

## Electronic Performance Appraisal and Performance of Private Universities in South-South Region, Nigeria

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### Abstract

This study examined the relationship between electronic performance appraisal and performance of private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria. The study adopted the cross-sectional survey design and took a census of the population from the 13 private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria. Data was collected through structured questionnaire. A total of 52 copies of questionnaire were distributed. Tables and percentages were used for data presentation and analyses. Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses, with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science, version 22. The result revealed that electronic performance appraisal has a strong, positive and significant relationship with the measures of performance of private universities. The study concluded that electronic performance appraisal is important in achieving organizational performance because the systems can provide real-time performance indicators of employees; helps them adjust accordingly where help may be required. The study recommended based on the findings that: private institutions should install electronic performance appraisal systems which will help eliminate bias and promote transparency. These systems also save the human resource department time and cost.

**Keywords:** *Electronic performance appraisal, Private Universities, Quality Service, Timely Graduation, Organization and Nigeria*

### Introduction

Performance appraisal (PA) plays a fundamental role in managing human resources in organizations. It is a widely discussed concept in the field of performance management (Idowu, 2017). Susanto, Leu, Chen & Mohiddin (2020) argues that to track an employees' performance may be a hassle and a difficult responsibility of the managers and top management of an organization. The term performance appraisal (or performance evaluation) refers to the methods and processes used by organizations to assess the level of performance of their employees. This process usually includes measuring employees' performance and providing them with feedback regarding the level and quality of their performance (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006 as cited in Van Dijk & Schodi, 2015) in order to provide better goods and provision of quality services to customers and other relevant stakeholders. HR practitioners and scholars have continued to find ways of evaluation process that is faster, easier, minimum bias, and more effective due to the fact that there is growing dissatisfaction with the traditional performance appraisal processes. Hence, technological development has provided electronic performance appraisal (E- performance appraisal) to aid organizations and HR managers to better appraise their employees performance and the general performance of the organization (SierraCedar, 2016, as cited in Payne, Mendoza & Horner, 2018). According to Arjomandy (2013) E-performance appraisal is utilizing intelligent software instead of paper-and-pencil method to capture, store, analyse, rate and report the personnel's activities inside the organization to let the HR professionals or line managers be informed about employees' strengths and weaknesses and take the right decisions about them.

The main goal of every performance appraisal in organizations (traditional or electronic) is to improve employee performance and also aid management to make informed decisions for the good of the organization. Generally, organizational performance is the actual output/result of an organization obtained when measured against its intended output (Farlex, 2012, as cited in Victoria, 2019). However, Modell (2019) described performance of universities as the socially constructed conceptions of organizational performance that become firmly institutionalized as legitimate aspects of achievement in institutional fields. Performance of organizations can be hindered by so many factors (internal and external) within the organization. Quite a good number of scholars had undertaken studies on private institutions in African countries such as Nigeria, focusing on their emergence, policies, internal management and performance. Most of these studies including the NUC irrefutably and conclusively agreed that management issues such as inadequate staffing (manpower deficiencies), lack of psychological

dispositions and shortage of financial and material resources contribute to or affect the quality of education and overall performance of private universities (Kajawo, 2019; Ochoti, Maronga, Muathe, Nyabwanga & Ronoh, 2012; Adetunji, Adetunji & Oyelude, 2016). The preoccupation with the link between electronic performance appraisal and organizational performance has been less applicable to private universities, despite the undeniable fact that e-performance appraisal enhances organizational performance. More so, there seem to be dearth of empirical investigations on the relationship between electronic performance appraisal and performance of private universities, especially in South-South Region, Nigeria. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to empirically examine the relationship between e-performance appraisal and performance of private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of this study include:

1. To determine the relationship between electronic performance appraisal and quality service of private universities in South-South Region Nigeria.
2. To investigate the relationship between electronic performance appraisal and timely graduation of students of private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria.

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between electronic performance appraisal and quality service of private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between electronic performance appraisal and timely graduation of students of private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria?

