

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAIRNESS AND TRANSPARENCY IN STAFF
PERFORMANCE EVALUATION INDICES AND EMPLOYEE JOB SATISFACTION AT
COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NORTHWEST, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between perceived fairness and transparency in staff performance evaluation indices and employee job satisfaction in Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria. A correlation research design was adopted. The population consisted of 6,613 academic staff from 17 Colleges of Education, while 382 respondents were selected through stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a structured Staff Questionnaire (SQ), validated by experts, with a reliability coefficient of 0.79 obtained through a pilot study. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis. Findings revealed a strong positive relationship between fairness and transparency ($r = .639, p < .01$), a weak but significant relationship between fairness and staff performance ($r = .151, p < .01$), and a moderate significant relationship between transparency and staff performance ($r = .415, p < .01$). Regression analysis indicated significant relationship between transparency and staff attitudes towards performance ($\beta = .538, t = 8.961, p < .05$), whereas fairness had a significant negative relationship ($\beta = -.192, t = -3.207, p < .05$). The study concluded that transparency is a stronger predictor of positive staff outcomes and recommended improved implementation of fairness principles, clear communication, and digital evaluation systems.

Keywords: Fairness, Transparency, Performance Evaluation, Job Satisfaction, Staff Attitudes

Introduction

Performance evaluation systems in educational institutions have garnered significant attention globally, with a particular focus on fairness and transparency. These systems play a crucial role in assessing staff performance, guiding professional development, and informing administrative decisions. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on ensuring that these evaluations are perceived as fair and transparent by the staff being evaluated (Johnson et al., 2023). This trend is observed across various educational institutions worldwide, including colleges of education.

On a global scale, the importance of fairness and transparency in performance evaluations has been recognized as a key factor in maintaining staff morale and productivity. A study by Zhen-qi and Zhang (2021) found that institutions with perceived fair and transparent evaluation systems reported higher levels of job satisfaction and lower turnover rates among staff members. This underscores the significance of these factors in creating a positive work environment and retaining valuable human resources.

In the continental context of Africa, the implementation of fair and transparent performance evaluation systems in educational institutions has been a topic of ongoing discussion and development. Many African countries are working towards modernizing their educational systems, and this includes refining staff evaluation processes. A comprehensive study by Okonkwo et al.

(2021) across several African nations revealed that there is a growing awareness of the need for more objective and transparent evaluation methods in colleges of education.

Regionally, in West Africa, efforts to improve the quality of education have led to increased scrutiny of staff performance evaluation systems. Nigeria, in particular, has seen a push for reforms in this area, with various stakeholders advocating for more equitable and transparent processes (Adebayo & Oluwatoyin, 2024). The Nigerian Commission for Colleges of Education has emphasized the importance of fair evaluation systems in enhancing the overall quality of education provided by these institutions (Adebayo & Oluwatoyin, 2024).

The concept of fairness in performance evaluation encompasses several dimensions, including procedural fairness, distributive fairness, and interactional fairness. Procedural fairness refers to the perceived fairness of the methods and procedures used in the evaluation process. This includes aspects such as consistency in application, opportunity for voice, and absence of bias (Choi & Park, 2021). Distributive fairness, on the other hand, relates to the perceived fairness of the outcomes or rewards resulting from the evaluation (Choi & Park, 2021). This dimension considers whether staff members feel that the rewards or consequences of their performance evaluations are commensurate with their efforts and achievements. Interactional fairness, the third dimension, focuses on the quality of interpersonal treatment received during the evaluation process. This includes aspects such as respect, dignity, and clear communication of expectations and feedback (Anderson et al., 2024).

Transparency in performance evaluation systems ensures that staff members understand how they are being evaluated and can trust the process (Chen et al., 2022). The interrelationship between fairness and transparency in performance evaluation systems is significant and multifaceted. Transparency often serves as a prerequisite for perceived fairness, as clear and open processes are more likely to be viewed as equitable. Conversely, fair processes contribute to the perception of transparency, as they demonstrate a commitment to openness and objectivity (Kim, & Cho, 2021).

In the context of Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria, understanding the perceptions of fairness and transparency in performance evaluation systems among the staff is crucial. These institutions face the challenge of implementing evaluation systems that are both effective and perceived as fair by its staff members. The perception of fairness in performance evaluations can significantly impact staff motivation, job satisfaction, and overall organizational commitment. When staff members believe that their performance is being evaluated fairly, they are more likely to engage positively with the process and use the feedback constructively for their professional development (Cheng & Hackett, 2024).

The study of relationship between fairness and transparency in performance evaluation indices and employee job is crucial for understanding and improving the effectiveness of these systems. By examining these perceptions, the institution can work towards creating evaluation processes that are not only effective but also perceived as fair and transparent by its staff, ultimately contributing to a more positive and productive educational environment.

The fairness and transparency in performance evaluation indices among staff Colleges of Education in Northwest, Nigeria, has become a critical issue affecting employee morale, productivity, and overall institutional effectiveness. This study aims to investigate the factors influencing these perceptions and identify potential solutions to enhance the fairness and transparency of the evaluation process.

