

A Qualitative Exploration of Employee Performance Evaluation through the Annual Performance Appraisal System (APAS) at ProgressiveEdge Training Services

Jacqueline Siwale¹

School of Business, Texila American University, Lusaka, Zambia
Email: jacquelinesiwale@gmail.com

Victor Chikampa

School of Social Science, Mulungushi University, Kabwe Zambia
Email: chikampav@gmail.com

Nelson Kabanda

Registrar, Gideon Roberts University, Lusaka, Zambia
Email: kabandanc@gmail.com

Ulayi Owen Shiku

School of Business, Texila American University, Lusaka, Zambia
Email: ulayi.shiku@gmail.com

Abstract

The study provides a qualitative exploration of the employee performance evaluation process through the Annual Performance Appraisal System (APAS forthwith) at ProgressiveEdge Training Services. Utilizing qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, the study sought to gain a deeper understanding of employee and supervisor perceptions and experiences with the APAS. A purposive sampling technique was employed, selecting 80 respondents (25% of the population), including senior employees, supervisors, and HR personnel. The primary objective was to explore how the APAS impacted employee performance evaluations and to identify challenges and areas of improvement. Data was analyzed through thematic analysis, revealing several key themes from participants' feedback. Findings indicated that while senior employees were generally aware of the APAS, their understanding of its specific processes and objectives was limited. Key issues included inadequate training, lack of clear communication regarding the system's goals, and confusion over the performance criteria. Furthermore, the reliance on manual input for performance scoring led to concerns about bias and inconsistency in evaluations.

Additionally, the study found a significant misalignment between supervisor expectations and employee understanding of performance objectives, which contributed to dissatisfaction and disengagement. Supervisors' limited knowledge of the APAS resulted in inconsistent evaluations, and the absence of real-time feedback mechanisms hindered employee development. These factors were identified as potential drivers of demotivation and increased turnover risk.

In conclusion, the study called for a comprehensive review and enhancement of the APAS to improve its effectiveness and fairness.

¹ Corresponding author

Recommendations included focused training for supervisors, clearer communication of performance expectations, standardization of the evaluation process to reduce bias, and the introduction of real-time feedback mechanisms to foster continuous development. By addressing these issues, ProgressiveEdge Training Services could create a more transparent, efficient, and motivating performance evaluation system that supported both employee growth and organizational success.

Keywords: Employee Performance Evaluation & Annual Performance Appraisal System (APAS)

Introduction:

Performance appraisal is universally acknowledged as a fundamental function within human resource management across both public and private sector organizations. It entails a structured and periodic evaluation of an employee's job performance and productivity, conducted against predetermined criteria and aligned with organizational goals. According to Armstrong (2006), performance appraisal is a process whereby managers assess an employee's work behaviour, benchmark it against established standards, and provide feedback aimed at fostering improvement. Additionally, performance appraisals (PAs forthwith) serve as a tool for identifying training needs, making promotion decisions, and confirming employment status. As such, PAs are integral to career development, employee progression, and the ongoing evaluation of performance within an organization (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006).

Notwithstanding its significance, performance appraisal is frequently perceived as a burdensome and unappealing activity by both managers and employees. Numerous studies indicate that a substantial proportion of employees express dissatisfaction with the performance appraisal process, with surveys revealing that nearly 80% of workers are dissatisfied with how their performance is assessed (Brown, 2001). This dissatisfaction raises a pertinent question: why not eliminate the performance appraisal system? Pulakos (2004) contends that, while PAs may be viewed as contentious, they remain an indispensable element of organizational operations, as they facilitate feedback, foster performance enhancement, and support key decisions regarding promotions, training, and terminations. Furthermore, the necessity for effective performance management and the ability to substantiate decisions related to employee development, compensation, and legal compliance renders the abolition of PAs unfeasible (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2013). Despite the challenges it presents, performance appraisal continues to be an essential mechanism for enhancing organizational efficiency and achieving optimal outcomes, particularly in the context of the increasingly competitive global marketplace (Brown, 2001). As Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour (2015) assert, discontinuing the performance appraisal system could severely undermine an organization's capacity to assess and cultivate employee performance. Moreover, managers risk legal consequences if they fail to maintain a transparent and well-documented process for evaluating employee performance, further underscoring the necessity of developing a robust and effective performance appraisal system. Consequently, improving the performance appraisal system, rather than abolishing it, should be a primary focus for management to ensure equitable and constructive evaluations that drive both employee and organizational success.

