International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies
Online ISSN: 3116-4137 | Print ISSN: 3116-4145
Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 325-331, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

Performance Assessment Tools and Employee Motivation in a South African Public Legislature

Damien Kennedy Naidu

Author Information:
Management College of South Africa (MANCOSA), Durban, South Africa

Correspondence:
damienknaidu@gmail.com

Article History:

Date Received: September 16, 2026
Date Revised: October 29, 2026
Date Accepted: November 5, 2026
Date Published: November 12, 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.67903/ijroms0498

Document ID: *2026IJROMS0498*

Recommended Citation:
Naidu, D. K. (2026). Performance Assessment Tools and Employee Motivation in a South African Public Legislature. International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies, 1(10), 325-331. https://doi.org/10.67903/ijroms0498

Abstract. A prominent question in performance appraisal research is whether employee motivation is related to appraisal as an integrated HRM practice. Particularly in public legislative institutions, employees' experiences with appraisals through specialized assessment procedures have received less attention. Therefore, this study investigates how employees see the performance evaluation instruments integrated within the Limpopo Provincial Legislature's performance management system in South Africa. Out of 190 employees, 130 participated in a quantitative, cross-sectional survey. A structured questionnaire with eighteen Likert-scale statements was used to gather data. The analysis concentrated on mechanisms related to assessment, such as performance-linked incentives, procedural fairness, developmental support, recognition, and the use of assessment results for training and development. The results show a significant difference: while performance-linked incentives were highly supported as motivating, a significant percentage of workers expressed concerns about fairness and transparency, anxiety about assessments, dissatisfaction with recognition, a lack of developmental support, and weak connections between assessment results and training. By demonstrating that the motivational value of assessment depends not only on the existence of a formal system but also on the configuration and implementation of its constituent processes, the study adds a tool-level perspective to public-sector performance management.

Keywords: Employee Motivation; Performance Assessment; Performance Management; Public Sector; South Africa

Introduction

Employee motivation is a continuing concern for public-sector organizations seeking to sustain performance, accountability and service quality. Public institutions operate within formal rules and reporting structures, while managers must also support employees' competence, engagement and development. Performance assessment is one mechanism through which these demands are brought together: it can clarify expectations, evaluate contributions, provide feedback, identify development needs and inform recognition or rewards. However, the existence of a formal system does not in itself show that employees experience it as fair, useful or motivating.

Performance appraisal is therefore better understood as a set of connected practices than as a single administrative event. These practices may include setting performance expectations, evaluating results, communicating decisions, recognizing contributions, allocating performance-linked incentives, and using assessment information to plan training or development. Each practice can convey a different signal to employees. A reward may indicate that effort is valued, while unclear criteria or weak developmental follow-through may undermine confidence in the same system.

Recent South African research supports the importance of implementation and employee experience. Mohapi and Louw (2024) reported a perceived gap between the intended goals of a government performance-management system and its implementation, including concerns about fairness and managerial objectivity. Nkoana and Matjie (2024) examined employees' psychological experiences of a pay-for-performance system in a South African bank, illustrating that reward systems should be considered alongside the way employees experience their operation. Morifi and Matjie (2025) identified concerns around rating consistency, feedback and reward mechanisms in a public-sector department. Oschman and Matjie (2025) likewise explored employee experiences of performance appraisals in the South African Air Force. These studies indicate that implementation, fairness, feedback and recognition remain important questions in the South African context.

The present article builds on the authors' earlier publication, which examined the overall relationship between performance appraisal perceptions and employee motivation in the Limpopo Provincial Legislature

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies
Online ISSN: 3116-4137 | Print ISSN: 3116-4145
Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 325-331, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

(Naidu & Mpanza, 2026). The earlier article treated assessment at an aggregate level. The current paper asks a different question: which particular assessment tools and implementation features do employees view positively, and where do they report weaknesses? It does not present a new or independent sample. It makes transparent that it draws on the same broader research project and dataset, while using a different analytical focus.

Research Questions

These questions reflect the article's focus on employees' reported experiences of specific assessment tools and implementation features. The article contributes a tool-level descriptive analysis of employee responses, distinguishes reward, legitimacy and development functions, and extends the discussion beyond an aggregate assessment of the relationship between appraisal perceptions and motivation.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do employees perceive the motivational value of performance-linked incentives within the Limpopo Provincial Legislature?
2. How do employees perceive the fairness, communication and transparency of the performance-assessment process?
3. To what extent do employees perceive performance assessment as supporting professional development, training and recognition?

Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The study is confined to employees of the Limpopo Provincial Legislature, located in Lebowakgomo, South Africa. The organization had a reported workforce of 190 employees across 16 organizational units. The analysis draws on 130 completed questionnaires collected through a quantitative, cross-sectional survey. It focuses on employees' perceptions of selected performance-assessment mechanisms, particularly performance-linked incentives, procedural fairness, communication and transparency, professional development, training follow-through and recognition. Responses are summarized using frequencies and percentages. Accordingly, the findings describe the views reported by the survey respondents at the time of data collection and are not intended to establish causal relationships or changes over time. The study is delimited to one provincial legislature and does not include employees from other provincial or national legislatures, other public-sector departments, or external stakeholders. It is also limited to the quantitative survey responses and the specific questionnaire items relevant to the present article. Although the data originate from the broader research project reported in Naidu and Mpanza (2026), this article examines selected item-level response patterns and the distinct reward, legitimacy and development functions of assessment. It does not repeat the earlier article's aggregate analysis, test a causal model, or claim that the reported patterns represent all public-sector employees in South Africa.

Literature Review

Performance assessment as a set of human resource management mechanisms

Performance assessment is commonly embedded within broader performance-management systems that connect organisational objectives with individual responsibilities. In public institutions, formal processes can support accountability by specifying performance areas and documenting results. Yet assessment also has potential developmental and relational functions: it can help employees understand expectations, receive feedback, identify capability gaps and agree on steps for improvement. A narrow compliance approach risks reducing these functions to completion of forms and procedural milestones.

Recent South African findings show that the design of a system and employees' experience of implementation may differ. Mohapi and Louw (2024) found that employees perceived a disjuncture between the intended aims of a government performance-management system and how it was applied. Morifi and Matjie (2025) reported that employees' experiences included concerns about rating consistency, feedback and rewards, even though some participants viewed the system positively. These findings support the need to investigate the specific processes employees encounter rather than relying only on a general judgement of the performance-management system.

Assessment tools and employee motivation

Performance-assessment mechanisms can be grouped analytically into reward, legitimacy and development functions. Reward mechanisms connect assessed performance with incentives or other benefits. Legitimacy mechanisms concern whether the process is perceived as fair, consistent, understandable and transparent. Development mechanisms include feedback, coaching, recognition, training and individual development planning. These functions may reinforce one another, but they are not interchangeable.

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies
Online ISSN: 3116-4137 | Print ISSN: 3116-4145
Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 325-331, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

Performance-linked incentives can provide an extrinsic reason to direct effort towards stated objectives. However, the existence of a reward does not guarantee that employees trust the process used to determine eligibility or understand how ratings are reached. Research on public-sector performance-management systems in South Africa has highlighted relationships among performance management, employment relationships and work engagement (Maake et al., 2023; Maake et al., 2024). Nkoana and Matjie (2024) also demonstrate the relevance of employee psychological experiences when considering a pay-for-performance system. In practical terms, the motivational value of incentives should therefore be examined alongside employees' perceptions of fairness, communication and the broader appraisal experience.

Procedural fairness, transparency and communication

Procedural fairness concerns employees' perceptions of whether assessment criteria and decisions are applied consistently and justifiably. Transparency requires that employees understand expectations, evidence requirements, rating procedures and the implications of outcomes. When these elements are unclear, even a formally established system may be experienced as arbitrary. Mohapi and Louw (2024) identify concerns about objectivity and fair implementation in a South African government department. Similarly, research on employee experiences of appraisal in South African public and organisational settings points to fairness and implementation as important features of system acceptance (Morifi & Matjie, 2025; Oschman & Matjie, 2025).

Communication is not simply an administrative supplement to assessment. It shapes whether employees understand why a decision was reached and what should happen next. A process that provides ratings without explaining the standards, evidence or follow-up actions may weaken confidence. For this reason, the present study treats communication and transparency as an assessment mechanism relevant to employees' overall experience.

Development, recognition and follow-through

Assessment can support longer-term capability when findings lead to appropriate training, coaching or development plans. The process should therefore connect the identification of performance gaps with practical responses. If assessment identifies a need but the organisation does not provide support, employees may perceive the process as retrospective monitoring rather than development. Recognition is related but distinct: it communicates that contributions are noticed and valued. Recognition need not replace financial incentives; it may complement them by reinforcing employees' sense that their work matters.

