

Outcomes of Employees' Reactions towards the Characteristics of Performance Appraisal System: A Case of a Commercial Bank in Pakistan

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the four key characteristics (fairness perception, fulfillment of training and development needs, feedback and grievance mechanism) of the performance appraisal system and to know the relationship of these attributes with three outcome variables including overall performance appraisal satisfaction, work motivation and turnover intention. Respondents were the employees of a commercial bank in Pakistan and data was collected through questionnaire. Results of the stepwise multiple regression reveals that fairness perception and grievance mechanism are the most important predictors of overall performance appraisal satisfaction and turnover intention. Fulfillment of training and development needs and feedback were the important predictors of work motivation. The paper highlights the importance of an effective performance appraisal system and the outcomes associated with it. The findings may help the management in devising an effective performance appraisal system.

Keywords: Bank employees, Performance Appraisal, Turnover intention, work motivation, Pakistan.

1. Introduction

Organizational behavior and human resource management academicians consider performance appraisal as one of the most important human resource practice (Boswell & Boudreau, 2002; Judge & Ferris, 1993) and comparatively one of the most meticulously investigated research theme (Fletcher & Perry, 2002). In performance appraisal there is an attempt to know about employees' performance, that how effectively they are performing their job (Brown & Leigh, 1996). It is a systematic process in which actual performance is compared with performance standards. Different kinds of formal and informal procedures have been devised to know about individuals contributions towards their organizations (Carroll & Schreier, 1982). According to Mohrman Jr et al. (1989), an appraisal cycle has four important activities which includes clarification of performance standards, assessment of performance, giving feedback to appraisee and dissemination of appraisal information to other departments where necessary.

Banking sector has been playing an important role in the economic growth of Pakistan. Comparatively banking industry's contribution exceeds other financial sectors in the economic well being of Pakistan. This sector has a remarkable potential for further growth and on its way towards that end. As organizations claim today that the most valuable assets they have are the human resources, therefore management and proper utilization of such valuable assets is considered to be a prerequisite for achieving organizational goals. For effective utilization of human assets sound human resource practices need to be adopted by organizations. Among other human resource practices performance appraisal plays a vital role in employees development and organization well being. Keeping in view the existing competition for talent among the players competing in banking sector, effective human resource practices can help organizations to retain their employees. Objective and fair assessment of employees' performance is an important component of human resource management. An ineffective appraisal system can negatively affect employees' performance and may cause stress and dissatisfaction. Employees are the primary stakeholders of an appraisal system and their reactions and acceptance of the appraisal process plays a significant role in making it effective or ineffective.

All the commercial banks operating in Pakistan have a formal performance appraisal system, but there is a paucity of research to know about employees' reactions towards the effectiveness of their organization's appraisal system and its consequences. Keeping in view the dearth of research on investigating employees' reactions towards the key dimensions of an effective performance appraisal system and their outcomes, the current study attempts to fill this void. The study has assessed the relationship between reactions of employees working for a commercial bank on four key attributes of performance appraisal system including fairness perception, fulfillment of training and development needs, feedback and grievance mechanism and three outcomes variables including overall performance appraisal satisfaction, work motivation and turnover intention.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Determinants of overall appraisal satisfaction

Performance appraisal satisfaction is considered to be the most important and consequential variable among

those variables measuring appraisees reactions towards the appraisal system (Giles & Mossholder, 1990; Keeping & Levy, 2000; Levy & Williams, 2004)

In the opinion of both the managers and subordinates justice and fairness are considered to be the most important issues in appraising performance. Fairness perception is an important aspect in all human related processes, especially in selection, compensation and performance appraisal. Cardy, Dobbins, and Ferris (1994) have reported in their study that any well designed appraisal system can be doomed to failure if there are feelings of inequity and unfairness in performance evaluations. Smither (2005) & Taylor et al(1995) have also emphasized that fairness plays a vital role in determining the success or failure of an appraisal system.