Problem Statement:

Performance appraisal is a vital aspect of human resource management, essential for

evaluating employee productivity and aligning individual performance with organizational objectives. As defined by Bhawna Chahar, 2020. it involves a systematic evaluation of an employee's job performance against predefined criteria. Armstrong (2006) highlights its role in helping managers assess employee behaviour, identify areas for improvement, and guide decisions on promotions, training, and terminations. However, despite its importance, PAs are often met with negative perceptions from both employees and managers, with dissatisfaction commonly reported in surveys (Brown, 2001). Pulakos (2004) recognizes the contentious nature of PAs but argues that their elimination is impractical due to their essential role in feedback, performance enhancement, and organizational decision-making. Aguinis & Burgi-Tian (2013) emphasize the need to refine rather than abolish appraisal systems to promote organizational success.

The case of ProgressiveEdge Training Services illustrates the practical challenges faced by performance appraisal systems. The company, a leading provider of professional training and development services, introduced the APAS in 2016 to boost employee motivation and engagement. However, despite the system's intended goals of fairness, transparency, and career advancement, employee feedback reveals dissatisfaction due to inconsistent application, unclear objectives, and inadequate feedback. These issues have led to decreased morale and increased turnover, undermining the system's ability to retain talent and foster organizational growth (Brown, 2001). Consequently, this study aimed to examine the APAS at ProgressiveEdge Training Services, focusing on the disconnect between performance outcomes and rewards, the lack of managerial commitment, and the absence of clear performance targets. The failure to achieve the intended goals of motivating employees, enhancing engagement, and ensuring talent retention has contributed to a decline in overall productivity. The findings from this research will provide recommendations to improve the system, aligning employee performance with organizational objectives and fostering a more effective and transparent performance appraisal process.

Research Objectives:

- i. To explore employee perceptions and experiences of the APAS at ProgressiveEdge Training Services.
- ii. To understand the impact of the APAS on employee motivation, development, and overall performance within ProgressiveEdge Training Services.

Research Questions:

- i. How effective was the APAS in evaluating employee performance at ProgressiveEdge Training Services?
- ii. What challenges and limitations were identified by employees and supervisors regarding the APAS, particularly in terms of training, communication, and potential biases?
- iii. What improvements could be implemented in the APAS to enhance its effectiveness, such as enhanced supervisor training, increased frequency of assessments, and better alignment of objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs forthwith)?

Literature Review:

APAS are integral to modern organizational management, providing a structured method

to evaluate, motivate, and develop employees while ensuring alignment with organizational objectives. These systems are critical for identifying employees' strengths and weaknesses and informing key decisions related to promotions, compensation, and training (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2013). The APAS specifically, reviews employees' performance annually, providing a platform for feedback, goal-setting, and reflection on past performance. Despite its widespread adoption, the effectiveness of the APAS remains contentious. Traditional APAS models have been criticized for being rigid and inflexible, failing to provide continuous feedback, which is necessary for sustained improvement (Pulakos, 2004). Moreover, studies highlight issues of bias in performance evaluations, including the recency effect, personal biases of raters, and other extraneous factors, leading to unfair or inaccurate assessments (DeNisi & Pritchard, 2006). These issues can adversely affect employee satisfaction, morale, and organizational performance (Grote, 2002). Additionally, the APAS has been criticized for not aligning with modern organizational needs, where employees are expected to collaborate, innovate, and engage in continuous learning (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2013). Many employees and managers view PAs as a formality rather than a developmental tool, which diminishes their effectiveness. Consequently, organizations are increasingly adopting alternative performance evaluation methods, such as continuous feedback systems and 360-degree feedback, which integrate multiple perspectives in performance assessments (Smither et al., 1995).

Furthermore, some argue that APAS fails to account for broader factors influencing performance, such as teamwork, organizational culture, and employee well-being. As organizations evolve, there is a shift from merely evaluating past performance to fostering future growth and development. ProgressiveEdge Training Services, like many organizations, faces the challenge of ensuring that its APAS remains relevant and effective in motivating employees and aligning their performance with the company's strategic objectives. This literature review examines the current body of research on APAS, evaluating its advantages and limitations. It also explores alternative methods of performance evaluation, providing insights that can help ProgressiveEdge Training Services refine its performance management practices, and improve employee engagement, motivation, and overall organizational outcomes.

