



## The influence of performance appraisal systems on employee motivation and career growth in the service sector

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### Abstract

This study investigates the influence of performance appraisal systems on employee motivation and career growth within the service sector. With increasing emphasis on human capital as a strategic asset, understanding how appraisal mechanisms affect employee behavior and development has become crucial. The purpose of this research is to evaluate the extent to which key appraisal factors—such as fairness, feedback quality, goal clarity, and rater competence—contribute to motivation and perceived career advancement opportunities among service sector employees. A quantitative research design was employed using a structured questionnaire administered to 300 respondents from various service-based organizations. Descriptive statistics were used to present demographic profiles and general response trends. Correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships between appraisal fairness, feedback, motivation, and career growth. Multiple regression analysis confirmed that feedback quality, fairness, and goal clarity significantly predict employee motivation, accounting for 61% of the variance. The findings indicate that well-designed performance appraisal systems do not only serve as evaluation tools but also as motivational drivers and developmental frameworks when executed with transparency and competence. The study highlights the need for organizations to enhance appraisal quality by investing in evaluator training, ensuring regular feedback, and linking appraisal outcomes to tangible career growth opportunities. The results have significant implications for human resource management practices in the service sector, emphasizing a shift from traditional appraisal methods toward more developmental and employee-centric approaches. The study contributes to the growing body of evidence that strategic performance management fosters stronger employee engagement and long-term organizational success.

**Keywords:** Performance appraisal, employee motivation, career growth, service sector, human resource management

### Introduction

Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a central role in shaping the performance and competitiveness of organizations, particularly in the service sector where human capital is the primary asset. Among the various HRM functions, performance appraisal systems stand out as one of the most critical mechanisms for evaluating, managing, and improving employee performance. A well-designed performance appraisal system not only provides feedback to employees about their performance but also links their efforts to organizational goals and personal career advancement. In the dynamic and customer-centric environment of the service industry—such as hospitality, banking, retail, and healthcare—the effectiveness of human resources significantly determines service quality, customer satisfaction, and operational success.

Over the years, performance appraisals have evolved from simple employee assessments to multidimensional evaluation systems incorporating 360-degree feedback, self-appraisals, and competency-based assessments. Yet, despite these developments, many organizations continue to face challenges in utilizing performance appraisals as a strategic HR tool. Often, employees view appraisals as bureaucratic exercises rather than as developmental tools. This

perception can limit the effectiveness of appraisal systems in motivating employees and guiding their career growth.

In the service sector, where employee motivation and career development are vital for retaining talent and delivering high-quality service, the performance appraisal process becomes especially significant. Motivated employees are more engaged, customer-focused, and productive. Similarly, transparent and meaningful appraisal systems can guide employees on how to grow professionally within the organization. Hence, examining how performance appraisal systems affect employee motivation and career growth in service-oriented industries is both timely and necessary.

### Research Problem or Question

Despite the widespread use of performance appraisal systems in the service sector, there remains considerable debate about their effectiveness in enhancing employee motivation and fostering career development. Some organizations have adopted innovative appraisal practices, while others continue to rely on outdated or inconsistent methods that may demotivate employees or fail to support their growth. This discrepancy raises several critical questions:

- Are current performance appraisal systems effectively motivating employees in the service sector?
- Do employees perceive the appraisal process as fair, useful, and development-oriented?
- To what extent do performance appraisal systems contribute to employees' career progression?

The central problem this study seeks to address is the gap between the intended goals of performance appraisal systems and their actual influence on employee motivation and career growth in the service sector. Many organizations implement performance appraisals with the aim of encouraging high performance and guiding employee development, yet there is limited empirical evidence that these systems are achieving these objectives, particularly in service-based settings where interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and customer satisfaction are more difficult to quantify.

### Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of performance appraisal systems on employee motivation and career growth within the service sector. This overarching goal is supported by several specific objectives:

1. To analyze the key components of performance appraisal systems used in the service industry.
2. To assess employee perceptions of the fairness, clarity, and usefulness of these appraisal systems.
3. To evaluate the impact of performance appraisal practices on employee motivation.
4. To examine the extent to which performance appraisals support career growth and progression.
5. To provide practical recommendations for improving appraisal systems to better serve motivational and developmental goals.

