

MALAYSIAN POLYTECHNIC PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM: THE IMPACT OF SATISFACTION AND PERCEIVED FAIRNESS ON AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT AMONG LECTURERS

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Abstract

The research was conducted to examine the impact of perceived fairness and satisfaction in performance appraisal on affective commitment among lecturers in Malaysia polytechnics. A multi-stage sampling method and convenience sampling were used to administer the data gathering process. Online questionnaires were distributed and a total of 795 lecturers from five polytechnics participated in the survey. Data from the cross-sectional study was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 22. Descriptive analysis revealed that affective commitment was rated highest, followed by satisfaction in performance appraisal system and perceived fairness in performance appraisal. The correlation analysis concluded that there was a strong positive relationship between satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal and moderate positive relationship between satisfaction in performance appraisal and affective commitment and between perceived fairness in performance appraisal and affective commitment. Regression analysis revealed that 27.3% of variance in affective commitment was explained by variance in satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal. Satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal were found to have significant impact on affective commitment at significance level of .05. Implication and suggestions for future research were also presented.

Keywords: - *performance appraisal, perceived fairness, affective commitment, job involvement, performance management*

1. Introduction

According to Osibanjo and Adeniji (2012), human resource management as a field of study is presently passing through a transformational stage. The primary objective of human resource management is to fast track the achievement of organizational performance. Human resource practitioners may have impacted labour component by influencing employee commitment, increasing their morale and motivating them (Osibanjo & Adeniji, 2012). One of the activities of human resource management includes performance management which aims to evaluate employees' performance mainly through performance appraisal (Farr & Levy, 2007).

Performance appraisal is an important process for an organization and needs to be implemented objectively, fairly and transparently. A performance appraisal process is expected to manage and improve effective feedback and communication (Sabiu, et al., 2019). The purpose of having a performance appraisal system in an organization is to improve the contribution of employees into the achievements of organizational objectives (Abdelhadi, Ben Mansour & Leclerc, 2015), to support and improve employee development and eliminate performance barriers (Dusterhoff, Cunningham & MacGregor, 2014). Performance appraisal may also be used by human resource management to promote employee efficiency, and to improve employee productivity and efficiency as well as motivation and performance (Swanepoel, Botha & Mangonyane, 2014).

1.1 Performance appraisal system in Malaysia Polytechnics

For lecturers at Malaysia Polytechnics, the process involves setting the Annual Work Target or Sasaran Kerja Tahunan (SKT) and evaluation on behavioural and work performance under a given year in the Report of Annual Performance Evaluation or Laporan Nilai Prestasi Tahunan (LNPT). The evaluation involves achievement of targeted job or work in terms of quantity, quality, costs and other criteria. The overall aim is to help the institution to achieve the expected key performance indicator as set by the administrator or government. Key performance indicators serve as guides to help improve the quality and productivity of the institution.

According to Pekeliling Perkhidmatan Bilangan 13 Tahun 2012, Excellent Services Award (Anugerah Perkhidmatan Cemerlang, APC) had been awarded to civil servants since 1993 and was later modified in 2002. APC is the recognition given by the government to civil servants for their excellent and high-quality service based on their annual performance. The allocation for APC is set at 8% from civil servants who are in service on 31 December annually for each institution or agency (Pekeliling Perkhidmatan Bilangan 13 Tahun 2012). All civil servants including those who are appointed permanently, temporary or on contracts are qualified for APC.

1.2 Problem statement

The performance appraisal system is often a source of dissatisfaction (Katavich, 2013). An effective performance appraisal provides fair rating and does not permit occurrence of errors to occur and create dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction may then have negative impact on organizational performance (Mansoor et al., 2020). It is important to improve the performance appraisal system to eradicate dissatisfaction and negative impacts.