Theoretical Frameworks: To critically evaluate the effectiveness of APAS at ProgressiveEdge Training Services, it is essential to draw from established organizational behaviour and human resource management theories. Each of these theories provides valuable insights into how APAS influences employee motivation, performance, and satisfaction. These include the following:

- i. **Goal Setting Theory:** Goal Setting Theory suggests that specific, challenging goals lead to higher performance levels (Jeong et al., 2021). In the context of APAS, this theory emphasizes the importance of setting clear and measurable goals for employees. A well-structured APAS, incorporating goal-setting principles, can enhance employee engagement by aligning individual objectives with organizational expectations, which leads to improved performance outcomes. By examining how goals are set within the APAS at ProgressiveEdge Training Services, this theory can inform whether the system effectively promotes goal clarity and employee motivation, thereby enhancing performance.
- ii. **Expectancy Theory:** Expectancy Theory posits that motivation is influenced by the belief that effort will lead to desirable outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Employees assess whether their efforts will result in positive outcomes, such as rewards or recognition. In an APAS, if employees perceive a strong, fair connection between effort, performance, and reward, they are more likely to engage with the process.

and exert effort to meet performance expectations. This theory can be applied to evaluate whether ProgressiveEdge Training Services' APAS creates clear and achievable links between employee performance and rewards, motivating employees to exert higher levels of effort and meet performance expectations.

- iii. **Equity Theory:** Equity Theory focuses on fairness in social exchanges, suggesting that employees compare their inputs (efforts) and outcomes (rewards) to those of others (Adams, 1963). If employees perceive an imbalance, such as being under-rewarded for their efforts or observing discrepancies in how others are treated, they may experience dissatisfaction, which can negatively affect motivation and performance. This theory is particularly useful for evaluating how employees at ProgressiveEdge Training Services perceive the fairness of the APAS. By understanding employee perceptions of equity within the performance appraisal process, the study can identify potential areas for improvement, ensuring fairness, transparency, and overall satisfaction.
- iv. **Social Cognitive Theory:** Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes self-efficacy, the belief in one's ability to succeed in performing specific tasks (Bandura, 1986). In the context of APAS, feedback plays a critical role in shaping employees' beliefs about their capabilities. Positive feedback enhances self-efficacy, encouraging employees to strive for higher performance. Conversely, negative or unconstructive feedback can undermine confidence and performance. By applying Social Cognitive Theory, the study can explore how the feedback provided within the APAS influences employees' self-confidence and motivation. Understanding the impact of feedback on self-efficacy will help assess how well the APAS at ProgressiveEdge Training Services supports employees' growth and development.
- v. **360-Degree Feedback Model:** While not a formal theory, the 360-Degree Feedback Model is an important framework for understanding PAs. This model collects feedback from various sources, including supervisors, peers, subordinates, and self-assessments, providing a comprehensive view of employee performance (Smither et al., 1995). The model is considered to offer a more balanced, objective evaluation of performance, as it reduces biases inherent in traditional top-down appraisals. It emphasizes multiple perspectives to assess an individual's effectiveness and promote development. This model is relevant for assessing the comprehensiveness of the APAS at ProgressiveEdge Training Services. Evaluating whether the company uses or could benefit from incorporating 360-degree feedback can provide insights into how the system might be improved to offer a more holistic view of employee performance.

Types of PAs: In addition to the APAS, various other types of PAs are used by organizations to assess employee performance in different ways. These alternative methods can address some of the limitations of traditional APAS models and offer more flexibility and continuous feedback.

- i. **360-Degree Feedback:** It involves gathering feedback from multiple sources, including supervisors, peers, subordinates, and even self-assessments, providing a holistic view of an employee's performance and behaviour. It helps reduce biases by integrating multiple perspectives (ibid.). It can be beneficial for ProgressiveEdge Training Services to offer a more comprehensive and balanced view of employee performance.