Recent research on South African performance-management systems has highlighted feedback, development and implementation as areas requiring attention. Morifi and Matjie (2025) reported employee concerns about limited feedback and inadequate reward mechanisms, while Oschman and Matjie (2025) examined employee experiences of appraisal within a public-sector defence setting. These studies provide context for examining whether employees in the Limpopo Provincial Legislature see assessment as connected to recognition and development, rather than assuming that formal evaluation automatically produces either.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to describe employees' perceptions of performance-assessment tools at one point in time. This design was suitable for summarising response patterns across the selected items, but it cannot establish temporal order or causation.

Research Locale

The study was conducted at the Limpopo Provincial Legislature in Lebowakgomo, South Africa. At the time of the study, the Legislature employed 190 people across 16 organisational units.

Research Population

The target population comprised all 190 employees of the Legislature. The manuscript records that simple random probability sampling was used. A minimum sample of 127 was identified using the Krejcie and Morgan sample-size approach, and 130 completed questionnaires were included in the analysis.

Research Participants

The final analytical sample consisted of 130 respondents. The reported profile included employees across age and service-duration categories. Gender and departmental information were not disclosed by a proportion of respondents; non-disclosure is retained as a reported category rather than treated as missing at random.

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies
Online ISSN: 3116-4137 | Print ISSN: 3116-4145
Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 325-331, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a self-administered structured questionnaire comprising demographic questions and 18 Likert-scale statements about employee motivation and performance-assessment perceptions. For this article, analysis was limited to items concerning performance-linked incentives, assessment-related stress or anxiety, procedural fairness, professional-development support, recognition and appreciation, the use of assessment outcomes to inform training and development, and communication and transparency. The instrument was piloted with 12 respondents approximately one month before the main survey, and minor wording or clarity improvements were made. The reported Cronbach's alpha for the full 18-item scale was .959. Face and content validity were considered during instrument development.

Data Gathering Procedure

Questionnaires were distributed through Google Forms, email, WhatsApp and in-person distribution. The source manuscript states that the original study obtained the required research approval and followed data-handling protocols.

Results and Discussions

Respondent profile

The study included 130 completed questionnaires. The largest age group was 36–45 years (42.3%, n = 55), followed by 46–55 years (23.8%, n = 31). In terms of organisational tenure, 33.8% (n = 44) reported five to eight years of service and 29.2% (n = 38) reported more than nine years. The largest group by time in the current position had held that position for one to four years (41.5%, n = 54).

Female respondents accounted for 34.6% (n = 45), male respondents for 33.1% (n = 43), and 32.3% (n = 42) did not disclose gender. Departmental non-disclosure was 23.8% (n = 31). These figures describe the respondents who completed the questionnaire; they should not be interpreted as evidence that the sample is representative of every employee subgroup.

Table 1. Respondent characteristics

Characteristic	Category	n	%
1. Age	36–45 years	55	42.3
2. Age	46–55 years	31	23.8
3. Organizational tenure	5–8 years	44	33.8
4. Organizational tenure	More than 9years	38	29.2
5. Time in current position	1–4 years	54	41.5
6. Gender	Female	45	34.6
7. Gender	Male	43	33.1
8. Gender	Not disclosed	42	32.3
9. Department	Not disclosed	31	23.8

Research Question 1: How do employees perceive the motivational value of performance-linked incentives within the Limpopo Provincial Legislature?

Perceptions of assessment mechanisms

The most positive response concerned performance-linked incentives. In total, 82.4% (n = 107) agreed or strongly agreed that incentives linked to performance assessment encouraged them to work more productively; 12.3% (n = 16) were neutral and 5.3% (n = 7) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Assessment-related stress or anxiety was also prominent: 62.3% (n = 81) agreed or strongly agreed that they experienced stress and anxiety as a result of performance evaluations. A further 10.1% (n = 13) were neutral, while 27.6% (n = 36) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Responses concerning fairness were divided. A total of 38.5% (n = 50) agreed or strongly agreed that the procedure was fair, 36.9% (n = 48) disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 24.6% (n = 32) were neutral. The results therefore do not indicate a clear consensus on procedural fairness.

Views of developmental support, recognition, training alignment and transparency were less positive than views of incentives. Negative responses were 42.3% (n = 55) for support to pursue professional-development objectives, 43.9% (n = 57) for satisfaction with recognition and appreciation, 48.4% (n = 63) for whether assessment results informed training and development, and 47.0% (n = 61) for satisfaction with communication and transparency. The full response distributions are summarised in Table 2.

