



Performance Appraisal and Employee Reward System in Organizations: A Case Study of Zenith Bank Plc, Udoudoma Avenue Banking Layout, Uyo (2020 - 2025).

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Abstract

Employee performance appraisal and reward systems play a critical role in enhancing productivity, motivation, and job satisfaction in organisations. This study examines the relationship between performance appraisal and employee reward systems at Zenith Bank Plc, Udoudoma Avenue Banking Layout, Uyo, covering the period from 2020 to 2025. A descriptive survey research design was adopted, utilising questionnaires, interviews, and performance reports to collect data from 120 employees across different job levels (senior management, mid-level managers, and frontline staff). Inferential statistical analysis, including t-tests, correlation, and regression models, confirmed that structured performance reviews significantly improve productivity ($p < 0.001$) and that monetary rewards have a stronger impact on employee satisfaction ($\beta = 0.75, p < 0.001$) than non-monetary incentives. The findings reveal that a structured and transparent appraisal system enhances employee motivation, with 65% of respondents perceiving it as fair. Furthermore, 85% of employees prefer monetary rewards, hereby establishing a strong link between financial incentives and increased productivity. However, 40% of employees cite favouritism in performance evaluation, highlighting a major challenge in the existing system. It was recommended, among others, that improving transparency in appraisal criteria and aligning rewards with performance outcomes will enhance fairness and efficiency. These improvements can enhance overall employee engagement and workforce management at Zenith Bank.



Keywords: performance appraisal, employee reward system, motivation and productivity, job satisfaction, banking sector HR practices

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In today's dynamic corporate environment, employee performance is a critical determinant of organisational success. Performance appraisal systems and employee reward mechanisms serve as essential human resource (HR) tools that enhance employee motivation, productivity, and retention. According to Audu and Ochonogor (2025), organisations implement performance appraisal frameworks to systematically evaluate employees' work contributions and align individual performance with corporate objectives. Similarly, a well-structured reward system fosters a positive work culture and ensures that employees are adequately compensated for their contributions (Krstić, Radosavljević, & Vujatović, 2024).

The banking industry, including Zenith Bank Plc, is highly competitive and demands optimal employee performance to sustain profitability and customer satisfaction. However, one of the prevailing challenges in many financial institutions is the ineffectiveness of performance appraisal systems, which may lead to employee dissatisfaction, reduced morale, and high turnover rates (Mousa & Arslan, 2025). For instance, performance appraisal frameworks that lack transparency or are perceived as biased can demotivate employees rather than inspire them to improve their work quality (Audu & Ochonogor, 2025).

Furthermore, employee reward systems—both monetary and non-monetary—play a crucial role in enhancing job satisfaction. Yodmanee (2025) found that organisations with robust reward systems experience higher levels of employee engagement and productivity. In the banking sector, rewards such as bonuses, promotions, and professional development opportunities contribute significantly to employee retention and loyalty (Tarmeño-Bernuy & Cosme-Silva, 2025). Nonetheless, many organisations, including Zenith Bank Plc, may struggle with designing an equitable and performance-driven reward structure. Some employees may perceive reward distribution as unfair, leading to dissatisfaction and disengagement (Chindengwike, 2025).

The primary objective of this study is to analyse the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system at Zenith Bank's Uyo branch. Specifically, the study aims to evaluate the impact of employee rewards on performance and motivation while identifying challenges within the current appraisal framework. By addressing these issues, the study seeks to recommend strategies for improving performance evaluation mechanisms and ensuring a more effective and motivating reward system at Zenith Bank Plc.



1.2 Statement of the Problem

Employee performance appraisal and reward systems are critical tools for organisational success, particularly in the banking sector, where efficiency, customer service, and financial performance are heavily dependent on workforce productivity. However, despite the widespread implementation of performance appraisal mechanisms, many organisations, including Zenith Bank Plc, Uyo branch, continue to face challenges related to ineffectiveness in performance evaluations, employee dissatisfaction, and high turnover rates.

