid	Strongly Disagree	55	18.8	18.8	18.8	
	Disagree	174	59.4	59.4	78.2	2.3 (Disagree)
	Agree	33	11.3	11.3	89.4	
	Strongly Agree	31	10.6	10.6	100.0	
	Total	293	100.0	100.0		

Source: SPSS Output (version 23).

The Table 18 above displayed responses on performance appraisal results in Bwari Area Council could lead to workers' demotivation. From the mean score of 2.3 (Disagree), it revealed that majority of the respondents disagree that performance appraisal results in Bwari Area Council could lead to workers' demotivation.

Hypothesis One:

Table 20: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	636.408[a]	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	374.468	16	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	235.816	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	293		

a. 18 cells (72.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .14.

Table 20 showed the results of the test of hypothesis one. The calculated chi-square value of 636.408 is greater than the chi-square tabulated value of 374.468 at a degree of freedom 16 respectively. Therefore, we accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. This means that there is relationship between employees' perception of performance appraisal and employees' commitment to work.

Hypothesis Two:

Table 22: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	417.480[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	370.116	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	152.513	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	293		

a. 9 cells (45.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.59.

Table 22 showed the results of the test of hypothesis two. The calculated chi-square value of 417.480 is greater than the chi-square tabulated value of 370.116 at a degree of freedom 12 respectively. Therefore, we accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis. This means that there is relationship between performance appraisal and employees' commitment to work.

Discussion of Findings

The demographic analysis covered both junior and senior staff of Bwari Area Council, Abuja**.** The analysis revealed that the majority of respondents were male and married. Most of the respondents held a first degree, followed by those with M.Sc. or Ph.D. qualifications. A significant proportion had served in the organisation for between 11 and 15 years. While junior staff formed the majority, this was by a relatively narrow margin.

Respondents generally indicated dissatisfaction with previous performance appraisal exercises and perceived the current appraisal process as biased. Bias, in this context, refers to errors in judgment that arise when conscious or unconscious prejudices affect an individual's evaluation of another (Kevin, 2019). Such bias can lead to inflated or deflated performance ratings, potentially distorting the outcome of performance reviews. A notable finding from the study was the influence of management in manipulating appraisal results to favour relatives or perceived allies an example of the Similar-to-Me bias, where evaluators tend to favour individuals with whom they share similar characteristics, interests, or backgrounds. Kevin (2019) explains that such bias not only undermines objectivity in appraisals but also fosters exclusion within the workplace.

Furthermore, the appeal process**,** which is designed to resolve disputes arising from performance appraisals, was found to be ineffective. Employees reported that their complaints were often not given timely or adequate attention by the management. This aligns with the argument by Banjoko (2002), who noted that performance appraisal systems are prone to various errors arising from the characteristics of both the appraiser and the appraisee, as well as contextual factors. The study affirmed that appraisal outcomes often reflect the personal disposition of the rater rather than objective performance metrics.

While performance appraisals are meant to inform strategic decisions on personnel development such as promotions, salary reviews, retention, and training the findings showed that in Bwari Area Council, appraisal outcomes negatively influence employee commitment**.** Ideally, performance appraisals should motivate employees and support the achievement of organisational goals. However, the study revealed that employees who made exceptional efforts to support organisational objectives often felt unrewarded due to biased appraisal ratings, resulting in demotivation.

Armstrong (2012) highlighted the inherent subjectivity in performance appraisals, noting the difficulty in achieving consistency across ratings by different managers. Nonetheless, a degree of objectivity is achievable if appraisals are properly structured. The study identified positive feedback mechanisms as a key benefit of effective appraisal systems. Feedback allows employees to understand their performance levels and contributes significantly to their motivation and commitment to organisational goals. It is not sufficient to merely conduct appraisals what follows, especially the quality of feedback**,** is equally critical.

The findings showed that performance appraisal practices in Bwari Area Council have not led to improved employee performance**.** An effective appraisal process should provide employees with insight into their strengths and weaknesses. Feedback, therefore, plays a pivotal role in performance enhancement. According to Spector (2008), feedback gives employees vital information regarding their work performance and areas for improvement. This view is echoed by several scholars (Brown, Hyatt & Benson, 2010; Roberson & Stewart, 2006; Schraeder, Becton & Portis, 2007), who agree that feedback is instrumental in helping individuals identify their strengths and weaknesses. Macey et al. (2011) further assert that improving performance begins with understanding the employee's current capabilities and developmental needs through feedback.

Lastly, the hypotheses tested in the study confirmed a statistically significant relationship between employees' perception of performance appraisal and their commitment and motivation**.**

This reinforces the critical role that fair and constructive performance appraisals play in fostering employee engagement and performance within the workplace.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between performance appraisal and employee commitment to work within Bwari Area Council, Abuja. The primary objective was to explore employees' perceptions of performance appraisal practices and assess their impact on employee commitment within the organisation. A descriptive survey research design was employed, utilising structured questionnaires administered to staff members of the Council. Data gathered from the survey were analysed using cumulative frequency tables, bar charts, simple percentages, and mean averages, while the hypotheses were tested using the Chi-Square statistical method with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The findings revealed that a significant proportion of staff at Bwari Area Council perceive the performance appraisal process negatively. A major concern identified was the lack of timely and adequate responses to employee grievances following appraisal exercises. The study also indicated that staff commitment would likely improve if appraisal outcomes were directly and transparently linked to actual performance. Furthermore, the way performance appraisals are currently conducted in the Council has contributed to employee demotivation.

Performance appraisal plays a critical role in evaluating employee contributions towards organisational objectives. The study concludes that there is a statistically significant relationship between performance appraisal and employee commitment in Bwari Area Council. Additionally, employees' perceptions of the fairness and objectivity of appraisal exercises significantly influence their level of motivation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

a. The management of Bwari Area Council should refrain from manipulating performance appraisal outcomes to favour preferred individuals. Appraisal processes should be transparent and merit-based to foster fairness and trust among staff.

b. The feedback process should be prioritised as a core element of effective performance appraisal. Management must establish a responsive system for handling appeals, ensuring impartiality in reviewing employee complaints related to appraisal outcomes.

c. Efforts should be made to ensure that employees are adequately motivated following appraisal exercises. This involves linking appraisal results with clearly articulated organisational goals and using them as a basis for rewarding outstanding performance.

d. The current appraisal system should be reviewed by the management and relevant governmental authorities to enhance its objectivity. The process should include active participation from both the appraiser (superior) and the appraisee (subordinate), creating a more balanced and inclusive evaluation system.

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