By addressing these objectives, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how performance evaluations are implemented and experienced in service-sector organizations, and what improvements can be made to align them with strategic HRM goals.

### Significance of the Research

The significance of this research lies in its potential to inform HR policies and practices that directly influence employee performance, satisfaction, and retention in the service sector. Several factors highlight the importance of this study:

1. **Employee-Centric Nature of the Service Sector:** Since the success of service-based organizations largely depends on the performance and behavior of frontline employees, understanding how appraisal systems affect their motivation and development is crucial for operational excellence.
2. **Talent Retention Challenges:** The service sector often experiences high turnover rates due to limited career development opportunities and poor recognition. A better understanding of the relationship between performance appraisals and career growth can help organizations design HR practices that improve retention.
3. **Alignment with Strategic HRM:** The study supports the strategic HRM goal of aligning individual

performance with organizational objectives. Effective appraisal systems serve as a tool for achieving this alignment.

4. **Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice:** While much of the literature discusses the theoretical importance of performance appraisals, fewer studies explore the real-world impact of these systems on motivation and career growth in specific sectors. This research contributes to bridging that gap.
5. **Managerial Implications:** The findings can help HR managers, supervisors, and policymakers design appraisal systems that are not only evaluative but also developmental. Insights from the study can lead to the implementation of more effective, transparent, and motivating appraisal practices.

In short, the research has both academic and practical relevance, contributing to the theoretical understanding of HRM while offering actionable recommendations for managers in the service industry.

### Review of Literature

Biswas (2023) <sup>[1]</sup> explores how performance appraisals affect employee motivation, focusing primarily on psychological responses in different organizational settings. The study emphasizes that feedback quality and appraisal fairness significantly influence employee engagement and morale. Through empirical data from mid-level managers, Biswas confirms that performance appraisals, when conducted constructively, serve as motivational tools. However, the study also warns of potential negative effects if appraisals are inconsistent or poorly communicated. The research is insightful for understanding appraisal dynamics but could benefit from a broader industry perspective. Overall, it provides valuable guidance for HR professionals seeking to improve performance management practices.

Sharma, Satpal, and Ghosh (2025) <sup>[2]</sup> analyze performance appraisal practices across multiple service industry firms and their impact on employee morale. They find that clear communication of goals and regular feedback are essential to boosting motivation and productivity. Their study presents quantitative data showing a positive correlation between structured appraisals and employee satisfaction. However, they caution that overly rigid systems may suppress creativity. The work adds practical value by recommending specific appraisal improvements and aligning them with strategic HRM. While service-focused, its relevance extends to broader industries with similar human interaction dynamics.

Xalxo *et al.* (2024) <sup>[3]</sup> investigate the effectiveness of performance appraisals in the automotive sector, examining their influence on employee motivation. Though focused outside the service sector, their findings are highly applicable—highlighting how feedback frequency and employee involvement drive motivation. The study identifies a clear disconnect between appraisal outcomes and employee development in many firms. Their rigorous methodology and use of both qualitative and quantitative tools enhance credibility. The authors call for more transparent and participatory appraisal processes. This paper is a useful comparative source for service-sector researchers exploring appraisal systems across industries.

Sharma and Ghosh (2018) <sup>[4]</sup> focus specifically on how service-sector appraisals affect employee morale and efficiency. They highlight common challenges such as biased assessments, unclear evaluation criteria, and a lack of follow-up support. Their study offers a detailed breakdown of the components that constitute a successful appraisal system. Using case studies from retail and hospitality, they provide practical recommendations for designing employee-centered evaluation methods. Though slightly dated, the work remains relevant due to its detailed sector-specific insights. The authors convincingly argue that appraisal processes must evolve to meet the changing expectations of modern employees.

Jha and Saini (2025) <sup>[5]</sup> evaluate the relationship between performance appraisals and employee motivation within small and medium-sized service firms. They found that motivation increases when employees perceive appraisals as fair and development-focused. The study emphasizes the importance of two-way communication during evaluations and the role of supervisors in setting clear goals. While the sample size is limited, their findings are consistent with broader trends in HRM. The paper offers strong support for incorporating emotional intelligence and coaching into the appraisal process. It is a valuable addition for researchers focusing on SMEs and human capital development.