Performance appraisal has been practiced in providing incentives to employees of Malaysian polytechnics. However, there were not much research which can identify the effects of having a performance appraisal on the job involvement or organizational performance among employees of Malaysian polytechnics. Hence, this research was conducted at five selected polytechnics to study the impact of perceived fairness and satisfaction in performance appraisal on affective commitment of lecturers.

1.3 Research objective

This research was conducted to examine the impact of perceived fairness and satisfaction of lecturers in performance appraisal on affective commitment among lecturers in Malaysia Polytechnics. Specifically, this study aimed to:

- i. identify the levels of satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal system, and affective commitment among Malaysia Polytechnic lecturers.
- ii. identify the relationship between satisfaction in performance appraisal and affective commitment among Malaysia Polytechnic lecturers.
- iii. identify the relationship between perceived fairness in performance appraisal and affective commitment among Malaysia Polytechnic lecturers.
- iv. identify the impact of perceived fairness and satisfaction in performance appraisal on affective commitment among Malaysia Polytechnic lecturers.

1.4 Research questions

To help achieve the research objectives, the following research questions were developed:

- i. What are the levels of perceived fairness and satisfaction in performance appraisal system, and affective commitment among Malaysia Polytechnic lecturers?
- ii. How significant is the relationship between satisfaction in performance appraisal and affective commitment among Malaysia Polytechnic lecturers?
- iii. How significant is the relationship between perceived fairness in performance appraisal and affective commitment among Malaysia Polytechnic lecturers?
- iv. How significant is the impact of satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal on affective commitment among Malaysia Polytechnic lecturers?

1.5 Research hypothesis

Based on the research objectives, the following alternative hypotheses were developed:

H_{a1}: There is a significant relationship between satisfaction in performance appraisal and affective commitment among Malaysia Polytechnic lecturers.

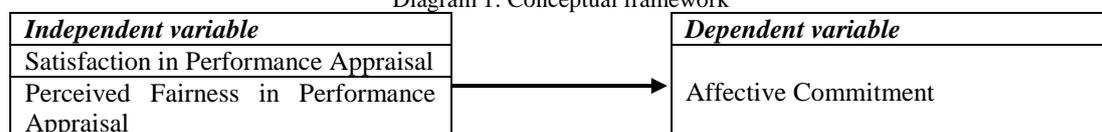
H_{a2}: There is a significant relationship between perceived fairness in performance appraisal and affective commitment among Malaysia Polytechnic lecturers.

H_{a3}: There is a significant impact of satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal on affective commitment among Malaysia Polytechnic lecturers.

1.6 Conceptual framework

To visualize the cause and effect and relationship between the variables, the following conceptual framework was constructed. Diagram 1 shows the relationship between the independent variables (i.e. satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal) and the dependent variable (i.e. affective commitment).

Diagram 1: Conceptual framework



1.7 Significance of research

It is hoped that findings from this research will provide more literature on performance appraisal particularly in the Malaysia Polytechnics. This research may benefit the following parties:

a) Department of Polytechnics and Community Colleges

Findings from this research may provide input and information on how to improve the performance appraisal system at Malaysia Polytechnics. Suggestions and recommendations that will be derived from this research may be implemented to impact on the behavioural and attitude among lecturers in the future.

b) Administrators at Malaysia Polytechnics

Findings from this research may provide input and information on how to improve the process of performance appraisal implemented at Malaysia Polytechnics. The administrators may use the findings to improve the satisfaction levels to bring positive changes in the behaviour and attitude of lecturers.

c) Lecturers

Findings from this research may provide input and information on the performance appraisal process and system implemented at Malaysia Polytechnics. The findings may provide insights on the efforts of the administrators to conduct performance appraisal fairly.

d) Future researchers

Findings from this research may add up to the literature on performance appraisal. Suggestions for future research may also give ideas for more comprehensive research that may be replicated and conducted at other institutions or organization.

2. Literature Review

This section discusses some writings and research findings by previous researchers regarding employee performance appraisal and organizational performance. The importance of performance appraisal and its impact on various variables are also presented.