Bernardin & Beatty (1984) have reported that employees' reactions towards the performance appraisal system are fine indicators of its overall effectiveness as compare to the strength of design and psychometric properties. In case of lack of acceptance on part of appraisees, a psychometrically sound appraisal system can backfire and may lead to negative consequences for organizations. Robert et al, (1990) suggests that both the raters' and ratees' attitudes play an important role in determining the effectiveness of an appraisal system. Tziner et al (1999) have the same opinion on the importance of appraisees' reactions towards the performance appraisal system. According to them perceived fairness is an important type of employees' reactions in determining the success of an appraisal system. Bretz et al, in a study of US private sector organizations reported that employees considered fairness to be the most important issue in appraising performance. McFarlin and Sweeney (1996) have reported in their study that fairness perception is an important determinant of performance appraisal satisfaction.

Previous research indicates that to know about one's performance and the opinions of the supervisors about oneself is a strong human desire (shelley,1999). Frequent discussion with subordinate regarding his/her performance can lead to effective communication between subordinate and supervisor (Youngcourt 2007). Such feedback sessions can help in the identification of star performers, average performers and poor performers and thus can lead to overcoming the performance deficiencies through proper interventions. According to Longenecker & Fink (1997) timely feedback sessions can help in reducing the level of stress and dissatisfaction. Employees can capitalize on their strengths and can overcome weaknesses by having awareness about their strengths and weaknesses through appropriate feedback. Employees can think about their performance and can change their behaviors and attitudes in order to contribute to the well being of the organization. Feedback is also beneficial for appraisers as well as it may lead to enhanced appraisal skills. Besides this the feedback sessions provides an opportunity to employees to vent their anger and frustrations and thus management gets an awareness about employees concerns and can ultimately leads to improvement in different aspects of employees performance by appropriate interventions(Daley 1998). Besides feedback employees perception that the appraisal system helps in the identification and fulfillment of training and development needs will determine their level of satisfaction with the system. Prince and Lawler (1986) have reported in their study that the development aspect of an appraisal system is positively associated with overall performance appraisal satisfaction.

2.2.Characteristics of the appraisal system and turnover intention

Retention of excellent performers is an important objective of an appraisal system. As observed by Allen et al(2000) that the focus has been on the role of merit compensation in determining the turnover intention and very few studies have taken into consideration the overall appraisal experience as a determinant of intention to quit. Employees' turnover can lead to negative consequences like loss of organizational memory (Moynihan and Pandey, 2010) and hampering reputation and productivity of an organization . Employees usually do not take a sudden decision to quit an organization, but rather they do so in a progressive manner. Such decisions are usually triggered by some kind of grievance or dissatisfaction, but the person goes through a series of mental considerations till the final decision of leaving an organization (SJ Jaros, 1997). Having dissatisfaction with the appraisal system may lead to intentions of quitting the existing employer. Studies on turnover intention show that employees try to withdraw from situations that are detrimental to their interests (Fugate et al., 2012). If employees have perceptions that the appraisal system is not fair, and also do not cater to their training and development needs then they will consider it counter to their career interests. In this study the relationship between the key attributes of the appraisal system (fairness perception, grievance mechanism, feedback and fulfillment of training and development needs) and turnover intentions have been investigated.

2.3.Characteristics of the appraisal system and work motivation

A sound and effective appraisal system can lead to benefits for both the employees and organization. If employees are fairly assessed and properly rewarded they will be willing to utilize their skills and experiences for the betterment and success of organization (Taylor,1999). Positive reactions towards the appraisal system results in a cordial atmosphere within work units because employees will have a perception of fair treatment. If employees believe that they are fairly treated and rewarded then they will work up to their maximum potential for the betterment of the organization. By having a look at the theories of motivation one can imagine a link between work motivation and performance appraisal. According to expectancy theory (Vroom,1964) employees act rationally by performing in such a manner to enhance their desired interests. The theory also assumes that

