

The Relationship between Frequency of Performance Appraisals and Employee Productivity: A Case Study of Busia County Government, Kenya

ERICK WANJALA NYOTI¹, RUTH ADITA MITALO², LAURA MAMULI³
^{1, 2, 3} Department of Business Administration and Management, Kibabii University

Abstract- *This study examines the relationship between the frequency of performance appraisals and employee productivity in the Busia County Government, Kenya. Using a descriptive research design, the study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods, collecting data from 425 employees through questionnaires, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between appraisal frequency and employee productivity ($\beta = 0.392$, $p < 0.001$). However, in a multiple regression model controlling for other performance appraisal practices, frequency showed the smallest unique contribution ($\beta = 0.112$, $p = 0.003$), suggesting that while regular appraisals are important, other aspects of the appraisal process may have a more substantial impact on productivity. The study provides empirical evidence for policymakers and human resource practitioners in county governments regarding the optimal frequency of performance appraisals and their role in enhancing employee productivity.*

Indexed Terms- *Frequency of Performance Appraisals, Employee Productivity.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Performance appraisal systems serve as crucial tools for enhancing employee productivity and organizational effectiveness in public sector organizations. These systems provide a structured approach to evaluating employee performance against predetermined standards and organizational objectives, with the frequency of appraisals playing a vital role in their effectiveness. In recent years, the implementation of performance appraisal systems in Kenya's public sector, particularly in county governments, has gained increased attention as

organizations strive to improve service delivery and accountability.

The Busia County Government, like other county governments in Kenya, faces the challenge of optimizing its human resource management practices to enhance service delivery while ensuring efficient resource utilization. The frequency of performance appraisals represents a critical aspect of this optimization process, as it influences the timeliness of feedback, goal-setting, and performance improvement initiatives. Regular appraisals provide opportunities for continuous feedback and performance monitoring, while also allowing for timely interventions when performance deviates from expected standards.

The importance of performance appraisal frequency extends beyond mere evaluation cycles. Regular appraisals create a culture of continuous improvement and help maintain a consistent focus on organizational goals. They provide platforms for regular dialogue between supervisors and employees, enabling timely identification of performance gaps and development needs. Furthermore, the frequency of appraisals can significantly impact employee motivation, engagement, and ultimately, productivity.

However, determining the optimal frequency of performance appraisals remains a challenge for many organizations. While too infrequent appraisals may lead to delayed feedback and missed opportunities for performance improvement, excessive frequency could create administrative burdens and reduce the perceived value of the appraisal process. This study aims to contribute to this discussion by examining the relationship between appraisal frequency and employee productivity in the context of a county government.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the widespread implementation of performance appraisal systems in county governments, there remains a significant gap in understanding how the frequency of appraisals affects employee productivity. While some organizations conduct annual reviews, others opt for quarterly or monthly assessments, yet the impact of these varying frequencies on employee productivity remains unclear, particularly in the context of county governments in Kenya.

The challenge of determining optimal appraisal frequency is compounded by various factors, including resource constraints, administrative capacity, and the need to balance regular feedback with operational efficiency. Organizations must weigh the benefits of frequent performance reviews against the time and resources required to conduct them effectively. This challenge is particularly acute in public sector organizations like the Busia County Government, where resource allocation must be carefully balanced against service delivery requirements.

There is a pressing need for empirical evidence to guide decision-making regarding appraisal frequency in county governments. While existing literature provides insights into performance appraisal practices in various contexts, there is limited research specifically examining the relationship between appraisal frequency and employee productivity in Kenyan county governments. This study addresses this gap by investigating how the frequency of performance appraisals relates to employee productivity in the Busia County Government.

The primary objective of this research is to examine the relationship between performance appraisal frequency and employee productivity, providing evidence-based insights to inform policy and practice in county governments. This understanding is crucial for optimizing performance management systems and enhancing organizational effectiveness in the public sector.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Goal-Setting Theory

Goal-Setting Theory, developed by Locke and Latham (1990), provides a valuable framework for understanding how the frequency of performance appraisals influences employee productivity. The theory posits that specific, challenging, and attainable goals lead to higher levels of performance. In the context of performance appraisal frequency, regular evaluations provide more frequent opportunities for goal-setting and adjustment, potentially enhancing employee motivation and performance.