2.1 Performance management

Performance management involves a continuous process of identifying, measuring, and developing individual and team performance in alignment with the strategic goals of an organization (Arguinis, 2013). To manage performance, it is important to measure performance and understand the performance measures, as inadequate understanding may lead to failure of monitoring and reporting performance (Van Camp & Braet, 2016). The success of any private or public organization depends on its ability to measure and evaluate employees' performance (Mbwambo & Lyamuya, 2021).

Performance appraisal issues should be discussed in a highly effective communication process using one on one discussion. Employees should be allowed to respond and ask questions that may assist them to improve their performance and motivate them by appreciating their opinions (Sabiou et al., 2019). The human resource's practice of performance appraisal can positively influence employees' behaviour and performance (Mahalekange, 2018).

2.2 Perceived fairness in performance appraisal system

According to Aleassa (2014), human resources practices may impact on the behavior and attitudes of employees, depending on the employees' perceptions and evaluation of these practices. Perception involves the way one see the world and is a uniquely individualized experience. Perception is the view of an individual which may create a powerful driving force for action (McDonald, 2011). Perception of fairness or what is or should be fair in the eyes of employees have been considered as one of the cognitive factors that influence employees' attitude and behaviours at work (Sharma & Sharma, 2021). Perceived fairness in performance appraisal may affect employees' satisfaction with performance appraisal (Mahalekange, 2018).

In designing a performance appraisal system, attention should be given to the aspect of creating perceptions of fair treatment relative to other employees as well as the employees' own expectations (Idowu, 2017). Perception that performance appraisal is unfair and political may diminish employee attitudes and performance (Swanepoel et al., 2014). Fair and accurate performance appraisal help keep the employees satisfied and this in turn positively affect the efficiency and effectiveness of employees and organizations (Muhammad Asad, et al., 2020). A study conducted by Swanepoel et al. (2014) finds that performance appraisals are highly politicized. Some define organizational politics in terms of behaviour of interest groups to use power to influence decision-making.

2.3 Satisfaction in performance appraisals

To increase employee satisfaction towards the performance appraisal process, employees' concerns regarding the evaluation process should be addressed (Muhammad Asad Khan et al., 2020). In the prevention of

performance related issues, managers are expected to communicate the organization's vision, mission, and objectives to ensure employees understand their performance goals (Sabiou et al., 2019).

2.4 Impact of performance appraisals

Performance appraisal is an essential tool that can enhance employee motivation by:

- a) allowing them to know how well their performance has improved from the past, through feedback mechanisms (Zhang et al., 2017).
- b) ensuring that conditions of employment can fulfill the immediate needs of employees (Ugoani, 2020).
- c) ensuring that the conditions in the workplace can provide positive challenges to the employees (Ugoani, 2020).

In higher education institutes, for instance, employee performance appraisal not only motivates them but also improves their skills and creates a healthy work environment (Jauhar et al., 2021). Healthy and satisfying work environment may improve employees' attachment to the institutions or increase their affective commitment.

According to Ullah et al. (2021), employees often place strong attitudes towards performance appraisal. An appraisal that triggers negative attitudes, such as hurting an employee's self-esteem, may hinder positive outcomes. These reactions can restrict constructive discussion between a supervisor and their subordinates. The supervisor needs to give feedback to the employees as most employees wish to be informed about their performance to help them improve.

Performance appraisals help clarify the expected outcomes from employees and will strengthen and improve employee performance. It can also help management in refining, validating and establishing a fair and objective basis for decision making related to personnel affairs (Leisink & Knies, 2017). On the other hand, the study by Sabiu et al. (2019) finds that employee motivation through effective incentive system may play an important role in encouraging changes in performance appraisal system without fear.