motivation is strongly dependent on the linkage among effort, performance, outcomes and value of outcomes. Thus if the performance standards are unrealistic, then the employees will not be motivated to put maximum effort. Linkage of performance and outcomes will also affect the motivation level, as well as the valance of those outcomes is considered to be an important predictor of motivation. According to DeNisi and Pritchard (2006) the strength of the performance-reward link will determine motivation level and future performance. According to equity theory of motivation an individual always compare his contributions (knowledge, skills, abilities, hard work, loyalty, commitment and enthusiasm) and outcomes (salary, benefits, praise, recognition, reputation, job security, growth and advancement) with those of his coworkers. Perceived discrimination will negatively affect employees attitudes towards their work and organization. An appraisal system designed on the principles of equity and fair treatment may enhance the motivation level of employees. Besides fairness perception individuals also desires for their personal growth and advancement. The use of performance appraisal should not be confined to reward and punishment only but it should be used for employees training and development purposes as well. The kind of purposes performance appraisal information serves will determine employees' attitude towards their job, performance appraisal process, and their supervisor (Prince & Lawler, 1989). Employees' perception that the appraisal system cater to their development needs will enhance their work motivation. Proper feedback during the performance appraisal is also an important predictor of employees' attitudes towards their work and organization. Keeping in view the Previous studies we can anticipate a positive relationship between feedback and work motivation. Through proper feedback regarding their performance employees will have an idea about their strengths and weaknesses, thus capitalizing on strengths and overcoming weaknesses will enhance future performance.

3. Method

Job-shop production refers to a manufacturing environment that produces goods in small batches according The study was carried out in a private commercial bank of Pakistan. Data was collected through questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three parts, part I included demographic information, Part II consisted of questions about the current appraisal system focusing the four dimensions including fairness perception, appraisal as a tool of training and development, feedback and grievance mechanisms. The third part consisted of open ended questions and summary questions. Questionnaires were distributed among respondents using snow ball technique. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed in different branches of the selected bank. 236 (78%) questionnaires were returned of which 22 were considered incomplete and discarded. Data of 34 other employees was discarded as well because they were newly inducted management trainee officers and had not yet been through their appraisals. Number of respondents left for the analysis was 180. The respondents consisted of different job incumbents including branch managers, operational managers, customer relationship managers, General banking officers and tellers. Majority of the respondents were male (79.5%) due to low female employment rate in the banking sector of Pakistan. Respondents' average age was 39 years. 54% of the respondents were having master degrees, 35.6% were having bachelor degrees and the remaining had completed their intermediate degrees. The data was analyzed using SPSS (statistical package for social sciences) version 21. In order to find out the correlations among the variables of our study Pearson correlation was used. Stepwise multiple regression was used to determine which group of independent variables is the important predictors of the dependent variables in the study.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Characteristics of the existing appraisal system

Employees' responses regarding the features of the current appraisal system were taken using a five-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree"). A total of 15 questions were passed through principal component analysis which resulted in four factors having Eigen values greater than 1, thus explaining 72.8% of the total variance. Table 1 depicts the four factors, items associated with factors and their respective factor loadings. Coefficient alphas are also given for each dimension which is confirming internal consistency reliability. Factor 1 consists of items related to the fairness perception of employees about the appraisal system. Factor 2 related to the grievance mechanism in case of employees' concerns about performance assessment.. Item factor loadings of factor 3 contain items about feedback given to employees before and after appraisal. Factor 4 has items related to the usefulness of the appraisal system in catering to employees' training and development needs. Using the mean score of different items in each dimension, four variables representing the characteristics of the existing performance appraisal system were created.

Table1: Table II. Principal component analysis of the characteristics of the existing appraisal system

Items	Factor Loading
Factor1: Fairness Perception (coefficient alpha = .68)	
1. My organization has fair criteria for performance assessment.	.87
2. Management takes the performance appraisal very seriously.	.79
3. The appraisers always try to be objective in their evaluation.	.68
4. The performance standards are properly communicated to employees.	.62
5. The performance standards are usually realistic.	.75
6. Usually there is a feeling of injustice after the appraisal decisions.	.82
Factor2 : Grievance Mechanism (coefficient alpha = .71)	
1. The PA system corrects appraiser's biases through a review process.	.83
2. In case of dissatisfaction with the assessment employees can raise their concerns.	.88
3. Management usually pays no heed to employees' concerns about their performance evaluation.	.72
Factor3:Feedback (coefficient alpha = .83)	
1. Managers usually discuss performance related issues with their subordinates.	.85
2. After the appraisal session HR department review the appraisal and discuss it with appraisees.	.78
Factor4 : Fulfillment of Training and Development needs (coefficient alpha = .72)	
1. The performance appraisal system helps in identification of employees' training and development needs.	.72
2. The PA system allows employees to express their developmental needs.	.81
3. There is proper follow-up by HR department for catering to employees training needs.	.84
4. The shortcomings identified in the appraisal can be overcome through trainings provided by the organization.	.79