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical foundation of this study is the Adaptive Theory (AT). The Adaptive/Adaptation Theory, also known as Survival Theory is an organization's ability to adapt to changes in its environment and adjust accordingly. The most famous Scientist associated with the Adaptive Theory is Charles Darwin, whose studies in the 1830s in the Galapagos Islands established a fixed relationship between organisms and its habitat. The central concept of the Adaptive Theory provide a dynamic picture of the process by which people or organizations incorporate advanced technologies into their work practices (Bourdieu, 1971; Gideon, 1979; Ollman, 1971, as cited in DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). Since organizational environments are full of uncertainty caused by different environmental factors, organizations are constantly changing their structures, processes which include technologies in order to adapt to the changing environments in order to achieve their various goals and objectives and also satisfy different relevant stakeholders.

### **The Concept of Electronic Performance Appraisal (E-PA)**

In today's IT based economy, the need for digital HRM has become imperative to meet the HR challenges of 21<sup>ST</sup> century, hence, organizations have increasingly been introducing web-based applications for HRM purposes, and these are frequently labelled as Digital/Electronic Human Resource Management systems (Zafar, 2010; Swaroop, 2012, as cited in Nivlouei, 2014). HR practitioners and scholars have continued to find ways of evaluation process that is faster, easier, minimum bias, and more effective. Hence, technological development has provided electronic performance appraisal (E- performance appraisal) to aid organizations and HR managers to better appraise their employees performance and the general performance of the organization. According to Arjomandy (2013) E-performance appraisal is utilizing intelligent software instead of paper-and-pencil method to capture, store, analyse, rate and report the personnel's activities inside the organization to let the HR professionals or line managers be informed about employees' strengths and weaknesses and take the right decisions about them. The information coming from the appraisal system can be used in making administrative decisions like pay increase or cut, promotions, providing feedbacks to employees' about their strengths and weaknesses, training and development needs and selection procedures. Some HR practitioners are speculating that the traditional annual performance review may be going the way of the dinosaur, as digital technologies are driving almost everything we do in and outside organizations. Farr, Fairchild & Cassidy (2014), posited that electronic performance appraisal systems, particularly online systems present many potential benefits for organizations. These systems centralize numerous human resource functions and enable easy access to a wide variety of information about

employees. By making such information continuously available to employees, managers, and HR, such online systems provide a framework to enhance organizational efficiency and decision making.

### **Performance of Private Universities**

Richard, Devinney, Yip & Johnson (2009) posited that organizational performance is one of the most important constructs in management research. According to Leeds University (1999), performance indicators for institutions, especially for higher education are complicated and often controversial. Although, there is wealth of information collected and published about higher institutions, it does not always lend itself to the contribution of performance indicators. Interpretation is especially difficult, given the heterogeneity of the education sector, the student population and qualification offered. This is why Modell (2019) described universities performance as the socially constructed conceptions of organizational performance that become firmly institutionalized as legitimate aspects of achievement in institutional fields. But generally, organizational performance is the actual output/result of an organization obtained when measured against its intended output (Farlex, 2012, as cited in Victoria, 2019). Organizational performance can be measured in terms of both quantitative as well as qualitative term.

### **Measures of Performance of Private Universities**

Drawing from the performance indicators proposed by Gherghina, Vaduva & Postole (2009) and Musa & Ibrahim (2019), this study adopted two measures of performance of private universities; Quality Service and Timely Graduation.

#### **Quality Service**

Pounder (1999) postulated that over the years, institutions Worldwide have come under pressure to demonstrate effective performance. The response has been to borrow the quality concept from industry and place it at the centre of institutional performance in higher education. Quality service for the purpose of this study is defined as simply dealing with clients and customers (students) in a respectful and efficient manner. According to Asiyai (2015), Nigerian higher education stakeholders are greatly concerned about the quality of education provided the citizens of the country. Concerns about the quality of education students receive from universities, the quality of lecturers (teaching staff) employed to teach students and non-teaching staff for other administrative duties, and infrastructural facilities have always been of utmost interest.