2.5 Affective commitment

According to Meyer and Allen (1991), commitment can be divided into three components i.e. affective, normative and continuance commitment. These components of commitment may be experienced by an individual at different levels. Affective commitment represents an individual's emotional attachment to the organizational and its values, continuance is a commitment to stay due to economic incentives and normative commitment involves the feeling of moral obligation to remain in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Affective commitment is found to be a significant variable impacting the organizational outcomes such as attendance, turnover, performance and other individual outcomes such as stress and work-family related conflict (Meyer et al., 2002).

2.6 Past researches

Previous literature has identified some factors of performance appraisal such as purpose, criteria, leadership and method of performance evaluations. A study conducted by Al-Jedaia and Mehrez (2020) concluded that the purpose of performance appraisal, and method of performance evaluation had impacts on employee's motivation and job performance. Criteria and leadership of performance appraisal did not impact on employee motivation and job performance.

Mbwambo and Lyamuya (2021) conducted a study in Tanzania secondary schools to measure the effectiveness of the open performance review and appraisal system (OPRAS). The OPRAS is used to evaluate working relationships, communication and listening at both teachers and leaders' levels, assessed based on quality and quantity, responsibility and judgment, and preparation of teaching and learning materials. The study concludes that employees are given enough feedback following the performance appraisal process. On the other hand, Mohammad Asad Khan et al. (2020) found that performance appraisal significantly and positively affects employee satisfaction in University of Peshawar, in Pakistan.

Sabiou et al. (2019) conducted an empirical research to study the relationship between human resource management practices, ethical climates and organizational performance. The study finds that ethical climates mediate the relationship between human resource management practices and organizational performance.

3. Methodology

This cross-sectional study was conducted using an online survey with structured Likert-scale items to gather data. The link to the online questionnaire was shared to lecturers at five Malaysia Polytechnics namely; Politeknik Kota Bharu, Politeknik Sultan Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah, Politeknik Seberang Perai, Politeknik Nilai Negeri Sembilan dan Politeknik Kuching, Sarawak. The data gathering process was administered and monitored closely for a period of 3 weeks.

3.1 Population and sampling

This study used a multistage sampling method. First, 5 polytechnics were selected from a total of 34 polytechnics in Malaysia. These polytechnics were chosen to represent their geographical location. For example, Politeknik Kota Bharu represented the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, Politeknik Sultan Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah and Politeknik Seberang Perai represented the north, Politeknik Nilai, Negeri Sembilan represented the west coast and Politeknik Kuching, Sarawak represented East Malaysia.

Next, the directors of the selected polytechnics were contacted, and representatives were appointed. With the cooperation and coordination of the representatives, the online questionnaires were distributed to the lecturers while being monitored by the heads of academic departments. Using the convenience sampling method, the link to the online questionnaires were distributed via email and group *WhatsApp*.

A total of 795 lecturers participated in the survey. A majority of the respondents were female (58.6%) and possessed Bachelors degree (47.8%) and Masters degree (46.0%). Most of the respondents were from DH44 (37.5% and DH48 (34.3%). Only 15% of the respondents had not received the Exemplary Service Award (APC) in their service and 55.2% of the respondents had received the APC once in their service period. Most of the respondents (62.8%) had acquired teaching experience of 6 to 20 years. The profile of respondents is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	329	41.4
Female	466	58.6
Highest Academic Qualification:		
Bachelor Degree	380	47.8
Masters	366	46.0
PhD	22	2.8
Others	27	3.4
Grade:		
DH41	136	17.1
DH44	298	37.5
DH48	273	34.3
DH52	34	4.3
DH54	8	1.0
Others	46	5.8
Have received APC:		
Nil	119	15.0
Once	439	55.2
More than once	237	29.8
Teaching experience:		
5 years and below	156	19.6
6 to 14 years	248	31.2
15 to 20 years	251	31.6
21 years and above	140	17.6

3.2 Data gathering and instruments

Data for this research was gathered via online questionnaires. The items included in the online instruments were adapted and modified from established scales to measure perceived fairness and satisfaction in performance appraisal, and affective commitment. Performance appraisal is divided into two dimensions, namely satisfaction in performance appraisal process and perceived fairness in performance appraisal. To measure satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal, a total of 12 and eight items are adapted

and modified mainly from Prather (2010) and other researchers, respectively. On the other hand, to measure affective commitment, six items from Meyer and Allen’s (1991) Affective Commitment Scale were used. All items used 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “1 = strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree”.