4.2. Outcomes of the existing appraisal system

To investigate about the outcomes of the prevailing performance appraisal system employees responded to 10 questions on a five-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree"). Three factors were extracted with Eigen values greater than 1 by using principal component analysis, which explained 68.8% of the variance. Table II shows the three factors, the items and their respective factor loadings. Each factor's coefficients alpha are also given which shows the internal consistency reliability. Factor 1 was about the overall performance appraisal satisfaction, factor 2 contains items about turnover intention and factor 3 has items related to work motivation. Three variables representing the outcomes of the existing appraisal system were created by using the mean score of the different items in each dimension

Table II. Factor analysis of the Outcomes of the existing appraisal system

Item s	Factor Loading
Factor 1: Overall Performance Appraisal Satisfaction (coefficient alpha = .78)	
1. Overall I am satisfied with my performance appraisal.	.82
2. Performance appraisal has never been a serious cause of dissatisfaction for me.	.79
3. The performance appraisal has been an irritant for me in this organization.(reverse scored)	.86
Factor 2: Turnover Intention (coefficient alpha = .75)	
1. I have been thinking to quit my current organization.	.83
2. I would have quit my current employer if I have been offered a similar position in another organization.	.85
3. Right now I am in search of finding a job elsewhere.	.86
Factor 3: Work Motivation (coefficient alpha = .80)	
1. I really enjoy my work.	.78
2. I always try to put extra effort in doing my work.	.79
3. I am disappointed with my current job.(reverse scored)	.81
4. Sometimes I feel that to work hard is useless in this organization.(reverse scored)	.83

4.3 Correlations

Table III shows the correlations among the three dependent variables (i-e overall appraisal satisfaction, turnover intention and work motivation) and four independent variables (i-e Fairness perception, Fulfillment of T & D needs, feedback, and grievance mechanisms). Overall performance appraisal satisfaction is negatively correlated with turnover intention at strength of $-.582$ at $p \leq 0.01$. Work motivation has a correlation of $.487$ with overall appraisal satisfaction with a significance level of 0.01 . Fairness perception has a strong positive correlation with overall appraisal satisfaction at the strength of $.603$ and 0.01 significance level. Fulfillment of T&D needs, feedback and grievance mechanisms are correlated with overall appraisal satisfaction at the strengths of $.479$, $.572$, and $.501$ respectively at $p \leq 0.01$.

Turnover intention is negatively correlated with fairness perception having a value of $-.488$ and a significance level of 0.01 . Fulfillment of T&D needs has a weak and insignificant correlation with turnover intention having a value -0.208 . Feedback is also weakly correlated with Turnover intention at the strength of -0.288 , while grievance mechanism has a negative correlation with turnover intention with a value of -0.387 and a significance level of 0.05 .

Work motivation is having a significant correlation of 0.538 with fairness perception attribute of the appraisal system at level of 0.01 . Fulfillment of T&D needs is also significantly correlated with work motivation at strength of 0.303 and with significance level of 0.05 , while correlation between Grievance mechanism and work motivation is $.0512$ at $p \leq 0.01$.

Table III: Correlations among variables

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Overall appraisal satisfaction	1						
2.	Turn Over intention	$-.582^{**}$	1					
3.	Work motivation	$.487^{**}$	$-.301^*$	1				
4.	Fairness Perception	$.603^{**}$	$-.488^{**}$	$.538^{**}$	1			
5.	Fulfillment of T&D needs.	$.479^{**}$	$-.208$	$.303^*$	$.201$	1		
6.	Feed back	$.572^{**}$	$-.288$	$.389^*$	$.399^*$	$.278$	1	
7.	Grievance Mechanisms	$.501^{**}$	$-.387^*$	$.512^{**}$	$.532^{**}$	$.198$	$.243$	1
*.		"Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed)".						
**.		"Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)".						

