

Full length research paper

Goal setting and performance appraisal in public sector of Nigeria: An empirical investigation

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Accepted 5 June 2011

The advent of goal setting dates back to mid-1960s when Edwin. A. Locke started to examine the concept. The concept of goal setting emanated from Aristotle's form of causality. He speculated that purpose can cause action: thus Locke began researching the impact of goals on individual performance. For goals to increase performance, one must define them as difficult to achieve and as specific. The concept of goals in public service particularly in the core ministries and parastatals in Nigeria does almost not exist due to the fact that they are not set at inception of any period and performance appraisals are conducted. Therefore, this research seek to ascertain whether or not goals are set in the public sector of Nigeria and investigate the indices with which appraisal is based with a study of One thousand public servants who are working in human resources department of government ministries and parastatals. Data was collected with a well structured questionnaire and analyzed with descriptive statistics while hypotheses formulated were tested with t-test. The result shows that goals are hardly set in public service in Nigeria and the study recommends that appreciable and attainable goals should be set for organizations and individual so that such can form the basis for assessment.

Key words: Goal, Goal Setting, Performance, Appraisal, Public Service.

INTRODUCTION

A goal is what an individual is trying to accomplish; it is the object or aim of an action. The concept is similar in meaning to the concepts of purpose and intent (Locke, 1969). Other frequently used concepts that are also similar in meaning to that of goal include performance standard (a measuring rod for evaluating performance), quota (a minimum amount of work or production), work norm (a standard of acceptable behavior defined by a work group), task (a piece of work to be accomplished), objective (the ultimate aim of an action or series of actions), deadline (a time limit for completing a task), and budget (a spending goal or limit). Goals that are difficult to achieve and specific tend to increase performance more than goals that are not.^[1]

A goal can become more specific through quantification or enumeration (should be measurable), such as

demanding "increase in productivity by 50%"; or by defining certain tasks that need completing. Setting goals affects outcomes in four ways:

- **Choice:** goals narrow attention and direct efforts to goal-relevant activities, and away from perceived undesirable and goal-irrelevant actions.
- **Effort:** goals can lead to more effort; for example, if one typically produces 4 widgets an hour, and has the goal of producing 6, one may work more intensely than one would otherwise in order to reach the goal.
- **Persistence:** An individual becomes more prone to work through setbacks if pursuing a goal.
- **Cognition:** goals can lead an individual to develop cognitive strategies to change their behavior.

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Earlier attempts by behaviorists to reduce concepts like goal and purpose to physical events have been strongly criticized (e.g., see Locke, 1969, 1972). Goal setting might be called "stimulus control" by a modern behaviorist, but the key question then becomes. What is the stimulus? If it is only an assigned goal (an environmental event), then the importance of goal acceptance is ignored; an assigned goal that is rejected can hardly regulate performance. If goal acceptance is considered relevant, then the regulating stimulus must be a mental event ultimately the individual's goal. The environment, of course, can influence goal setting as well as goal acceptance, an issue that is dealt with in some of the recent research. The basic assumption of goal-setting research is that goals are immediate regulators of human action. However, no one-to-one correspondence between goals and action is assumed because people may make errors, lack the ability to attain their objectives (Locke, 1968), or have subconscious conflicts or premises that subvert their conscious goals. The precise degree of association between goals and action is an empirical question that is dealt with in the research we review here. We also examine the mechanisms by which goals affect action, the effects of feedback, participation, and money on goal-setting effectiveness, the role of individual differences, and the determinants of goal commitment.

Public service

Public services is a term usually used to mean services provided by government to its citizens, either directly (through the public sector) or by financing private provision of services. The term is associated with a social consensus (usually expressed through democratic elections) that certain services should be available to all, regardless of income. Even where public services are neither publicly provided nor publicly financed, for social and political reasons they are usually subject to regulation going beyond that applying to most economic sectors. Public services is also a course that can be studied at college and/or university. These courses can lead entry in to the: police, ambulance and fire services. It is also an alternative term for civil service.

A public service may sometimes have the characteristics of a public good (being non-rivalrous and non-excludable, but most are merit goods, that is, services which may (according to prevailing social norms) be under-provided by the market. In most cases public services are services, i.e. they do not involve manufacturing of goods such as nuts and bolts. They may be provided by local or national monopolies, especially in sectors which are natural monopolies.

They may involve outputs that are hard to attribute to specific individual effort and/or hard to measure in terms

of key characteristics such as quality. They often require high levels of training and education. They may attract people with a public service ethos who wish to give something to the wider public or community through their work and are prepared to work harder for less pay as a result. (John Kenneth Galbraith has looked at the role of such "public virtue" in economic growth.)