- ii. **Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS):** These evaluate employees' performance based on specific behaviours tied to a range of performance levels, with clearly defined behavioural examples for each rating point. It is effective for evaluating specific job-related behaviours and aligning them with desired organizational outcomes. This approach could help ProgressiveEdge Training Services assess employees' day-to-day performance more objectively.
- iii. **Management by Objectives (MBO):** It focuses on setting clear, specific goals for employees and evaluating their performance based on how well these objectives are achieved. It helps create alignment between individual goals and organizational objectives, fostering motivation and goal-directed performance. This method could be a useful strategy for ProgressiveEdge Training Services to improve clarity in performance evaluations.
- iv. **Forced Ranking (Rank-and-Yank):** Employees are ranked against each other based on performance, with a predetermined percentage of employees placed in various performance categories. It can foster competition and identify top performers but may lead to dissatisfaction and unhealthy rivalry. ProgressiveEdge Training Services should consider how this method aligns with its organizational culture.
- v. **Graphic Rating Scale:** It involves rating employees on a scale of various attributes (e.g., communication, teamwork, reliability, and job knowledge) ranging from poor to excellent or low to high. It is simple and widely used, though subjective. ProgressiveEdge Training Services could use this method alongside others for a more balanced appraisal process.
- vi. **Critical Incident Method:** It focuses on documenting specific instances of particularly effective or ineffective behaviour throughout the evaluation period. It provides real-time examples of employee behaviour, offering clearer insight into strengths and weaknesses. This method could complement the APAS at ProgressiveEdge Training Services.
- vii. **Self-Assessment:** Employees assess their performance, reflecting on their achievements, strengths, and areas for improvement. It encourages self-reflection and accountability, providing personal insight into performance. It could enhance engagement and provide valuable input when integrated into ProgressiveEdge Training Services' APAS.
- viii. **Straight Ranking:** Employees are ranked from best to worst based on overall performance without predefined categories. It is simple but may lead to unhealthy competition. ProgressiveEdge Training Services might consider supplementing this method with other holistic approaches for more comprehensive assessments.
- ix. **Paired Comparison Method:** Employees are compared directly in pairs based on specific job performance criteria. It is useful for small teams or specific projects but could become cumbersome with large teams. ProgressiveEdge Training Services could consider using this for targeted evaluations.

The selection of the most suitable performance appraisal method depends on the goals and culture of the organization. While traditional APAS may work well in certain settings, alternative methods like 360-degree feedback, BARS, and MBO offer more flexible, continuous, and holistic evaluations. For ProgressiveEdge Training Services, a combination of these methods could provide a more comprehensive, fair, and motivating performance management system that aligns

with modern organizational needs and enhances employee engagement and development.

Possible Complications in Appraisals: While PAs offer numerous advantages, their implementation can present several complications. Grote (2002) emphasizes that the relationship between individual job performance and organizational outcomes is challenging to measure accurately, complicating the appraisal process. Two main challenges arise from formal PA systems: inappropriate use and misalignment with organizational culture and systems. These complications include:

- i. **Detrimental to Quality Improvement:** In organizations focused on Total Quality Management (TQM), formal PAs may be viewed as counterproductive, distracting from continuous improvement efforts.
- ii. **Negative Perceptions:** Many employees view PAs negatively, perceiving them as uncomfortable or distressing. If employees believe the process is unfair or unlikely to benefit them, they may see PAs as a mere “tick-box” exercise, undermining their effectiveness.
- iii. **Errors in Ratings:** Raters may inflate ratings to avoid conflict or please employees, which results in inaccurate assessments and undermines the reliability of the evaluation process.
- iv. **Legal Issues:** Improperly conducted appraisals can expose organizations to legal risks, especially when the outcomes influence promotions or terminations. Misapplications may lead to claims of discrimination or wrongful termination.
- v. **Performance Goals:** If goals within the PA system are overly ambitious or unrealistic, they can have negative consequences such as unethical behaviour, a decline in quality, or unmet skill development. Setting achievable goals, especially for new employees, can be more beneficial in the long run.
- vi. **Derailing Merit-Based Pay:** Biases or inaccuracies in PAs can negatively affect merit-based pay systems, weakening the connection between performance and compensation and leading to dissatisfaction among employees.

By addressing these potential complications, organizations like ProgressiveEdge Training Services can refine their PA systems, ensuring fairer, more accurate evaluations that align with both individual and organizational goals.