One of the primary issues with the current appraisal system at Zenith Bank Uyo is a lack of transparency and fairness in evaluating employees. Studies suggest that employees often perceive appraisal systems as biased, subjective, and inconsistent, which reduces their trust in the process and limits its effectiveness in motivating high performance (Audu & Ochonogor, 2025). Additionally, ineffective feedback mechanisms hinder employees' ability to understand performance expectations and make necessary improvements (Mousa & Arslan, 2025).

Furthermore, employee dissatisfaction has been linked to an inadequate reward system, where compensation structures fail to reflect individual and collective contributions. Research indicates that when employees do not perceive rewards—whether monetary (bonuses, salary increments) or non-monetary (recognition, promotions)—as fair or commensurate with their efforts, their motivation and engagement levels decline (Tarmeno-Bernuy & Cosme-Silva, 2025). In the case of Zenith Bank Uyo, it is observed that high-performing employees often feel undervalued, leading to decreased morale and reduced commitment to organisational goals.

A direct consequence of these challenges is high employee turnover, which disrupts workflow, increases recruitment and training costs, and negatively impacts customer service delivery. Studies indicate that ineffective appraisal and reward systems contribute to higher attrition rates in financial institutions, as employees seek opportunities in organisations that offer better recognition, incentives, and career growth prospects (Yodmanee, 2025).

Thus, this study seeks to examine the underlying deficiencies in the performance appraisal and reward systems at Zenith Bank Uyo and explore their implications for employee motivation and retention. By identifying the root causes of employee dissatisfaction and turnover, this research aims to propose strategic interventions that enhance performance evaluation mechanisms and foster a more effective reward structure.



1.3 Objectives of the Study

While the primary aim of this research was to examine the performance appraisal and employee reward system in organizations using Zenith Bank Plc, Udoudoma Avenue Banking Layout, Uyo, its specific objectives were to;

- i. To analyse the effectiveness of performance appraisals at Zenith Bank Uyo.
- ii. To evaluate the impact of rewards on employee performance.
- iii. To recommend strategies for improving appraisal and reward systems.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. How does the performance appraisal system affect employee motivation at Zenith Bank?
- ii. What is the relationship between reward systems and employee productivity?
- iii. What are the challenges of the current appraisal system?

1.5 Hypotheses

The research was guided by the following hypotheses:

- i. Employees who receive structured performance appraisals exhibit higher productivity.
- ii. There is a significant relationship between performance appraisal and employee motivation.
- iii. Monetary rewards have a stronger impact on employee satisfaction than non-monetary rewards.

1.6 Significance of the Research

This study is significant as it addresses a critical challenge in human resource management—the effectiveness of performance appraisal and reward systems in enhancing employee motivation and productivity. In the banking sector, where customer service, operational efficiency, and financial performance are highly dependent on employee commitment, a well-structured performance management system is essential. By focusing on Zenith Bank, Uyo, this study provides a case-specific understanding of how appraisal methods and reward structures impact employee engagement and overall organisational performance. The insights from this research will help identify gaps in the current appraisal system, highlight employee concerns, and propose strategic improvements that can enhance workplace satisfaction and efficiency

Furthermore, the findings will be valuable to bank management and HR practitioners, as they offer evidence-based recommendations to improve performance evaluation policies and ensure that reward structures are fair, transparent, and motivating. Employees will also benefit, as the study brings attention to their experiences and

expectations, advocating for better appraisal practices that align with their contributions and career development goals. Beyond Zenith Bank, the research holds broader relevance for other financial institutions and corporate organisations, providing a framework for optimising performance appraisal systems to reduce turnover and foster a highly motivated workforce.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Conceptual Framework

Empirical Analysis

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study is hinged on two key motivational theories: Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Expectancy Theory, both of which explain how appraisal and reward systems influence employee behaviour and performance.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) distinguishes between motivators (intrinsic factors) and hygiene factors (extrinsic factors). Motivators—such as recognition, career advancement, and meaningful work—drive employee satisfaction and productivity. Hygiene factors—including salary, company policies, and working conditions—do not necessarily motivate employees but, if inadequate, can cause dissatisfaction (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959).