The application of Goal-Setting Theory in the public sector context suggests that frequent performance appraisals can help maintain goal clarity and focus throughout the performance period. Regular evaluations allow for the establishment of shorter-term objectives aligned with broader organizational goals, enabling more effective performance monitoring and adjustment. This is particularly relevant in county governments, where service delivery goals must be consistently aligned with public expectations and resource constraints.

3.2 Equity Theory

Equity Theory, proposed by Adams (1963), complements the understanding of how appraisal frequency affects employee productivity by focusing on perceived fairness in organizational processes. The theory suggests that employees evaluate the fairness of their treatment by comparing their input-output ratio with that of others. Regular performance appraisals can contribute to perceptions of fairness by providing consistent opportunities for performance evaluation and feedback.

In relation to appraisal frequency, Equity Theory highlights the importance of maintaining consistent and fair evaluation practices across all employees. The frequency of appraisals can influence employees' perceptions of organizational justice and equity, ultimately affecting their motivation and productivity. When employees perceive that performance is evaluated regularly and fairly, they are more likely to maintain high levels of effort and commitment to organizational goals. This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant in public sector organizations,

where transparency and fairness in human resource practices are essential for maintaining employee morale and public trust.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Frequency of Performance Appraisals

The frequency of performance appraisals has emerged as a critical consideration in performance management systems across various organizational contexts. Current practices and trends indicate significant variation in appraisal frequency, ranging from annual reviews to monthly assessments, with organizations increasingly moving toward more frequent evaluation cycles. Schleicher et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of 77 studies, revealing that more frequent appraisals were associated with increased employee motivation and job performance, attributing this to the opportunity for timely adjustments and continuous improvement.

From a global perspective, organizations in developed countries have shown a trend toward more frequent performance evaluations. Cappelli and Conyon (2018) found that organizations in the United States conducting quarterly or monthly appraisals reported higher employee engagement and productivity compared to those maintaining traditional annual review cycles. Similarly, European organizations have experimented with varying appraisal frequencies, though practices differ significantly across countries and sectors (Dewettinck & van Dijk, 2014).

In the African context, research has shown mixed results regarding appraisal frequency. Agyemang et al. (2016) found that Ghanaian organizations implementing bi-annual appraisals reported greater employee motivation and job satisfaction compared to those conducting annual reviews. However, Karuhanga (2015) noted that in Uganda, the effectiveness of frequent appraisals was often limited by resource constraints and administrative capacity, particularly in public sector organizations.

The Kenyan public sector context presents unique considerations regarding appraisal frequency. Mwema and Gachunga (2014) reported that regular performance evaluations in Kenyan organizations were associated with improved employee motivation

and performance. However, Okoth (2017) identified challenges in maintaining consistent appraisal schedules in public sector organizations, including resource limitations and administrative burdens.

4.2 Employee Productivity in Public Sector

Measuring and enhancing employee productivity in the public sector presents distinct challenges compared to private sector organizations. Traditional productivity indicators often focus on quantifiable outputs, but public sector productivity must also consider service quality and public value creation. Mbuia and Sarisar (2018) identified key productivity indicators for Kenyan public sector organizations, including service delivery efficiency, customer satisfaction, and achievement of departmental objectives.

Several factors affect employee productivity in the public sector. Wamoto et al. (2018) identified organizational culture, leadership style, resource availability, and performance management systems as significant determinants of productivity in Kenyan county governments. The study emphasized the importance of regular performance monitoring and feedback in maintaining high productivity levels.

Performance appraisals play a crucial role in public sector productivity enhancement. Mwangi and Njeje (2016) found that effective performance appraisal systems contributed to improved employee productivity through clear goal-setting, regular feedback, and alignment of individual objectives with organizational goals. However, the effectiveness of these systems largely depends on their implementation, including the frequency and quality of evaluations.