Research Methodology:

A qualitative research design was adopted to explore employee perceptions of the APAS at ProgressiveEdge. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were utilized as primary data collection methods, allowing for detailed, flexible conversations. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes in the data, providing insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the APAS. Primary data were gathered through interviews and focus group discussions with senior staff and HR personnel, while secondary data from literature and reports provided theoretical support for the study.

The target population consisted of senior staff members at ProgressiveEdge, particularly those involved in or overseeing the APAS, such as supervisors and HR personnel. This group was selected due to their direct involvement with the performance appraisal process. A purposive sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of 80 participants or 25% of the

target population of 200. This sample size is appropriate for qualitative research, ensuring reliable insights while maintaining manageable data collection. Purposive sampling was employed to focus on individuals with specific knowledge of the APAS. This non-probabilistic method ensured that the sample included those with direct experience relevant to the study's objectives.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, allowing participants to provide open-ended responses and engage in interactive dialogue. These instruments were chosen for their ability to generate detailed insights into participants' understanding of the APAS and the challenges they faced. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes in the data, such as gaps in training, communication challenges, and misalignments between supervisors' expectations and employees' understanding of the APAS. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the issues associated with the APAS.

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout the research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and confidentiality was maintained to protect their privacy. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence, and all data were used solely for academic purposes. The study faced several limitations, including limited access to some organizational information, non-responsiveness from some potential participants, time constraints, and potential bias in responses from participants in supervisory or HR roles. Despite these challenges, the study provided valuable insights into the APAS at ProgressiveEdge.

In other words, the research methodology was well-suited to the study's objectives, although limitations such as access to information and response bias were acknowledged. These factors were carefully considered in interpreting the results.

Data Analysis:

This section presents a detailed discussion and interpretation of the findings from the study on the effectiveness of the APAS at ProgressiveEdge Training Services. The findings are analyzed across various key areas, including gender distribution, marital status, educational level, familiarity with the APAS, the setting of realistic targets, and the competence of supervisors in utilizing the system. Each of these aspects offers valuable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the APAS, which can inform future improvements in the system's design and implementation. The following sections provide an in-depth analysis of the findings, supported by relevant literature.

Gender Distribution: The data reveals a significant gender imbalance, with 82% of the participants being male. This disparity highlights the ongoing issue of gender inequality in the workplace, reflecting global concerns about unequal gender representation in leadership and decision-making roles. Despite calls for gender equality, women remain underrepresented, particularly in positions of authority. This trend suggests that organizational efforts to foster gender inclusivity, particularly in leadership, need to be strengthened to ensure equal opportunities and career advancement for all genders (Acker, 2006).

Marital Status: The marital status data indicates that most employees are married, with only 12% being single. Existing literature suggests that married individuals are often perceived as more stable in their jobs, contributing positively to organizational performance through increased job security and social responsibility (Brown, 2001). The relatively small proportion of single employees might reflect a more transient workforce, though this does not necessarily correlate with lower performance. The findings suggest that marital status may have a bearing on employee commitment and organizational loyalty (Brown, 2001; Judge et al., 2001; Acker, 2006).

Table 1: Gender distribution²

Code	Frequency	Percentage
Male	66	82
Female	14	18
Total	80	100

Education Level: The educational background of the workforce at ProgressiveEdge Training Services indicates a well-educated staff, with most employees holding university degrees. This trend aligns with the institution’s positioning as a learning organization, fostering continuous development. Higher educational qualifications are typically associated with enhanced adaptability and the capacity to manage technological changes and industry shifts (Bhawna Chahar, 2020). A more educated workforce is likely to be instrumental in driving organizational success and facilitating innovation within the organization.

Understanding and Trust in the APAS System: The data highlights a significant gap in employees’ understanding of the APAS software, which has contributed to dissatisfaction and perceptions of bias, particularly concerning promotion decisions based on APAS outcomes. Employees expressed concerns about favouritism, often attributed to personal relationships with supervisors, which undermines trust in the appraisal system. The lack of transparency and a clear understanding of the system further erodes its credibility, as employees question the fairness and objectivity of the evaluations. As noted by Mukubani (2008), a well-understood and transparent appraisal system is crucial for fostering trust, fairness, and objectivity in performance assessments.