In the banking sector, ineffective appraisal systems and poor reward structures often fail to provide sufficient motivators, which has resulted in low morale and high turnover (Mukabi, Kagucia, & Mamuli, 2025). Studies suggest that monetary rewards alone do not sustain motivation; instead, employees seek recognition, career growth, and a sense of achievement (Chukwu & Osirim, 2024).

Expectancy Theory

Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) argues that employees are motivated when they believe that effort will lead to performance, which in turn leads to rewards (Vroom, 1964). This theory comprises three components:

- i. **Expectancy (Effort → Performance):** Employees must believe their efforts will lead to a good appraisal.
- ii. **Instrumentality (Performance → Reward):** They must perceive a strong link between performance and reward.
- iii. **Valence (Value of the Reward):** The reward must be desirable and meaningful to employees.



Research shows that when performance appraisal systems lack transparency, employees lose trust in their evaluations, reducing motivation (Dhal et al., 2025). Similarly, if reward systems are not perceived as fair, employees disengage, leading to reduced productivity (Aremu & Nurudeen, 2025).

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal refers to a structured process of evaluating employee performance based on predetermined criteria. It plays a crucial role in determining promotions, salary increments, and career progression (Samuel et al., 2025). Various appraisal methods exist, each with its strengths and weaknesses.

i. 360-Degree Feedback

The 360-degree feedback approach gathers performance evaluations from multiple sources, including supervisors, peers, subordinates, and customers. This method enhances appraisal fairness and accuracy by providing a holistic perspective (Mukabi et al., 2025). However, its subjectivity and potential for bias can undermine its effectiveness, particularly in organisations where hierarchical structures dominate, such as banks (Aremu et al., 2024).

ii. Management by Objectives (MBO)

Management by Objectives (MBO) involves setting specific, measurable goals for employees and assessing their performance based on goal achievement (Drucker, 1954). In the banking sector, MBO has been found to improve employee focus and accountability, as goals are often tied to customer satisfaction, loan disbursement efficiency, and financial targets. However, rigid goal-setting can sometimes overlook external factors beyond employees' control, leading to unrealistic performance expectations (Mukabi et al., 2025).

iii. Employee Reward Systems

Employee reward systems are designed to motivate, retain, and recognise employees for their contributions. Rewards in the banking sector fall into two main categories:

a. Monetary Rewards

Monetary rewards include salaries, bonuses, commissions, profit-sharing, and stock options. Studies indicate that financial incentives significantly impact short-term motivation but are less effective in driving long-term engagement (Mukabi et al., 2025). Research in Nigerian banks suggests that employees often become disengaged when salary increments do not match inflation rates, leading to job dissatisfaction (Chukwu & Osirim, 2024).

b. Non-Monetary Rewards

Non-monetary rewards include career development opportunities, recognition programs, flexible work arrangements, and professional training. Studies reveal that career growth and recognition are stronger predictors of job satisfaction than salary alone (Abdullah, 2025). Organisations with structured mentorship programs and leadership training retain top talent more effectively than those relying solely on financial rewards (Aremu et al., 2024). Banks that incorporate a mix of monetary and non-monetary incentives tend to experience lower employee turnover and higher levels of engagement (Samuel et al., 2025).

2.3 Empirical Framework

2.3.1 Studies on Performance Appraisal and Rewards

Several empirical studies have explored the relationship between performance appraisal, reward systems, and employee motivation in the banking sector, highlighting key trends and challenges in different regions.

According to Mukabi et al. (2025), a study on Kenyan banks found that employees perceived performance appraisals as biased due to a lack of clear performance metrics. The study emphasised the need for technology-driven appraisal systems to enhance transparency, reduce subjectivity, and provide employees with more reliable and data-based evaluations. The findings suggest that banks with automated and standardised appraisal systems experienced higher employee trust and engagement levels than those relying on manual evaluations.