4.3 Research Gap

A synthesis of existing literature reveals several important gaps in understanding the relationship between performance appraisal frequency and employee productivity, particularly in the context of county governments in Kenya. While studies have examined various aspects of performance management systems, there is limited empirical evidence specifically addressing how appraisal frequency affects employee productivity in local government settings.

Existing research has primarily focused on private sector organizations or national government institutions, with relatively few studies examining county governments. The unique characteristics of county governments, including their service delivery mandate and resource constraints, necessitate specific investigation of how appraisal frequency affects employee productivity in this context.

Furthermore, while studies have documented various performance appraisal practices, there is insufficient evidence regarding the optimal frequency of appraisals for maximizing employee productivity in public sector organizations. Most existing research has examined the general effectiveness of performance appraisal systems without specifically investigating the impact of varying appraisal frequencies.

Additionally, there is a notable gap in understanding how appraisal frequency interacts with other performance management practices to influence employee productivity. While some studies suggest that frequent appraisals contribute to improved performance, the relative importance of frequency compared to other factors remains unclear, particularly in the context of resource-constrained public sector organizations.

The identification of these gaps highlights the need for focused research examining the relationship between performance appraisal frequency and employee productivity in county governments. This study aims to address these gaps by providing empirical evidence from the Busia County Government context, contributing to both theoretical understanding and practical application of performance management practices in public sector organizations.

V. METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the relationship between performance appraisal frequency and employee productivity in the Busia County Government. The descriptive research design was chosen for its effectiveness in providing a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena under

study while allowing for both statistical analysis and in-depth exploration of underlying factors.

The mixed-methods approach enabled triangulation of data, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. The quantitative component focused on measuring the statistical relationship between appraisal frequency and productivity indicators, while the qualitative aspect provided deeper insights into employees' experiences and perceptions of how appraisal frequency affects their productivity. This combination allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the variables while capturing contextual factors that might influence this relationship.

5.2 Population and Sampling

The study targeted employees and managers of the Busia County Government, with a total population of approximately 2,500 employees across various departments. This population included staff from both the county executive and county assembly, representing different job levels and functions within the organization.

The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula, with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error: $n = (Z^2pq)/e^2$ where: $Z = 1.96$ (95% confidence level) $p = 0.5$ (estimated proportion) $q = 1 - p = 0.5$ $e = 0.05$ (margin of error)

This calculation yielded a minimum sample size of 384 participants. To account for potential non-response and ensure adequate representation, the sample size was increased by 20%, resulting in a final target sample of 461 participants. The study achieved a response rate of 92.2%, with 425 completed responses.

Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure proportional representation across different departments and job levels. The population was stratified based on job levels (non-management staff, middle management, and senior management) and departments (health, education, finance, agriculture, and others), with random sampling within each stratum to select participants.

5.3 Data Collection

The study utilized three main research instruments: questionnaires, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. The questionnaire was the primary instrument for collecting quantitative data, featuring both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions measuring appraisal frequency and employee productivity. The questionnaire was structured to capture information about the frequency of performance appraisals, perceived impact on productivity, and related factors.

Key informant interviews were conducted with 15 senior managers and department heads to gather in-depth insights about the implementation and impact of performance appraisal frequencies. Focus group discussions were held with selected groups of employees, providing a platform for detailed discussion about how appraisal frequency affects their productivity.

Data collection procedures followed a systematic approach. Questionnaires were distributed both electronically and in hard copy format to accommodate different preferences and accessibility needs. Key informant interviews were scheduled at convenient times for the participants and conducted in private settings to ensure confidentiality. Focus group discussions were facilitated by trained moderators and recorded with participants' consent.

5.4 Data Analysis

The analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to examine the relationship between performance appraisal frequency and employee productivity. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the basic features of the sample and key variables.

Inferential analysis included correlation analysis to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between appraisal frequency and productivity. Simple linear regression was performed to determine the extent to which appraisal frequency predicts employee productivity. Additionally, multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relative importance of appraisal frequency compared to other

performance management practices in predicting productivity.

The qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying recurring themes and patterns related to appraisal frequency and its impact on productivity. NVivo software was used to organize and code the qualitative data, facilitating the identification of key themes and supporting evidence.