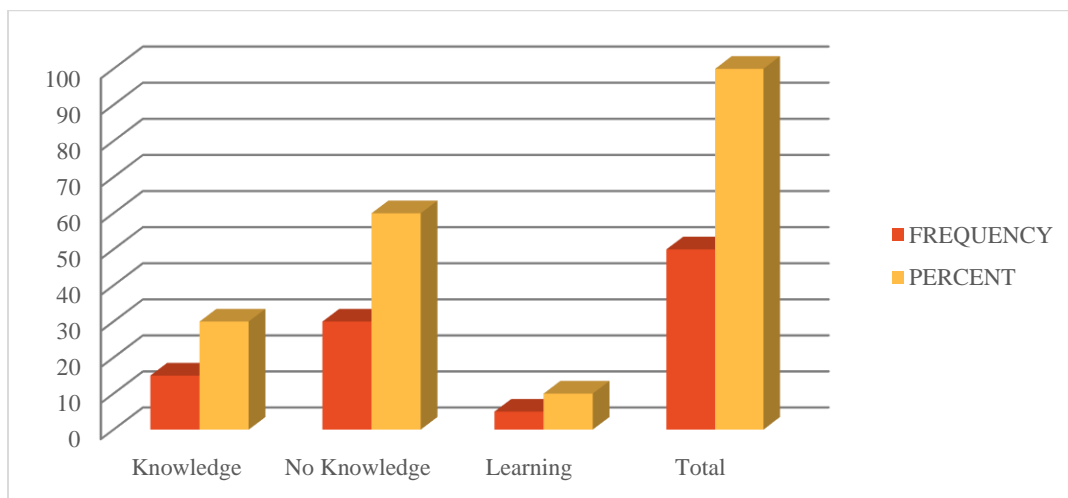


Figure 1: Understanding and Trust in the APAS System³

Figure 1 illustrates the knowledge that evaluating officers possess regarding the use of the APAS software. The findings indicate that most respondents believe supervisors lack sufficient knowledge of how to effectively use the APAS, with some suggesting that supervisors are still in the process of learning to operate the system. This suggests that despite the complexity of the software, there is a noticeable lack of competence in its management. The APAS program is

² Source: Field study, 2025

³ Source: Field data 2025

largely unfamiliar to most staff members within the institution, leading to dissatisfaction and a lack of trust in the appraisal system. Promotion decisions based on APAS outcomes are often perceived as biased, particularly when employees suspect favouritism, either due to personal relationships with supervisors or familial ties. This perception undermines the credibility of the APAS as a fair and transparent evaluation tool. Additionally, Table 2 highlights that the targets set within the APAS program are often unrealistic, uncommunicated, and unfeasible, according to respondents. Supervisors can easily manipulate these targets to influence failure rates, further eroding the fairness of the system. The findings underscore a significant gap in employees' understanding of the APAS, which contributes to perceptions of bias, particularly regarding promotion decisions based on the system's outcomes. The lack of transparency and clarity regarding how the APAS functions further diminishes its credibility, as employees question the fairness and objectivity of the evaluations. As Mukubani (2008) asserts, a well-understood and transparent appraisal system is essential to fostering trust, fairness, and objectivity in performance assessments. Given these issues, there is a clear need for a comprehensive review and improvement of the APAS program to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with organizational goals.

Table 2: Realistic targets⁴

Code	Frequency	Percentage
No	64	80
Yes	11	14
Maybe	5	6
Total	80	100

Goal Setting and Supervisor Competence: The findings reveal significant issues with the APAS in terms of unrealistic target setting and inadequate supervisor knowledge. Targets within the APAS are often unrealistic, undefined in advance, and manipulated by supervisors to influence failure rates, diminishing the appraisal process's integrity and fairness. Clear, achievable, and pre-defined goals are essential for ensuring fairness, and transparency, and fostering a performance-driven culture (Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992). Additionally, the lack of supervisor knowledge regarding the APAS system further exacerbates these issues. Many supervisors are inadequately trained, compromising the accuracy and consistency of performance assessments, which ultimately undermines the fairness of the evaluation process (Pritchard, 2006).