Similarly, Aremu et al. (2025) analysed performance appraisal practices in Myanmar's financial sector and found that employees valued transparent and constructive feedback more than salary increases. The study revealed that real-time feedback mechanisms—such as continuous performance tracking and regular employee-manager check-ins—were more effective in enhancing job satisfaction and motivation. It recommended that financial institutions implement immediate and interactive appraisal methods rather than annual, delayed reviews, which often leave employees uncertain about their career progression.

Focusing on employee reward systems, Chukwu & Osirim (2024) examined the impact of monetary and non-monetary incentives in Nigerian banks. Their study found a strong correlation between non-monetary rewards and employee retention, emphasising that career growth opportunities, recognition programs, and mentorship initiatives were more effective than financial incentives in reducing employee turnover. The research suggested that employees who received professional development opportunities were significantly less likely to leave their jobs, even if they received lower salaries compared



to competitors. This highlights the importance of long-term career investment over short-term financial rewards.

On the other hand, Samuel et al. (2025) investigated the role of performance-linked bonuses in Indonesian financial institutions. The study observed that financial incentives such as bonuses and commissions led to increased short-term productivity. However, the impact on long-term employee engagement and retention was minimal. Employees motivated primarily by financial rewards tended to seek better-paying opportunities elsewhere, leading to higher turnover rates. The study recommended that banks combine financial incentives with career development programs and employee recognition efforts to create a more balanced motivation strategy.

The literature suggests that effective performance appraisal and reward systems are essential for employee motivation and retention in the banking sector. Theories like Herzberg's Two-Factor Model and Expectancy Theory emphasise the importance of recognition, career development, and transparent evaluation mechanisms. Empirical evidence further supports that banks must integrate both financial and non-financial rewards to sustain employee engagement.

This study seeks to build on existing research by analysing the specific case of Zenith Bank, Uyo, by evaluating how appraisal and reward systems influence employee performance while recommending improvements for a more effective HR strategy.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey method; the target population consists of employees at Zenith Bank, Udoudoma Avenue Banking Layout, Uyo, including senior management staff, mid-level managers, and frontline employees (customer service, operations, and sales teams). A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation across different job levels. Data for analysis was collected using both primary (questionnaire, interviews, etc.) and secondary (reports and reviews) methods. Structured questions were distributed to employees to assess their views on performance appraisal fairness, reward satisfaction, and motivation levels. The questionnaire included Likert-scale questions of 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.



Table 1: Population and Sample Size Distribution

Employee Category	Population Size	Sample Size (N=120)
Senior Managers	20	10
Mid-Level Managers	50	30
Frontline Employees	130	80
Total	200	120

Source: Researcher

A sample of 120 employees was chosen to ensure statistical significance while maintaining feasibility. Stratified sampling ensures that insights are gathered from employees across all organizational levels.

3.1 Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using quantitative and qualitative statistical tools. Descriptive Statistics (SPSS Software) was used and it adopted frequency distributions, mean scores, and standard deviations to summarize employee responses and check trends in motivation, reward satisfaction, and appraisal fairness.

2. Regression and Correlation Analysis

- Regression models assessed the impact of performance appraisal on productivity.
- Correlation analysis determined the strength of the relationship between rewards and employee motivation.

3. Thematic Analysis (For Interviews & Open-ended Responses)

- Qualitative insights from interviews were categorized into common themes such as bias in appraisal, fairness of rewards, and improvement strategies.