#### **Timely Graduation**

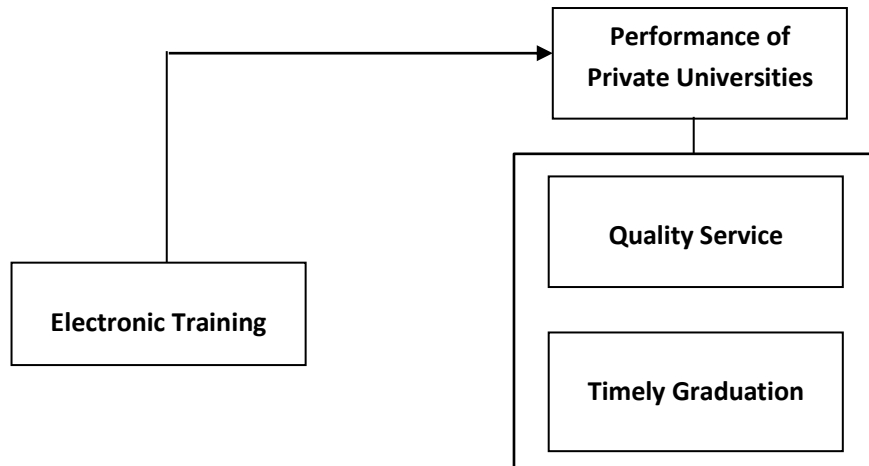
Timely completion of university degree programmes is a topic of growing concern to higher education institutions and their students (Suhre, Jansen & Torenbeek, 2013). In many countries, universities and institutions of higher education face the challenge of improving students' success by reducing dropout rates and time-to-degree (Facchi, Triventi & Vergolini, 2019). In simple terms, timely graduation requires a student to enroll into an institution for a degree program and complete the prerequisite requirements and graduate at record time. According to Musa & Ibrahim (2019), timely graduation is very essential on the realization of any educational goals. It is also essential to students, host universities, potential applicants and the nation at large. Unfortunately, it is common for undergraduate students to encounter barriers to timely graduation, and some of these barriers are inadvertently placed before students by institutional or administrative structures, routines, practices and procedures (Santos, 2020). The University of Texas (2017) posited that the effectiveness of a university should be measured by the number of students it lifts up and support opportunities for all students it admits from day one and strives for 100 percent graduation. According to Kolodner (2017), graduating from a four year college in four years may sound like a fairly straightforward venture, but only 41 percent of students manage to graduate. Noting that the longer it takes, the less likely a student is to make it to graduation.

### **Electronic Performance Appraisal and Performance of Private Universities**

According to Adepoju, Opafunso & Lawal (2017), the function of human resource management plays a major role in monitoring and evaluating employee performance through performance appraisal systems. In recent times, performance appraisal has become a strategic tool in improving effectiveness of workers and quality service delivery in organizations. Electronic performance evaluation helps organization to sustain and motivate talent by gaining the views and ideas of those who are accomplished in the various activities of the Organization (Jarrar and Schiuma, 2007, as cited in Al-Hawary & Al-Namlan, 2018). Thus, the Organization can reduce many costs as a result of applying the principles of e-evaluation of performance (Al-Hawary & Al-Namlan, 2018). Since online performance appraisal systems have the potential to capture and store a rich variety of information, they can be a valuable decision-making aid for upper management (Johnson & Gueutal, 2011; Gueutal & Falbe, 2005; Neary, 2002, as cited in Farr *et al.*, 2014). Several studies have underscored the importance and impact of electronic performance appraisal on organizational performance and other organizational outcomes, for example, Njeje, Chepkilot & Ochieng (2018) and Bhave, (2014). Neha & Himanshu (2015) posited that the impact of performance appraisal system on the job satisfaction and organizational commitment of the employees in the service sector industries has been established. Their study examined the effect of performance appraisal system on job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the service sector in India. It was concluded from the study that the employees who were satisfied with the performance appraisal system of their organization were also satisfied with their job and were committed to their organization. According to Frimpomaa (2014), organizations design appraisal systems to assess and enhance employees’ performance, develop their competence and distribute reward.

The following null hypotheses are formulated to validate the relationship between the variables:

- Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between e-performance appraisal and quality service in private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria
- Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between e-performance appraisal and timely graduation in private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria.



**Fig. 1:** Operational framework for the hypothesized relationship between electronic performance appraisal and performance of private universities.

**Source:** Sharma & Shukla (2013), Gherghina, Vaduva & Postole (2009) and Musa & Ibrahim (2019).

**Methodology**

Research design is the agglutination that holds all of the elements in a research work. It has been defined by different social and management scientists. Baridam (2001) defined research design as a framework or plan that is used as a guide in collecting and analyzing the data for a study. For the purpose of this study, the cross-sectional survey which is a form of quasi-experimental design was adopted. The population comprises a total of fifty two (52) principal officers from thirteen (13) private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria. The census sampling method was adopted because the sample size is small. The data collection instrument for the study was structured questionnaire. A total of fifty two (52) copies of questionnaire were distributed, forty seven (47) were retrieved out of which one (1) was mutilated and five (5) copies were not returned. For data presentation and analyses, tables and simple percentages were used. Also, Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypotheses, with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science, version 22.0.