Study objectives

The study is aimed at looking into the relationship between goal setting and performance appraisal and conduct a comparative analysis of the concepts in both public and private sector. Specifically, the study will:

1. Ascertain the relationship between goals setting and performance appraisal, if there is any.
2. Determine whether goals are set in public service of Nigeria.

Hypothesis

H₁ Goals are set in public service.

H₂ Performance appraisal is done based on goals set.

MEHODOLOGY

The Study Area

The study area, Abeokuta (latitude 7.170250N; Longitude 3.336960E) is an urban town located 88 kilometers from Lagos and serves as the state capital of Ogun State. The town is traversed by Ogun River, which is the major river, as well as other smaller streams. The area has an estimated population of 536,739 (1996 projected figure by the National Population Commission). Many of the inhabitants are civil servants, traders, farmers and commercial artisans. The advent civil rule and democracy brought about an increase in commercial activities of the town sequel to the arrival and establishment of many corporate organizations in the town.

Analysis Of Responses Given By Civil Servants Who Served As Respondents

Section A:

The Table 1. shows that 720(60%) of the respondents are male while 480(40%) of them are female.

Table 2. reveals the age brackets of the respondents. 240(20%) of the respondents falls within the age range of 20-30 years, 360 (30%) of them are within age bracket 31-40, while the rest 600(50%) are within the age range of 41-50.

Table 1: Sex

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Male	720	60	60	60
	Female	480	40	40	100
	Total	1200	100.0	100.0	160

Source: Field survey, 2009.

Table 2: Age Bracket

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	20-30	240	20	20	20
	31-40	360	30	30	50
	41-50	600	50	50	100
	Total	1200	100	100	170

Source: Field survey, 2009

Table 3: Marital status

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Married	840	70	70	70
	Single	240	20	20	90
	Divorced	120	10	10	100
	Total	1200	100	100	260

Source: field survey, 2009.

Table 4: Educational Qualification

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Sch. Cert	300	25	25	25
	Diploma	300	25	25	50
	HND	120	10	10	60
	BSc.	360	30	30	90
	MSc/MBA	120	10	10	100
	Total	1200	100	100	320

Source: Field survey, 2009.

Table 3. indicates that 840(70%) of the respondents are married, 240(20%) are single while 120 are divorced? Table 4. shows that 300(25%) of the respondents are school certificate holders, 200(25%) are diploma holders, 120(10%) have higher National Diploma, 360(30%) have first degree, while 120(10%) have post Graduate qualification.

Table 5. 200(10%) of the respondents have between 1-5 years experience, another 120(10%) have between 6-10years experience, 300(25) have 11-15 years

experience, while 660(55%) have at least 16years experience.

Section B:

The Table 6. revealed that 140(11.7%) of the respondent do not believe goal setting is important, 120(10%) believe it is to a slight extent, 100(6.4%) to a moderate extent, 140(11.4%) to a small extent, 360(30%)

Table 5: Work Experience

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	1-5yrs	120	10	10	10
	6-10yrs	120	10	10	20
	11-15yrs	300	25	25	45
	16 & above	660	55	55	100
	Total	1200	100	100	175

Source: Field survey, 2009.

Table 6: Goal setting is important

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Not at all	140	11.7	12	12
	To a slight extent	120	10	10	22
	To a moderate extent	100	6.4	7	29
	To a small extent	440	11.4	12	41
	To a great extent	360	30	30	71
	To an extreme extent	340	28.2	29	100
	Total	1200	100	100	273

Source: Field survey, 2009.

Table 7: Goal setting is compulsory in public service

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Not at all	460	38.5	38.5	38.5
	To a slight extent	100	8.0	8	46.5
	To a moderate extent	140	13.0	13	49.5
	To a small extent	50	4.2	4.5	64
	To a great extent	650	4.2	4.5	68.5
	To an extreme extent	400	31.5	31.5	100
	Total	1200	100	100	367

Source: Field survey, 2009.

to a great extent while 340(28.2) believe it is important to an extreme extent.

From Table 7. 460(38.5%) of respondents opined that goal setting is not compulsory, 100(18%) said it is to a slight extent, 140(13%) to a considerable extent, 50(4.2%) to a small extent, 50(4.2%) to a great extent, while 400 (31.5%) said it is to an extreme extent.

It is evident from Table 8. that 80(6.5%) of the respondents do not believe goal setting facilitates the attainment of organizational objectives; 380(26.5%) believe it is to a very slight extent, 30(3%) to a small extent, 60(6%) to a considerable extent, 320(26.5%) to a great extent, while 380(31.5%) believed to an extreme extent.