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 25. The analysis included tests for normality, reliability, and validity to ensure the robustness of the findings. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of the research instruments, with a threshold of 0.7 considered acceptable. The analysis also included diagnostic tests for assumptions of linear regression, including tests for normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Descriptive Statistics

The analysis of performance appraisal frequency in the Busia County Government revealed that 68.5% of respondents reported receiving regular performance appraisals, with a mean score of 3.69 (SD = 1.07) on a 5-point Likert scale. The frequency distribution showed that 47.8% of employees underwent appraisals quarterly, 20.7% monthly, 16.0% bi-annually, while 15.5% reported annual or irregular appraisals.

Employee productivity metrics showed positive trends associated with appraisal frequency. The mean productivity score was 3.58 (SD = 1.08), with 64.5% of respondents reporting improved productivity due to regular performance evaluations. Key productivity indicators included task completion rates, service delivery efficiency, and achievement of departmental objectives.

Demographic analysis revealed variations in appraisal frequency across different organizational levels. Senior management reported more frequent appraisals (mean = 4.12, SD = 0.89) compared to middle management (mean = 3.84, SD = 0.97) and non-management staff (mean = 3.52, SD = 1.15).

Additionally, departments showed varying patterns, with the Health department reporting the highest frequency of appraisals (mean = 3.89, SD = 0.95), followed by Education (mean = 3.72, SD = 1.02).

6.2 Inferential Statistics

Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between performance appraisal frequency and employee productivity ($r = 0.398$, $p < 0.001$). This moderate correlation suggests that increased frequency of appraisals is associated with higher levels of employee productivity.

The simple linear regression analysis demonstrated that appraisal frequency significantly predicts employee productivity ($F = 78.432$, $p < 0.001$). The model explained 15.8% of the variance in employee productivity ($R^2 = 0.158$), with a regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.392$ ($t = 8.857$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that for each unit increase in appraisal frequency, employee productivity increases by 0.392 units.

Multiple regression analysis, controlling for other performance management practices, showed that appraisal frequency remained a significant predictor of productivity, although with a smaller unique contribution ($\beta = 0.112$, $t = 2.987$, $p = 0.003$). This finding suggests that while frequency is important, it should be considered alongside other performance management practices for optimal impact.

The hypothesis testing confirmed the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0 : There is no significant relationship between performance appraisal frequency and employee productivity), supporting the alternative hypothesis that a significant relationship exists between these variables.

6.3 Discussion

The findings demonstrate a clear positive relationship between performance appraisal frequency and employee productivity in the Busia County Government. The moderate correlation ($r = 0.398$) aligns with previous research by Schleicher et al. (2018), who found that regular appraisals contribute to improved employee performance through timely feedback and goal adjustment opportunities.

The variation in appraisal frequency across organizational levels and departments highlights potential inequities in performance management practices. This finding corresponds with Karuhanga's (2015) observations about implementation challenges in public sector organizations, particularly regarding resource allocation and administrative capacity.

The regression analysis results, showing that appraisal frequency explains 15.8% of variance in productivity, suggest that while frequency is important, other factors also significantly influence employee productivity. This finding supports Melnyk et al.'s (2017) assertion that the quality and substance of appraisals might be more crucial than their frequency alone.

Qualitative insights from key informant interviews revealed that regular appraisals facilitate better performance monitoring and timely interventions. As one department head noted, "More frequent appraisals allow us to identify and address performance issues before they become significant problems." However, resource constraints and administrative burdens were cited as challenges in maintaining frequent appraisal schedules.

The findings have several practical implications. First, they suggest that organizations should strive for regular, consistent appraisal schedules while ensuring quality and fairness in the process. Second, the varying impact across organizational levels indicates a need for standardized practices to ensure equitable performance management. Third, the moderate effect size suggests that frequency should be balanced with other performance management practices for optimal results.

The study also revealed that departments with more frequent appraisals (e.g., Health) showed higher average productivity scores, suggesting that certain service delivery contexts might benefit more from regular performance reviews. This finding adds nuance to existing literature by highlighting the potential role of departmental context in determining optimal appraisal frequency.