System Limitations and Manipulation: Another critical issue is the system's limitations regarding feedback frequency and the potential for manipulation. The annual review cycle of the APAS limits the opportunity for regular, real-time feedback, impeding continuous employee development and performance improvement (Grote, 2002). The lack of self-regulation in the system also introduces opportunities for manipulation by supervisors, leading to biased evaluations and compromised objectivity (Soltani, 2005). Furthermore, over 60% of respondents indicated that the APAS had minimal influence on program management and organizational performance, suggesting that the system fails to motivate employees or enhance management practices, undermining its effectiveness in driving organizational success (Randell, 1994).

⁴ Source: Field data 2025

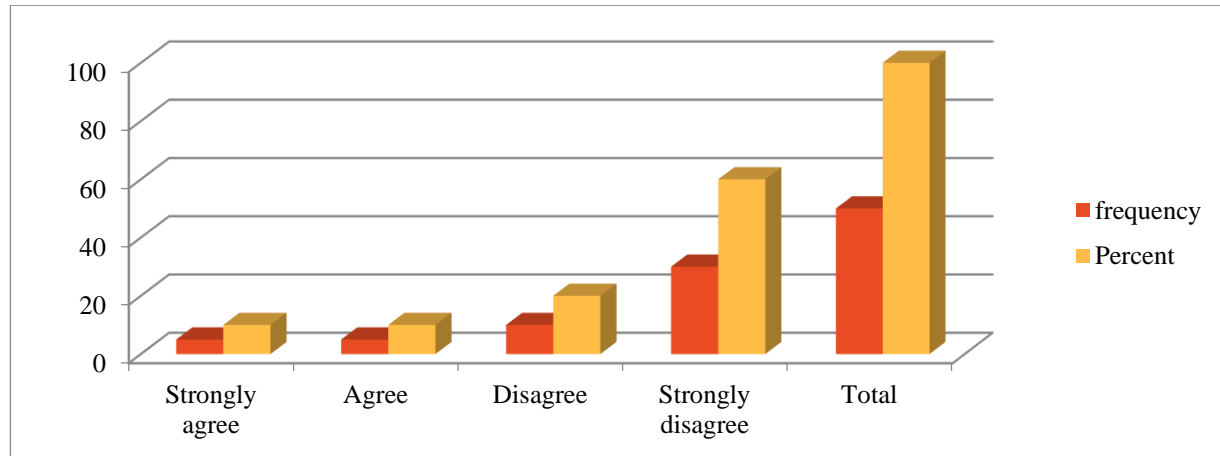


Figure 2: Frequency & Percentage⁵

Conclusions:

Based on the findings derived from thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, the following key conclusions can be drawn:

- i. **Misalignment of Objectives:** The study revealed a significant disconnect between the objectives set by supervisors and those perceived by employees. This misalignment created confusion around the purpose and expectations of the APAS, which in turn led to misperceptions regarding its fairness and effectiveness.
- ii. **Lack of Supervisor Knowledge:** The findings indicated that supervisors were inadequately trained in the effective utilization of the APAS. This lack of proficiency in using the system properly contributed to inaccurate performance assessments, employee dissatisfaction, and diminished confidence in the appraisal process.
- iii. **Insufficient Timely Feedback:** The APAS at ProgressiveEdge Training Services primarily relied on annual assessments, which resulted in a lack of timely feedback from both employees and supervisors. This limitation hindered the system's potential to provide real-time, actionable insights for ongoing performance improvement.

Implications of Findings:

The implications of these findings suggest significant challenges for ProgressiveEdge Training Services:

- i. **Risk of Employee Demotivation and Turnover:** The misalignment of expectations, combined with inadequate supervisor knowledge and insufficient feedback, increases the risk of employee demotivation. If the APAS remains unchanged, there is a heightened likelihood of increased turnover due to dissatisfaction with the appraisal process.

⁵ Source: Field data 2025

- ii. **Inadequate Employee Involvement:** The current shortcomings of the APAS may lead to diminished employee engagement in the performance appraisal process. Without clear communication, realistic targets, and regular feedback, employees may feel disconnected from the process, resulting in reduced involvement, which ultimately undermines the system's ability to drive both individual and organizational growth.