Results and Discussion

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Employee Perceptions of the Performance Appraisal System

Table 2: Effect of Performance Appraisal System on Employee Motivation

Employee Response	Percentage (%)	Impact on Motivation
Appraisal is fair and transparent	65%	Increased motivation and commitment
Appraisal lacks clear evaluation criteria	25%	Reduced motivation due to perceived bias
No opinion/neutral	10%	No significant impact on motivation
Regular feedback received	72%	Higher job satisfaction and engagement
Infrequent feedback	48%	Lower job motivation

Source: Researcher

Survey results as shown in Table 2 indicate that 65% of employees believe the current appraisal system is fair and transparent, while 25% express dissatisfaction, citing favouritism and lack of clear evaluation criteria. The remaining 10% are neutral. Employees who receive regular feedback tend to have a higher job satisfaction rate (72%), compared to those who rarely receive feedback (48%).

4.1.2 Appraisal Effectiveness in Enhancing Productivity

Table 3: Performance Appraisal Effectiveness in Enhancing Productivity

Performance Indicator	Findings (%)	Impact on Productivity
Employees receiving structured performance reviews	80%	10-15% improvement in productivity over time
Employees with clear performance targets and development plans	78%	Higher engagement and motivation
Employees without a structured appraisal process	52%	Lower engagement levels
Absence of constructive feedback	30%	Decrease in employee motivation

Source: Researcher



Table 3 shows performance appraisal effectiveness was measured using key performance indicators (KPIs) such as task completion rate, error reduction, and goal achievement levels. The analysis shows that 80% of employees who received structured performance reviews demonstrated a 10-15% improvement in productivity over time; employees with clear performance targets and development plans showed higher engagement levels (78%) than those without a structured appraisal process (52%). On the other hand, the absence of constructive feedback was linked to a 30% decrease in motivation for employees.

The results highlight the positive impact of structured performance appraisals on productivity, engagement, and motivation. Employees who receive regular feedback and clear performance expectations tend to be more engaged and productive, whereas a lack of constructive feedback leads to reduced motivation. at Zenith Bank Plc, Udoudoma Avenue Banking Layout, Uyo (2020 - 2025).

4.1.3 Impact of Rewards on Employee Satisfaction

Table 4: Relationship Between Reward Systems and Employee Productivity

This table presents the impact of monetary and non-monetary rewards on employee performance.

Reward Type	Employee Satisfaction (%)	Impact on Productivity
Monetary rewards (bonuses, salary increments)	85%	Increased productivity by 10-15%
Non-monetary rewards (recognition, flexible work, career growth)	70%	Moderate productivity increase (5%)
Employees satisfied with reward system	75%	More engaged and committed workforce
Employees who perceive rewards as unfair	30%	Lower productivity and increased turnover intention

Source: Researcher

Table 4 shows how reward influences the staff of Zenith Bank Plc, Udoudoma. It assessed the impact of monetary and non-monetary rewards on job satisfaction. The findings show that monetary rewards (salary increments, bonuses) were highly valued, with 85% of employees stating they were a key motivator. Non-monetary rewards which include recognition, flexible work arrangements, career growth opportunities, etc., also influenced job commitment (70%) but were considered secondary to financial benefits. Conversely, some employees who felt rewarded fairly based on their performance showed a 20% lower turnover intention than those who perceived inequities.

2.1 Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Table 5: Summary of Employee Perceptions on Performance Appraisal and Rewards

Variable	Percentage (%)	Mean Score (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Employees who perceive appraisal as fair	65%	3.85	0.72
Employees who perceive favouritism in appraisal	40%	2.90	0.95
Employees who receive structured feedback	72%	4.12	0.65
Employees who prefer monetary rewards	85%	4.35	0.58
Employees who perceive rewards as unfair	30%	2.75	0.80

From table 5 above, it can be seen that the mean score for fairness of performance appraisal ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.72$) indicates that most employees perceive the system as relatively fair. Favouritism in appraisal ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 0.95$) shows moderate concern among employees, while monetary rewards have the highest preference ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.58$), supporting Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory.

4.2.2 Hypothesis Testing and Inferential Statistics

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between performance appraisal and employee motivation.

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength of the relationship.

Variable	Performance Appraisal Score	Employee Motivation Score
Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.72	-
Significance Level (p -value)	0.000**	-

The strong positive correlation ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$) suggests a significant relationship between performance appraisal and employee motivation. Employees who perceive the appraisal system as fair tend to be more engaged and motivated.