**Data Analysis and Results**

**Bivariate Analysis**

Three (2) research questions and two (2) null hypotheses bivariate associations are tested in this section using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient statistical technique at a 95% confidence interval. The decision rule is set at a critical region of  $p > 0.05$  for acceptance of the null hypothesis and  $p < 0.05$  for rejection of the null hypothesis. However, while the rho was used to address the research questions, the p-value was used to address the hypotheses.

**Relationship between Electronic Performance Appraisal and Quality Service**

**Table 1: E-Performance Appraisal and Quality Service (Test for Hypothesis 1)**

			Correlations	
			E-Performance Appraisal	Quality Service
Spearman's rho	E-Performance Appraisal	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.772**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.005
		N	46	46
	Quality Service	Correlation Coefficient	.772**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.
		N	46	46

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SPSS output, Version 22 – Field Survey, 2020

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between electronic performance appraisal and quality service of private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria?

The related hypothesis for this relationship is stated as:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between e-performance appraisal and quality service in private universities in South – South Region, Nigeria.

From the result on the table above, the correlation coefficient shows that there is a positive relationship between electronic performance appraisal and quality service. The correlation coefficient figure of 0.772 confirms the strength of the relationship. The result from the table also reveals that the relationship between e-performance appraisal and quality service is significant (where  $p = 0.005$ ) and based on the decision rule of  $p < 0.05$  for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and restate that *there is a significant relationship between e-performance appraisal and quality service of private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria.*

**Relationship between Electronic Performance Appraisal and Timely Graduation**

**Table 2: E-Performance Appraisal and Timely Graduation (Test for Hypothesis 2)**

			Correlations	
			E-Performance Appraisal	Timely Graduation
Spearman's rho	E-Performance Appraisal	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.837**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.005
	Timely Graduation	N	46	46
		Correlation Coefficient	.837**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.
		N	46	46

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

SPSS output, Version 22 – Field Survey, 2020

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between electronic performance appraisal and timely graduation of private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria?

The related hypothesis for this relationship is stated as:

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between e-performance appraisal and timely of graduation in private universities in South – South Region, Nigeria.

From the result on the table above, the correlation coefficient shows that there is a positive relationship between electronic performance appraisal and timely graduation of students. The correlation coefficient figure of 0.837 confirms the strength of the relationship. The result from the table also reveals that the relationship between e-performance appraisal and timely graduation of students is significant (where  $p = 0.005$ ) and based on the decision rule of  $p < 0.05$  for null rejection; we reject the null hypothesis and thus, restate that *there is a significant relationship between e-performance appraisal and timely graduation of students of private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria.*

**Discussion of Findings**

The result of this study shows that there is a strong, significant and positive relationship between electronic performance appraisal and performance of private universities in South-South Region, Nigeria. The finding of this study confirms that electronic performance appraisal positively impacts on organizational performance. Electronic performance appraisal is becoming a leading method of performance evaluation in technologically driven organizations across sectors.

The ultimate goal is to drive and achieve business performance and success. According to Frimpomaa (2014), organizations design appraisal systems to assess and enhance employees' performance, develop their competence and distribute reward. Because of this, it is now viewed as a mechanism for developing and motivating employees. It is also important to note that performance appraisal systems have been used to identify training and development needs of employees. This study further reiterates the findings of Njeje *et al.* (2018) and Bhawe (2014). They found that electronic performance appraisal has a positive and significant impact on organizational performance.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Electronic performance appraisal is important in achieving organizational performance. This is because electronic performance systems can provide real-time performance indicators of employees, help them identify and adjust accordingly where help may be required. More so, electronic performance appraisal can be integrated with other areas of human resource management such as compensation, planning, training and development. Finally, electronic performance appraisal saves time, cost and administrative activities. From the findings, we make the following recommendations:

- i. Private institutions should install electronic performance appraisal systems which will help eliminate bias and promote transparency. These systems also save the human resource department time and cost.
- ii. Management of private institutions should endeavor to use the outcomes of electronic performance appraisal should be used to training and development of employees'.

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