Bouskila-Yam and Kluger (2020) <sup>[6]</sup> offer a psychological perspective, analyzing how strengths-based appraisals influence perceived supervisor support and motivation. Their findings suggest that focusing on employees' strengths rather than weaknesses leads to improved motivation and job satisfaction. Although the study is not sector-specific, it provides a theoretical foundation that is highly applicable to service industries. The research is particularly valuable for HR practitioners interested in positive reinforcement techniques. Its rigorous statistical analysis and experimental design strengthen the argument for a shift toward developmental, rather than evaluative, performance appraisals. This work is both innovative and well-grounded.

Komm *et al.* (2024) <sup>[7]</sup>, through a McKinsey global survey, identify what employees' value most in performance evaluations. The study reveals that employees seek frequent, honest, and actionable feedback aligned with career aspirations. Though not academic in tone, the report draws on extensive industry data and offers strategic insights for HR leaders. The authors recommend integrating real-time feedback mechanisms and coaching into appraisal frameworks. For service-sector organizations where employee experience directly impacts customers, these findings are especially relevant. This report stands out for its practical applicability and actionable recommendations backed by robust survey data.

Sharma (2023) <sup>[8]</sup> examines the effectiveness of performance appraisals in motivating employees at PACRA, a credit rating agency. The study finds that while appraisals contribute positively to short-term motivation, their long-term impact depends on follow-up training and development opportunities. Sharma highlights the importance of aligning appraisals with individual career goals. The research methodology is thorough, incorporating employee interviews and performance metrics. Though industry-specific, the findings have broader implications for service firms with structured evaluation systems. This paper provides a well-rounded view of the appraisal process from both employee and organizational perspectives.

Sharma (2025) <sup>[2]</sup> discusses the motivational aspects of performance appraisals in various corporate settings. The study confirms that timely and transparent evaluations boost morale and productivity. Sharma argues that subjective biases and unclear benchmarks remain critical barriers to appraisal effectiveness. The paper also recommends training evaluators to improve the consistency and impact of assessments. Although it covers multiple industries, its findings are highly relevant to the service sector, where employee satisfaction is closely tied to performance. This research helps bridge the gap between performance management theory and real-world HR challenges.

Sharma and Ghosh (2021) <sup>[10]</sup> study the link between performance appraisals, motivation, and service delivery in public-sector organizations. They argue that employees are more committed when appraisals lead to tangible outcomes like promotions or skill development. Their analysis includes survey data from multiple government departments, emphasizing transparency and fairness in the evaluation process. While public-sector focused, the insights apply broadly to service industries where structured hierarchies exist. The study reinforces the role of performance management in boosting both employee morale and organizational effectiveness. It is a strong contribution to HRM literature on service delivery outcomes.

### Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the influence of performance appraisal systems on employee motivation and career growth in the service sector. A structured approach was selected to ensure the collection of objectives, measurable data that could be analyzed statistically to derive meaningful conclusions. The sampling method used was stratified random sampling, targeting employees from various service-based organizations, including finance, hospitality, healthcare, and IT services. This method ensured that diverse sectors within the service industry were represented. A total of 300 valid responses were collected, providing a robust sample size suitable for statistical analysis.

Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire with both closed-ended and scaled items. The questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), covering key variables such as fairness of appraisal, feedback quality, goal clarity, rater competence, and perceived career advancement. The instrument was pilot-tested for reliability and clarity before full deployment. In terms of data analysis techniques, the study employed descriptive statistics to summarize demographic details and item-level responses. Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships among independent variables (e.g., fairness, feedback, clarity) and dependent variables (motivation and career growth). Finally, multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive strength of each independent variable on employee motivation, with a focus on identifying significant drivers.