4. Finding and Analysis

The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Descriptive analysis was run to identify the levels of lecturers’ satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal, and affective commitment. Descriptive analysis revealed that affective commitment was rated highest (with mean of 4.08 and standard deviation of .662), followed by satisfaction in performance appraisal system (with mean of 3.94 and standard deviation of .704). Perceived fairness of performance appraisal system was rated lowest (with mean of 3.90 and standard deviation of .717). Table 2 shows the descriptive analysis of the variables under study.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.
Satisfaction in Performance Appraisal	3.94	0.704
Perceived Fairness in Performance Appraisal	3.90	0.717
Affective Commitment	4.08	0.662

Correlation analysis was conducted to identify the relationship between the variables under study. It was found that strong positive relationship existed between satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal (r = .886) and moderate positive relationship between satisfaction in performance appraisal and affective commitment (r = .512) and between perceived fairness in performance appraisal and affective commitment (r = .506) at .001 level of significance. The result of correlation analysis is depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation analysis

	Satisfaction in Performance Appraisal	Perceived Fairness in Performance Appraisal	Affective Commitment
Satisfaction in Performance Appraisal	1	0.886**	0.512**
Perceived Fairness in Performance Appraisal	0.886**	1	0.506**
Affective Commitment	0.512**	0.506**	1

** significant at .01 level

In addition, to study the impact of independent variables towards dependent variables, regression analysis was done. Regression analysis revealed that 27.3% of variance in affective commitment was explained by variance in satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal (adjusted R square of .273). Satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal were found to have significant impact on affective commitment (β = .297 and .243, respectively) at significance level of .05. Therefore, it can be concluded that satisfaction in performance appraisal was the most significant predictor of affective commitment, followed by perceived fairness in performance appraisal. From the regression analysis, the following regression equation can be constructed:

$$Affective\ commitment = 0.279\ Satisfaction + 0.224\ Perceived\ fairness + 2.102$$

5. Implication and Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that affective commitment could be improved if lecturers were highly satisfied in the performance appraisal. The administrators may implement ways that may improve the lecturers’ satisfaction such as by having discussions among the Heads of Department and lecturers on ways to improve the lecturers’ performance. Lecturers should be given feedback periodically on the performance throughout the year. Improving perceived fairness in performance appraisal system may also improve affective

commitment of lecturers. The administrators should implement a fair and transparent performance appraisal system that is free from bias.

Performance appraisal may be related to many issues or variables and may impacted on many organizational and individual performance measures. However, due to time and budget constraints, only a few variables were analyzed. This study involved three variables, mainly satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal and affective commitment. Other performance measures such as motivation, job engagement and stress and attendance should be considered in future study.

Respondents for this study were lecturers or teaching staff. Future research may also focus on the administration. Since performance appraisal system involves both employees and employers, it would be more informative to take both parties as respondents. Employers may provide information on the performance appraisal process and constraints faced in implementing the performance appraisal system. In terms of coverage, this study was conducted at only five polytechnics in Malaysia. Generalizations may not be representative of all Malaysia polytechnics. Future research may consider wider selection of polytechnics.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that high levels of satisfaction and perceived fairness in performance appraisal among lecturers in Malaysia polytechnics was important as they significantly impact the affective commitment. Affective commitment creates emotional attachment and loyalty to the institutions. Therefore, improving the lecturers' affective commitment may help ensure that lecturers remain with the institutions and perform well to achieve the institutions' goals.

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