These results contribute to the broader understanding of performance management in public sector

organizations, particularly in developing countries. They suggest that while increasing appraisal frequency can enhance productivity, organizations must consider resource constraints, administrative capacity, and the need to maintain quality in the appraisal process.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between performance appraisal frequency and employee productivity in the Busia County Government, yielding several significant findings. The research confirmed a positive relationship between appraisal frequency and employee productivity ($\beta = 0.392$, $p < 0.001$), though the strength of this relationship suggests that frequency is one of several factors influencing productivity. The study found that 68.5% of employees receiving regular appraisals reported improved productivity, with departments conducting more frequent appraisals showing higher average productivity scores.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support Goal-Setting Theory's emphasis on regular feedback and goal adjustment. The positive relationship between appraisal frequency and productivity aligns with the theory's assertion that regular goal-setting and review opportunities enhance performance. Similarly, the results support Equity Theory by highlighting the importance of consistent and fair evaluation practices across all organizational levels.

The practical implications of this research are substantial. The findings demonstrate that while increasing appraisal frequency can enhance productivity, organizations must balance this with resource constraints and administrative capacity. The varying impact across departments suggests the need for contextualized approaches to performance management, considering specific service delivery requirements and operational contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement a hybrid approach combining regular informal check-ins with formal quarterly appraisals

2. Develop digital platforms to streamline the appraisal process and reduce administrative burden
3. Provide comprehensive training for managers on conducting effective and efficient performance evaluations
4. Establish department-specific performance metrics while maintaining consistency in appraisal frequency
5. Create feedback mechanisms to continuously monitor and improve the appraisal system

REFERENCES

- [1] Adams, J. S. (1963). Towards an understanding of inequity. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67(5), 422-436.
- [2] Agyemang, C. B., Boateng, H., & Dzandu, M. D. (2016). Examining intellectual capital and performance relationships. *Journal of Intellectual Capital*, 17(4), 814-833.
- [3] Cappelli, P., & Conyon, M. J. (2018). What do performance appraisals do? *ILR Review*, 71(1), 88-116.
- [4] Dewettinck, K., & van Dijk, H. (2014). Linking Belgian employee performance management system characteristics with performance management system effectiveness. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24(4), 806-825.
- [5] Karuhanga, B. N. (2015). Evaluating performance management practices in universities in Uganda. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 29(6), 706-726.
- [6] Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (1990). *A theory of goal setting & task performance*. Prentice Hall.
- [7] Mbua, P. M., & Sarisar, J. O. (2018). Effect of performance appraisal system on service delivery of technical staff in public universities in Kenya. *Journal of Human Resource Management*, 6(1), 12-21.
- [8] Melnyk, S. A., Bititci, U., Platts, K., Tobias, J., & Andersen, B. (2014). Is performance measurement and management fit for the future? *Management Accounting Research*, 25(2), 173-186.

- [9] Mwangi, S. M., & Njeje, D. (2016). Influence of performance appraisal on employee productivity in organizations: A case study of selected WHO offices in East Africa. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Information Technology*, 2(4), 521-542.
- [10] Mwema, N. W., & Gachunga, H. G. (2014). The influence of performance appraisal on employee productivity in organizations: A case study of selected WHO offices in East Africa. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Entrepreneurship*, 1(11), 324-337.
- [11] Okoth, V. A. (2017). Employee perception of performance appraisal and its relationship with organizational commitment and performance. *Journal of Human Resource and Leadership*, 2(6), 1-18.
- [12] Schleicher, D. J., Baumann, H. M., Sullivan, D. W., Levy, P. E., Hargrove, D. C., & Barros-Rivera, B. A. (2018). Putting the system into performance management systems: A review and agenda for performance management research. *Journal of Management*, 44(6), 2209-2245.
- [13] Wamoto, M. O., Ayuma, C., & Kimani, C. (2018). Influence of performance appraisal on employee performance in the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Busia County, Kenya. *International Journal of Research in Business, Economics and Management*, 2(1), 59-75.