Table 9. revealed that 60(5%) of the respondent don't believe that goal setting is essential for organizational effectiveness, 160(13.5%) believes it is to a very slight

extent, 150(12.5%) to a small extent, 110(9%) to a considerable extent, 220(18.5%) to a great extent while 830(41.5%) to an extreme extent.

As reflected in the Table 10, 40(3.5%) of the respondents don't believe goals propel workers to perform, 120(10%) believe it does to a slight extent, 40(3%) to a moderate extent, 40(3%) to a small extent, 360(30.5%) to a great extent, while 600(50%) said it does to an extreme extent.

From the Table 11, 40(3.5%) of the respondents believes goals setting is not common in parastatals than in core ministry, 20 (1.5%) believes is common in parastatals than in core ministry to a slight extent, 150(12.5%) to a small extent, 90(7.6%) to a moderate extent, 130(11%) to a considerable extent, 320(27%) to a great extent while 450(37%) to an extreme extent. Table 12. shows that 40(3.5%) do not believe performance is

Table 8: It facilitates the attainment of organizational objectives.

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Not at all	80	6.5	6.5	6.5
	To a slight extent	380	26.5	26.5	33
	To a moderate extent	30	3	3	36
	To a small extent	60	6	6	42
	To a great extent	320	26.5	26.5	68.5
	To an extreme extent	380	31.5	31.5	100
	Total	1200	100	100	286

Source: Field survey, 2009.

Table 9: Goal setting is essential for organizational effectiveness

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Not at all	60	5	5	5
	To a slight extent	160	13.5	13.5	18.5
	To a moderate extent	150	12.5	12.5	31
	To a small extent	110	9	9	40
	To a great extent	220	18.5	18.5	58.5
	To an extreme extent	830	41.5	41.5	100
	Total	1200	100	100	253

Source: Field survey, 2009.

Table 10: It propels workers to perform

		Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid	Not at all	40	3.5	3.5	1
	To a slight extent	120	10	10	6
	To a moderate extent	40	3	3	11
	To a small extent	40	3	3	13
	To a great extent	360	30.5	30.5	51
	To an extreme extent	600	50	50	100
	Total	1200	100	100	181

Source: Field survey, 2009.

a function of goals set, 100(8.5%) believe it is to a small extent, 40(3.5%) to a moderate extent, 50(4%) to a considerate extent, 350(27%) to a great extent while 520(54%) believes it is an extreme extent.

The Table 13, 190(15%) of the respondent believes performance appraisal is not objective in public service, 40(3.5%) opined it is to a very slight extent, 100(8%) to a small extent, 30(2%) to a moderate extent, 30(7%) to a considerate extent, 420(32%) to a considerate extent, while 390(31%) said to an extreme extent.

Demographic characteristics of respondents

720(60%) of the respondents are male while 480(40%)

of them are female. 240(20%) of the respondents falls within the age range of 20-30 years, 360 (30%) of them are within age bracket 31-40, while the rest 600(50%) are within the age range of 41-50. The table indicates that 840(70%) of the respondents are married, 240(20%) are single while 120 are divorce. 300(25%) of the respondents are school certificate holders, 200(25%) are diploma holders, 120(10%) have higher National Diploma, 360(30%) have first degree, while 120(10%) have post Graduate qualification. 200(10%) of the respondents have between 1-5 years experience, another 120(10%) have between 6-10 years experience, 300(25) have 11-15 years experience, while 660(55%) have at least 16 years experience. 140(11.7%) of the respondent do not believe goal setting is important, 120(10%) believe it is to a slight

Table 11: Goal setting is common in parastatals than in core ministry

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid Not at all	40	3.5	3.5	3.5
To a slight extent	20	1.5	1.5	5
To a small extent	150	12.5	12.5	17.5
To a moderate extent	90	7.6	7.6	25
To a considerable extent	130	11	11	36
To a great extent	320	27	27	63
To an extreme extent	450	37	37	100
Total	1200	100	100	250

Source: Field survey, 2009.

Table 12: Performance is a function of goals set

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid Not at all	40	3.5	3.5	3.5
To a small extent	100	8.5	8.5	12
To a moderate extent	40	3.5	3.5	15.5
To a considerable extent	50	4	4	18.5
To a great extent	350	27	27	45
To an extreme extent	520	54	55	100
Total	1200	100.5	101.5	194.5

Source: Field survey

Table 13: Performance Appraisal is objective in public service.