4.4 Relationship between the characteristics and outcomes of the existing performance appraisal system

Using step wise multiple regression analysis the relationship between four variables representing the characteristics of the existing performance appraisal system (i-e. fairness perception, Grievance mechanism, feedback and fulfillment of T&D needs) and the three variables related to the outcomes of the appraisal system (i-e. overall appraisal satisfaction, turnover intention and work motivation) was analyzed. Table IV shows the results of the step-wise multiple regressions which depicts that the main predictors of the overall appraisal satisfaction are fairness perception and grievance mechanism. Those employees who believe that their appraisal system is fair and have proper grievance mechanism in case of disagreement were more satisfied with the appraisal system. Feedback and fulfillment of training and development needs were the main predictors of work motivation. Those employees who believe that their managers give them proper feedback from time to time and discuss with them performance related issues were experiencing high motivation level, and vice versa. Vallerand (1988) has reported a strong association between intrinsic motivation and feedback, according to him positive feedback enhance intrinsic motivation while negative feedback reduces its level. In the same study differences were found among male and female for the relationship between positive feedback and intrinsic motivation.

Antonio et al, (2013) in their study of small firms in Greece has reported training and development as one of the most important predictors of motivation besides job design and quality of relationship with supervisor. Among the four independent variables fairness perception and grievance mechanism were the significant predictors of turnover intention. Organizational justice literature provides substantial evidence about the relationship between perception of inequity/unfairness and outcomes like stress, withdrawal and dissatisfaction. In a recent study a positive relationship has been reported between perception of unfairness and intention to quit (Lilian Otaye 2014).

Table IV: Results of stepwise multiple regression

Dependent Variables	Independent variables	β	R^2	Change in R^2	F
Overall satisfaction with the performance appraisal system					
Step 1	Fairness Perception	0.68	0.56	0.56	99.62*
Step 2	Grievance Mechanism	0.46	0.65	0.09	74.26*
Work Motivation					
Step 1	Feedback	0.50	0.43	0.43	59.82*
Step 2	Fulfillment of T&D Needs	0.31	0.48	0.05	38.72*
Turnover Intention					
Step 1	Fairness Perception	-0.48	0.18	0.18	20.62*
Step 2	Grievance Mechanism	-0.26	0.25	0.07	13.24*

Note: * $p < 0.001$

5. Conclusion

The study has focused on four key characteristics of performance appraisal system and their relationship with three outcome variables. The results demonstrates that among the four key characteristics, fairness perception and grievance mechanism are the important predictors of overall performance appraisal satisfaction and as well as turnover intention. For work motivation fulfillment of training and development needs and feedback are the important predictors. Performance appraisal is an important human resource management tool, as it helps in retaining and motivating an organization's workforce. An effective appraisal system leads to positive outcomes for individuals as well as organizations. Researchers in the fields of HR and organizational behavior have emphasized the attributes of appraisal system and their impact on positive outcomes (Fletcher and Williams, 1996). The results of this study suggests that management may have positive outcomes like performance appraisal satisfaction, work motivation and can avoid negative outcomes like turnover intention through an effective performance appraisal system. The presence of an ineffective appraisal system can lead to negative outcomes for individual and organization. Management in general and Human Resource Managers in particular should pay attention to the overall system of appraisal and should review the system from time to time in order to identify flaws and take corrective measures. In a nutshell an effective appraisal system have the characteristics of catering to employees T&D needs, they consider it fair, and have the opportunity to raise their voice in case of grievance against the performance assessment, besides other attributes.

6. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The results of this study should be interpreted with the following limitations in mind.

Cross-sectional nature of the data inhibits us to come up with definitive causal relationships, therefore future studies should opt for longitudinal design. Data was collected from a single organization, so the results cannot be generalized to other organizations in the same sector. The study may be replicated by using data from different organizations with large sample size. Future studies can also look into the moderators (e.g. relationship with supervisor) between the performance appraisal attributes and associated outcomes.

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