Statement of the Problem

The effectiveness of performance evaluation systems in Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria

has been constrained by persistent concerns about fairness in their design and implementation. Many academic staff perceive evaluation criteria as unclear, inconstantly applied, and sometimes influenced by subjective judgment, which undermines confidence in the system (Iqbal et al., 2021). Studies have shown that unclear criteria and lack of standardization often result in perceptions of bias and procedural injustice (Iqbal et al., 2021). In addition, limited staff involvement in the development and review of evaluation processes reduces acceptance and trust, thereby weakening the credibility of outcomes. Where fairness is not consistently experienced across procedural, distributive, and interactional dimensions, employees are less likely to view evaluation outcomes as legitimate or motivating (Anderson et al., 2024). Consequently, these gaps in fairness create dissatisfaction and reduce the effectiveness of evaluation systems as tools for performance improvement.

Furthermore, inadequate transparency in the performance evaluation process continues to pose a major challenge to staff engagement and job satisfaction. Poor communication of evaluation procedures, irregular feedback mechanisms, and limited access to performance records hinder staff understanding of how decisions are made and how outcomes are determined. Research indicates that lack of transparency reduces trust and increases uncertainty among employees (Chen et al., 2022; Sharma & Sharma, 2022). Additionally, insufficient training of evaluators and the limited integration of digital technologies contribute to inefficiencies and opacity in the system (Nurdiansyah et al., 2024). These conditions often lead staff to perceive evaluation results as disconnected from actual performance and career progression, thereby weakening motivation and institutional effectiveness. Therefore, the persistence of these issues necessitates a systematic investigation into how fairness and transparency in performance evaluation influence staff attitudes and performance in Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

This study is based on the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the perceived fairness of the job performance and satisfaction evaluation systems among staff of colleges of education in Northwest, Nigeria;
2. To determine the relationship between perceived fairness and transparency and staff attitudes towards performance evaluation in Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria.

Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

H01: There is no significant relationship between perceived fairness, perceived transparency, and staff performance in Colleges of Education in Northwest, Nigeria.

H02: There is no significant relationship between perceived fairness and transparency and staff attitudes towards performance evaluation in Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria.

Methodology

The study employed a correlation research design. The design is chosen to systematically collect quantitative data from a representative sample of the college staff, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of their views and experiences regarding the performance evaluation process. The choice of a survey research design for this study is appropriate to collect data on attitudes, opinions, and perceptions from a large group of individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The population of the study comprised 6,613 academic staff drawn from 17 Federal and State Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria. This population encompasses the entire academic workforce of the institutions. By using the academics staff of the institutions, the study provided a holistic view of perceptions across institution, enhancing the breadth and depth of this findings. The sample size of 382 academic staff in this study was determined using Research Advisory (2006) at 99% confidence level in a 5% margin of error. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the respondents based on specific characteristics. This ensures that each subgroup is proportionally represented in the sample.

For this study, a Staff Questionnaire (SQ) was utilized as the primary instrument for data collection. This instrument is suitable for gathering information from academic staff. The SQ was designed by the researchers to collect relevant data from the participants. The instrument consists of four sections namely section A, B, C, D, and E. Section A consists of the respondents' demographic information (Gender), Section B consists of Likert-scale statements to assess' staff perceived fairness. The section C of the instrument consists of statements focusing on the perceived transparency of evaluation performance process. While the section D part of the SQ contained statements to explore the job satisfaction and section F contained statements to explore the performance and attitudes of staff toward perceived fairness, transparency, and job performance in evaluation process.

Pilot study was conducted using 30 academic staff in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument. The pilot study was conducted among members of other tertiary institution that is not part of the study area. Therefore, the instrument was validated by 2 experts, one from department educational psychology and counseling while the other one is an educational measurement and evaluation expert. The reliability index of the instrument obtained was 0.79. The data collected was analyzed. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis One, while Regression analysis was used to test hypothesis two at 0.01 significance level with aid of SPSS 23.0 version.

Results

Tests of Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between perceived fairness, perceived transparency, and staff performance in Colleges of Education in Northwest, Nigeria.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix of Perceived Fairness, Transparency, and Staff Performance

		Perceived Fairness	Perceived Transparency	Performance
Perceived Fairness	Person Correlation	1	.639**	.151**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.003
	N	382	382	382
Perceived Transparency	Person Correlation	.639**	1	.415**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	382	382	382
Performance	Pearson Correlation	.151**	.415**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	
	N	382	382	382

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

Table 1 presents the Pearson correlation analysis among perceived fairness, perceived transparency, and staff performance. The results showed a strong positive relationship between perceived fairness and perceived transparency ($r = .639$, $p < .01$), indicating that higher levels of fairness are associated with higher levels of transparency. Furthermore, perceived fairness demonstrated a weak but statistically significant positive relationship with staff performance ($r = .151$, $p < .01$). In contrast, perceived transparency exhibited a moderate and significant positive relationship with staff performance ($r = .415$, $p < .01$). These findings indicate that both fairness and transparency are significantly associated with staff performance, with transparency showing a stronger relationship. Consequently, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant relationship among perceived fairness, perceived transparency, and staff performance was rejected.