This methodological framework allowed for a comprehensive examination of how appraisal systems impact employee attitudes and development. The use of multiple statistical tools ensured the validity and reliability of the findings, laying a strong foundation for recommendations aimed at improving HR practices within the service sector.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics

Survey Item	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Variance
1. My organization conducts fair performance appraisals.	3.8	4	4	0.9	0.81
2. I receive constructive feedback that helps me improve.	3.6	4	4	0.8	0.64
3. Performance appraisals help me stay motivated at work.	3.7	4	4	0.7	0.49
4. I see a clear link between appraisal results and career growth.	3.5	4	3	1	1
5. I feel recognized and rewarded for my contributions.	3.4	3	3	1.1	1.21

The table above presents descriptive statistics for five key survey items assessed on a 5-point Likert scale. These items were designed to evaluate employee perceptions of performance appraisal systems and their influence on motivation and career development. The item “My organization conducts fair performance appraisals” recorded a mean score of 3.8, indicating that most respondents agreed with this statement. A median and mode of 4 confirm that many employees perceive the process as fair. The standard deviation (SD) of 0.9 shows moderate consistency in responses. The statement “I receive constructive feedback that helps me improve” also scored well (mean = 3.6), suggesting a generally positive perception of feedback practices. The low SD of 0.8 implies consistent agreement across respondents. When asked if “Performance appraisals

help me stay motivated at work,” the mean score was 3.7, reinforcing the idea that appraisal systems can positively influence motivation. The low variance (0.49) indicates high response agreement. The statement “I see a clear link between appraisal results and career growth” had a slightly lower mean of 3.5, with a higher SD of 1.0, suggesting more variation in perception. While the average response leaned toward agreement, some employees may not view the link between appraisals and career growth as strong or consistent. Lastly, the statement “I feel recognized and rewarded for my contributions” had the lowest mean score at 3.4, and the highest variance (1.21), reflecting varied experiences. The mode of 3 indicates many employees were neutral.

**Table 2:** Correlation

Variables	Fair Appraisal	Feedback Quality	Motivation	Career Growth
Fair Appraisal	1			
Feedback Quality	0.62**	1		
Motivation	0.55**	0.68**	1	
Career Growth	0.49**	0.53**	0.65**	1

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above correlation matrix provides insights into the relationships between four key variables in this study: Fair Appraisal, Feedback Quality, Motivation, and Career Growth. All correlations are calculated using Pearson’s correlation coefficient based on 300 employee responses. A strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.62$ ) exists between Fair Appraisal and Feedback Quality, indicating that employees who perceive the appraisal process as fair are also more likely to perceive the feedback they receive as constructive and helpful. This suggests that fairness in appraisal design is closely tied to the effectiveness of the communication during evaluations.

Feedback Quality has the strongest correlation with Motivation ( $r = 0.68$ ), showing that constructive feedback significantly boosts employee motivation. This underscores the role of timely, actionable feedback in keeping

employees engaged and driven. Motivation also correlates positively with Career Growth ( $r = 0.65$ ), suggesting that more motivated employees are likely to perceive greater opportunities for growth or advancement. This could reflect either real promotion opportunities or the motivational influence of positive appraisals on employee expectations. Interestingly, Fair Appraisal and Career Growth have a moderate correlation ( $r = 0.49$ ), implying that while fairness is important, it may not directly translate to perceived career advancement unless supported by strong feedback and motivational practices.

**Model Summary**

- $R = 0.78$ ,  $R^2 = 0.61$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.60$
- $F(5, 294) = 92.12$ ,  $p < 0.001$

**Table 3:** Multiple Regressions

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standardized Coefficient (β)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)
(Constant)	1.25	—	4.1	0.000
Fairness of Appraisal	0.3	0.32	5.85	0.000
Feedback Quality	0.42	0.41	7.1	0.000
Goal Clarity	0.28	0.27	4.75	0.000
Rater Competence	0.19	0.18	3.3	0.001
Link to Career Advancement	0.25	0.22	4.1	0.000

The multiple regression analysis examines the impact of five key components of performance appraisal systems on employee motivation. The results show that the overall regression model is statistically significant with  $F(5, 294) =$

$92.12$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , indicating that the predictor variables collectively explain a significant portion of the variance in employee motivation. The  $R^2$  value of 0.61 implies that 61% of the variance in employee motivation can be explained by

the combined influence of the five independent variables. The adjusted  $R^2$  of 0.60 accounts for the number of predictors, confirming that the model is robust and generalizable.