Hypothesis 2: Employees who receive structured performance appraisals exhibit higher productivity.

A t-test was conducted to compare the productivity of employees who receive structured appraisals versus those who do not.

<i>Group</i>	<i>Mean Productivity Score (M)</i>	<i>Standard Deviation (SD)</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Structured Appraisal Group (n=80)	4.28	0.70	4.32	0.001**
Unstructured Appraisal Group (n=40)	3.15	0.85	-	-

Employees receiving structured performance appraisals (M = 4.28, SD = 0.70) show significantly higher productivity than those in the unstructured group (M = 3.15, SD = 0.85). The p-value (p = 0.001) confirms statistical significance, meaning the difference is not due to chance.

Hypothesis 3: Monetary rewards have a stronger impact on employee satisfaction than non-monetary rewards.

A regression analysis was conducted to assess the relative impact of monetary vs. non-monetary rewards on employee satisfaction.

<i>Predictor Variables</i>	<i>Standardized Beta (β)</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Monetary Rewards	0.75	5.62	0.000**
Non-Monetary Rewards	0.35	2.81	0.005**

Monetary rewards ($\beta = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$) have a stronger influence on employee satisfaction than non-monetary rewards ($\beta = 0.35$, $p = 0.005$). The results align with Expectancy Theory, which suggests that employees are more engaged when high performance leads to clear financial reward.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study examined the relationship between performance appraisal and employee reward systems at Zenith Bank Plc, Udoudoma Avenue Banking Layout, Uyo (2020 - 2025). Based on the statistical findings, structured performance appraisals significantly enhance employee motivation and productivity with $r = 0.72$, $p < 0.001$. Monetary rewards ($\beta = 0.75$, $p < 0.001$) are the strongest predictors of job satisfaction. Employees who receive structured appraisals score higher in productivity, with the mean score of 4.28 higher than those with unstructured appraisals (M = 3.15, $p = 0.001$). Challenges in the current system include favouritism (40%), unclear criteria (30%), and infrequent feedback (20%), which negatively impact motivation. These findings reinforce the need for transparent, structured, and performance-linked appraisal and reward systems to drive engagement and retention.



The findings align with established theories and empirical studies on performance appraisal and reward systems. Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964) asserts that employees are more engaged when they perceive a direct link between effort, performance, and rewards. The study confirms that structured appraisals enhance engagement at Zenith Bank Uyo. It also supports Equity Theory (Adams, 1963), which states that perceived fairness in reward distribution impacts employee motivation. The 40% of employees who perceived favouritism in appraisals demonstrate how unfairness undermines trust and commitment. The empirical research (Mullins, 2020) confirms that structured appraisal frameworks reduce employee turnover by improving motivation and job satisfaction. These comparisons reinforce the importance of transparency, fairness, and structured feedback mechanisms in designing an effective performance appraisal and reward system.

5.2 Recommendations

Following the above findings and conclusions, and to improve performance appraisal and reward systems, the following strategies are recommended:

1. Implement data-driven performance appraisal systems by introducing AI-powered performance tracking tools to reduce favouritism and improve fairness, standardising KPIs (key performance indicators) to ensure objective evaluations, and conducting quarterly feedback sessions to increase transparency and trust.
2. Strengthen the Link Between Appraisal and Rewards by establishing performance-based salary increments directly tied to quantifiable KPIs, providing career advancement opportunities alongside financial rewards, and recognising top performers monthly through monetary and public acknowledgement.
3. Improve employee feedback mechanisms by conducting employee satisfaction surveys every six months to identify key concerns, allowing anonymous feedback channels to capture honest employee perspectives, and implementing peer review appraisal systems to incorporate multi-dimensional performance insights.
4. Balance financial and non-financial incentives by offering flexible work arrangements to improve work-life balance, providing scholarship or training incentives to enhance employee career growth, and establishing a mentorship program for leadership development.



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