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid Not at all	190	15	15	15.5
To a slight extent	40	3.5	3.5	19
To a small extent	100	8	8	27
To a moderate extent	30	2	2	29
To a considerable extent	30	7	7	36
To a great extent	420	32	32	60
To an extreme extent	390	31	31	100
Total	1200	100	100	286.5

Source: Field survey, 2009.

extent, 100(6.4%) to a moderate extent, 140(11.4%) to a small extent, 360(30%) to a great extent while 340(28.2%) believe it is important to an extreme extent.

Analysis of responses given by civil servants who served as respondents

460(38.5%) of respondents opined that goal setting is not compulsory, 100(18%) said it is to a slight extent, 140(13%) to a considerable extent, 50(4.2%) to a small extent, 50(4.2%) to a great extent, while 400 (31.5%) said

it is to an extreme extent.80(6.5%) of the respondents do not believe goal setting facilitates the attainment of organizational objectives; 380(26.5%) believe it is to a very slight extent, 30(3%) to a small extent, 60(6%) to a considerable extent, 320(26.5%) to a great extent, while 380(31.5%) believed to an extreme extent. 60(5%) of the respondent don't believe that goal setting is essential for organizational effectiveness, 160(13.5%) believes it is to a very slight extent, 150(12.5%) to a small extent, 110(9%) to a considerable extent, 220(18.5%) to a great extent while 830(41.5%) to an extreme extent.40(3.5%) of the respondents don't believe goals propel workers to

Table 14: Goals are set in public service

	Mean	Std	Correlation	P.val
Goal setting	3.05	1.150		
Goals set are set	4.61	1.595	0.44	0.00

Source: Field survey, 2009.

Table 15: Performance appraisals are done based on goals set.

	Mean	Std	Correlation	P.val
Goal setting	3.05	1.150		
Goals are set in public sector	4.78	2.147	0.059	0.00

Source: Field survey, 2009.

Table 16: Goal setting is compulsory in public sector.

	Mean	Std	Correlation	P.val
Goal setting	3.05	1.150		
Goals setting is compulsory	6.24	0.936	0.047	0.000

Source: Field survey, 2009.

perform, 120(10%) believe it does to a slight extent, 40(3%) to a moderate extent, 40(3%) to a small extent, 360(30.5%) to a great extent, while 600(50%) said it does to an extreme extent. 40(3.5%) of the respondents believes goals setting is not common in parastatals than in core ministry, 20 (1.5%) believes is common in parastatals than in core ministry to a slight extent, 150(12.5%) to a small extent, 90(7.6%) to a moderate extent, 130(11%) to a considerable extent, 320(27%) to a great extent while 450(37%) to an extreme extent. 40(3.5%) do not believe performance is a function of goals set, 100(8.5%) believe it is to a small extent, 40(3.5%) to a moderate extent, 50(4%) to a considerate extent, 350(27%) to a great extent while 520(54%) believes it is an extreme extent. 190(15%) of the respondent believes performance appraisal is not objective in public service, 40(3.5%) opined it is to a very slight extent, 100(8%) to a small extent, 30(2%) to a moderate extent, 30(7%) to a considerate extent, 420(32%) to a considerate extent, while 390(31%) said to an extreme extent.

Test of hypothesis

The Table 14 shows that the mean and standard deviation of goals are set in public service in the table. While the correlation is 0.44, the probability value is less than 0.05.

The Table 15. shows the relationship mean and standard deviation of relationship between goal setting and goal are set in public sector. While the correlation is

0.059 and the probability value is 0.00. This indicates that appraisal is not done based on goals.

From the Table 16, the correlation of the relationship between goal setting and goal setting is compulsory is 0.047, the standard deviation is 0.936 and the probability value is 0.00. It implies that goal setting is not compulsory in public service.

Summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations

This study examines the concept of goal setting and performances appraisal in the public sector. The research reports the civil servants' perception of the concept and how each of the concepts have been applied in the public services. It shows that goal setting is a good tool for the attainment of any organizational objective irrespective of the volume. The studies also reveal that performance appraisal is done in the public service despite the fact that it is subjective and therefore dreaded. The study has empirically investigated the civil servants' perception of goal setting and performance appraisal. It shows that the two concepts are Siamese twins that would give direction to any organization (Private or Public), if it they taken as they should i.e. goals set at the beginning of a particular period and performance appraisal conducted in consonance with the goals set at inception. It is therefore concluded that most government parastatals do not set goals and therefore do not conduct objective appraisal. Sequel to the findings of this research, it is recommended that:

- Goals should be set by government for all the arms of government including the core ministers and parastatals while private sector operators should set attainable goals.
- Adequate provisions should be made for the attainment of the goals set.
- Mechanism should be put in place to monitor the attainment of the goals set.
- An objective performance appraisal should be conducted at the expiration of the time.

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