Individually, all five predictors are statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). The variable Feedback Quality shows the strongest impact on motivation with a standardized beta ( $\beta$ ) of 0.41, followed closely by Fairness of Appraisal ( $\beta = 0.32$ ) and Goal Clarity ( $\beta = 0.27$ ). This suggests that well-communicated and constructive feedback, along with fair and clearly defined appraisal goals, are key drivers of motivation. Link to Career Advancement and Rater Competence also positively contribute to motivation ( $\beta = 0.22$  and  $0.18$  respectively), indicating that when employees see a direct benefit from appraisals and trust the competence of evaluators, their motivation increases. In summary, the regression results emphasize that motivation is not driven by a single factor, but rather a combination of clear, fair, and growth-oriented appraisal elements. These findings support strategic HR practices that invest in improving all aspects of performance appraisal systems.

### Recommendations of the Study

Based on the analysis presented in the Descriptive Statistics, Correlation Matrix, and Regression Table, several strategic recommendations can be drawn to enhance employee motivation and career growth in the service sector through performance appraisal systems. First, the descriptive statistics suggest that while employees generally perceive appraisals as fair and helpful, there is variability in their experience of recognition and career linkage. Organizations should standardize feedback mechanisms and ensure appraisals are consistently tied to tangible rewards or career progression opportunities. Managers should be trained to conduct evaluations fairly and communicate results effectively. From the correlation analysis, strong positive relationships were found between appraisal fairness, feedback quality, and motivation. Therefore, organizations must focus on improving the quality of feedback by making it more frequent, personalized, and actionable. Creating a culture of ongoing feedback rather than limiting it to annual reviews can help sustain motivation levels throughout the year.

The regression results indicate that feedback quality, fairness, and goal clarity are the strongest predictors of employee motivation. Hence, it's critical to ensure that employees understand what is expected of them and how their performance aligns with broader organizational goals. Regular goal-setting meetings and collaborative appraisal planning can be helpful in this regard. Moreover, the statistical significance of rater competence implies a need for appraiser training. HR departments should implement evaluator certification or skill development programs to build trust in the system. Finally, clear visibility of how performance appraisals affect career advancement is crucial. Employees should receive individualized development plans based on appraisal outcomes, along with regular progress tracking. In summary, performance appraisal systems must be transparent, continuous, competency-driven, and aligned with development paths. These recommendations, supported by empirical data, can help service organizations improve motivation, reduce attrition, and strengthen employee engagement.

### Conclusion

The analysis conducted through descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression models offers meaningful insights into the role of performance appraisal systems in influencing employee motivation and career growth within the service sector. The descriptive statistics indicate that while employees generally agree that appraisal systems are fair and moderately motivating, there remains notable variation in perceptions related to recognition and career progression. This highlights the need for more consistent implementation and clearer communication of appraisal outcomes. The correlation analysis reinforces the interrelationship among key variables—fairness, feedback quality, motivation, and career advancement. Strong positive correlations, particularly between feedback quality and motivation, and between motivation and perceived career growth, suggest that performance appraisals are more effective when integrated with meaningful and constructive feedback mechanisms. These relationships affirm that appraisal processes are not isolated administrative functions but deeply tied to employee engagement and development. The multiple regression results further clarify the predictive strength of these variables. Feedback quality, fairness of appraisal, and goal clarity emerged as the most significant predictors of motivation. The high  $R^2$  value (0.61) indicates that these variables collectively account for a substantial portion of the variance in employee motivation. This emphasizes the value of designing appraisal systems that go beyond evaluation and instead act as developmental tools. In conclusion, this study demonstrates that a well-structured and fair appraisal system, supported by competent evaluators and clear communication, can significantly enhance employee motivation and perceived career opportunities. Organizations in the service sector should therefore prioritize continuous improvement of appraisal processes to ensure they are not only performance-assessment tools but also strategic levers for talent management, retention, and growth. These findings provide a strong empirical basis for rethinking HR practices and aligning them more closely with employee-centric outcomes.

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