H02: There is no significant relationship between perceived fairness, transparency and staff attitudes towards performance evaluation in Colleges of Education in Northwest Nigeria.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of the relationship between perceived fairness, transparency and staff attitudes towards performance evaluation

	β	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	22.884	.947		24.155	.000
Perceived Fairness	-.123	.038	-.192	-3.207	.001
Perceived Transparency	.332	.037	.538	8.961	.000

a. Dependent Variable Performance (Attitudes)

Table 2 presents the regression analysis examining the relationship between perceived fairness, transparency and staff attitudes towards performance evaluation. The results revealed that perceived fairness had a significant negative relationship on staff performance ($\beta = -.192$, $t = -3.207$, $p < .05$). This suggests that increases in perceived fairness are associated with a slight decrease in performance attitudes, an unexpected finding that may reflect contextual or perceptual complexities in the evaluation system. On the other hand, perceived transparency showed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship on staff performance ($\beta = .538$, $t = 8.961$, $p < .05$), indicating that transparency is a major determinant of positive staff attitudes toward performance evaluation. Therefore, the null hypothesis stated that, there is no significant relationship between perceived fairness and transparency and staff attitudes towards performance evaluation was rejected. This is because, the results demonstrate that both perceived fairness and transparency significantly predict staff performance.

Discussion of Findings

Based on these results, hypothesis one was rejected, indicating that fairness, transparency are significantly related to staff performance.

This finding is consistent with Kim and Cho (2021), who found that fairness and transparency are interdependent constructs that jointly influence employee outcomes. Their study demonstrated that transparency enhances fairness perceptions, which in turn contribute to improved performance.

However, the relatively weak relationship between fairness and performance aligns with Johari and Yahya (2023), who argued that fairness alone may not strongly predict performance unless supported by clear communication and accountability mechanisms.

In contrast, the stronger relationship between transparency and performance supports Cheng and Hackett (2024), who found that transparent evaluation systems significantly improve employee engagement and performance outcomes. Similarly, Zhen-qi and Zhang (2021) reported that transparency reduces uncertainty and enhances job satisfaction, thereby improving productivity.

From a theoretical perspective, Organizational Justice Theory explains the fairness-performance relationship, while Expectancy Theory better explains the stronger influence of transparency, as it directly clarifies expectations and outcomes.

Overall, the rejection of H01 confirms that both fairness and transparency are critical determinants of staff performance, with transparency exerting a more substantial influence.

Based on these findings, Hypothesis Two was rejected, indicating that fairness and transparency have a significant relationship with staff attitudes toward performance evaluation.

The strong positive effect of transparency is consistent with Nurdiansyah et al. (2024), who found that transparent systems enhance employee trust, engagement, and productivity. Similarly, Chen et al. (2022) reported that transparency reduces ambiguity and increases employees' confidence in evaluation outcomes.

Cheng and Hackett (2024) further emphasized that continuous and transparent feedback mechanisms are critical in shaping positive employee attitudes and improving performance. These findings reinforce the importance of transparency as a key driver of positive organizational behavior.

However, the negative influence of fairness contradicts many previous studies that report a positive relationship. This unexpected result may be explained by contextual factors. Al-Jedaia and Mehrez (2020) found that when fairness systems are perceived as rigid, bureaucratic, or inconsistently applied, they may lead to dissatisfaction rather than motivation.

Similarly, Anderson et al. (2024) noted that when there is a disconnect between formal fairness policies and actual practices, employees may develop negative attitudes toward the evaluation system. In such cases, fairness is perceived as symbolic rather than functional.

Within the framework of Expectancy Theory, fairness without a clear link to rewards or outcomes may fail to motivate employees, thereby producing negative effects. This suggests that fairness must be complemented by transparency and accountability to positively influence performance.

Thus, while transparency enhances staff attitudes towards performance, fairness requires improved implementation, clarity, and alignment with outcomes to achieve its intended effect.

These results highlight the need for performance evaluation systems in Colleges of Education to move beyond formal fairness structures and prioritize transparent, communicative, and outcome-driven processes.

In summary, the study provides empirical evidence that improving transparency is critical for enhancing staff performance, while fairness must be strengthened through consistent, participatory,

and well-communicated practices to yield positive outcomes.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study affirms that effective performance evaluation systems in Colleges of Education must integrate both fairness and transparency, with particular emphasis on enhancing transparency mechanisms. Institutions should prioritize clear communication, continuous feedback, and accessible evaluation processes to improve staff performance and organizational effectiveness. Ultimately, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge by demonstrating that transparency is a more immediate and impactful driver of staff performance, while fairness requires strategic refinement to achieve its intended outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. National Commission for Colleges of Education, in collaboration with Management of Colleges of Education should develop and implement clear, measurable, and standardized staff performance evaluation criteria that are easily accessible and well communicated to all academic staff members.
2. The management of Colleges of Education should establish regular communication channels, open feedback mechanisms, and accessible evaluation record systems to enhance transparency and strengthen staff confidence in the performance evaluation process.

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