Recommendations:

In light of the conclusions and their implications, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the APAS at ProgressiveEdge Training Services:

- i. **Training for Supervisors:** It is recommended that the company invest in comprehensive training programs for supervisors. This will ensure they are adequately equipped to effectively implement the APAS, conduct fair and accurate assessments, and communicate performance expectations. Supervisor's competency in using the system is crucial for enhancing the reliability of performance evaluations.
- ii. **Incorporate Regular Feedback Mechanisms:** The APAS should be revised to incorporate more frequent performance evaluations, such as daily, weekly, or monthly assessments, rather than relying solely on annual reviews. Continuous feedback allows for real-time performance adjustments and promotes a more dynamic approach to employee development, increasing motivation and engagement.
- iii. **Establish Realistic KPIs and Objectives:** The APAS should include well-defined, realistic, and achievable KPIs and objectives for both employees and supervisors. These goals should be set at the start of the performance period, ensuring that they align with the organization's broader strategic objectives. This alignment will help foster greater employee engagement with the process and clarify expectations.
- iv. **Enhance Transparency and Objectivity:** To address concerns regarding potential biases and manipulation within the performance evaluation process, it is recommended that the APAS be enhanced with mechanisms for self-regulation and standardized scoring processes. Implementing such measures will ensure that performance assessments are more transparent, objective, and free from biases, thus improving the credibility and fairness of the system.

By implementing these recommendations, ProgressiveEdge Training Services can enhance the effectiveness of its APAS, increase employee satisfaction, and create a more supportive, motivating work environment that fosters both individual and organizational success. These improvements are critical to ensure that the APAS serves its intended purpose of driving continuous improvement, aligning individual performance with organizational goals, and strengthening the overall culture of the organization.

References

- Acker, J. (2006). Inequality regimes: Gender, class, and race in organizations. *Gender & Society*, 20(4), 441-464. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243206289499>

- Adams, J. S. (1963). Toward an understanding of inequity. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67(5), 422-436. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0040968>
- Aguinis, H., & Burgi-Tian, J. (2023). Performance management around the world: Solving the standardization vs adaptation dilemma. *IIM Ranchi Journal of Management Studies*, 2(2), 159-170. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IRJMS-09-2022-0091>
- Armstrong, M. (2006). *Performance management: Key strategies and practical guidelines* (3rd ed.). London: Kogan Page.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall. 159-170. <https://archive.org/details/socialfoundation0000band>
- Brown, P. (2001). Marital status and job performance. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 19(2), 208-235. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20062094>
- Chahar, B. (2020). Performance Appraisal Systems and Their Impact on Employee Performance: The Moderating Role of Employee Motivation. *Information Resources Management Journal*, 33(4), 17-32. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IRMJ.2020100102>
- DeNisi, A., & Pritchard, R. (2006). Performance appraisal, performance management, and improving individual performance: A motivational framework. *Management and Organization Review*, 2(2), 253-277. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1740-8784.2006.00042.x>
- Grote, D. (2002). *The performance appraisal reformation: How to make performance appraisals work for you*. Harvard Business Press.
- Javidmehr, M., & Ebrahimpour, M. (2015). Performance appraisal bias and errors: The influences and consequences. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 4, 286-302. <https://doi.org/10.33844/ijol.2015.60464>
- Jeong, Y. H., Healy, L. C., & McEwan, D. (2021). The application of Goal Setting Theory to goal setting interventions in sport: A systematic review. *International Review of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 16(1), 474-499. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1750984X.2021.1901298>
- Judge, T. A., Thoresen, C. J., Bono, J. E., & Patton, G. K. (2001). The job satisfaction-job performance relationship: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 127(3), 376-407. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.127.3.376>
- Mukubani, T. (2008). Trust and transparency in performance appraisal systems. *Journal of Management and Governance*, 12(1), 67-79.
- Pritchard, R. D. (2006). Improving performance appraisals: Training and calibration. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(2), 344-354.
- Randell, D. (1994). Assessing the impact of performance appraisal on organizational success. *Journal of Management*, 30(4), 881-900.

- Smither, J. W., London, M., Flautt, R., Vargas, Y., & Kucine, I. (2003). Can working with an executive coach improve multi-source feedback ratings over time? A quasi-experimental field study. *Personnel Psychology*, 56(1), 23-44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2003.tb00142.x>
- Soltani, E. (2005). Conflict between theory and practice: TQM and performance appraisal. *The International Journal of Quality and Reliability Management*, 22, 796-818. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02656710510617238>
- Vroom, V. H. (1964). *Work and motivation*. John Wiley & Sons.