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies
Online ISSN: 3116-4137 | Print ISSN: 3116-4145
Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 325-331, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

Table 2. Employee perceptions of key performance-assessment mechanisms

Assessment mechanism / item	Positive n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Negative n (%)
1. Performance-linked incentives encourage productive work	107 (82.4)	16 (12.3)	7 (5.3)
2. Stress or anxiety arising from performance evaluations	81 (62.3)	13 (10.1)	36 (27.6)
3. Performance-assessment procedure is fair	50 (38.5)	32 (24.6)	48 (36.9)
4. Support for professional-development objectives	54 (41.5)	21 (16.2)	55 (42.3)
5. Satisfaction with recognition and appreciation	45 (34.6)	28 (21.5)	57 (43.9)
6. Assessment results inform training and development	46 (35.4)	21 (16.2)	63 (48.4)
7. Satisfaction with communication and transparency	47 (36.1)	22 (16.9)	61 (47.0)

Reward mechanisms were viewed more positively than other assessment features

The clearest finding is the strong positive response to performance-linked incentives: 82.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that such incentives encouraged productive work. This suggests that respondents recognised a motivational signal in the connection between assessed performance and rewards. The finding is consistent with research that treats reward design as an important feature of performance-management systems, including recent South African work on pay-for-performance experiences (Nkoana & Matjie, 2024). However, the result captures employees' reported perceptions; it does not demonstrate that incentives objectively increased productivity.

The positive response to incentives coexists with substantial concern about other aspects of assessment. In particular, 62.3% reported stress or anxiety linked to performance evaluation. The system may therefore provide a reward-related incentive while still being experienced as stressful by many employees. This contrast cautions against treating a favourable view of one mechanism as proof that the entire performance-management system is motivating.

Research Question 2: How do employees perceive the fairness, communication and transparency of the performance-assessment process?

Procedural fairness and transparency remain areas of uncertainty

Only 38.5% of respondents agreed that the assessment procedure was fair, compared with 36.9% who disagreed and 24.6% who were neutral. The near balance between positive and negative views suggests that procedural legitimacy is contested rather than widely accepted. In addition, 47.0% were dissatisfied with communication and transparency. Taken together, these patterns suggest that employees may not consistently understand or trust how assessment decisions are made.

This interpretation is aligned with South African research reporting a gap between the stated objectives of performance-management systems and their implementation (Mohapi & Louw, 2024). Morifi and Matjie (2025) similarly describe concerns relating to rating consistency and feedback in a public-sector department, while Oschman and Matjie (2025) examine appraisal experiences in another public-sector setting. The current findings do not establish that the same causes operate in the Legislature, but they place the observed perceptions within a broader national discussion about fair and credible implementation.

Research Question 3: To what extent do employees perceive performance assessment as supporting professional development, training and recognition?

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies
Online ISSN: 3116-4137 | Print ISSN: 3116-4145
Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 325-331, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

The assessment-to-development link appears weak

The largest negative response among the mechanisms summarised in Table 2 concerned whether assessment results informed training and development: 48.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared with 35.4% who agreed or strongly agreed. A further 42.3% did not agree that they were supported in pursuing professional-development objectives. This pattern suggests that the assessment process may not consistently translate into development opportunities from the employee perspective.

Assessment has limited developmental value if the process identifies performance gaps but does not lead to feedback, coaching, training or agreed development actions. The finding supports a practical sequence in which assessment results are discussed with employees, development priorities are documented, and the organisation records whether agreed support was provided. This recommendation is an implication of the response pattern, not proof that a particular intervention will produce a specified motivational effect.

Recognition may not be keeping pace with formal evaluation

Only 34.6% of respondents were satisfied with recognition and appreciation, while 43.9% were dissatisfied. This indicates that many respondents did not feel that recognition matched their contributions. Recognition should not be treated as interchangeable with financial incentives. An incentive may provide a material reward, while timely and specific acknowledgement communicates that an employee's contribution has been noticed. The weaker recognition result, alongside strong support for incentives, suggests that the two mechanisms may be experienced differently.

A tool-level interpretation: reward, legitimacy and development

Taken together, the descriptive findings support an analytical distinction among three functions of assessment. First, reward mechanisms connect performance to incentives. Second, legitimacy mechanisms—including fairness, communication and transparency—shape whether the process is understood and accepted. Third, development mechanisms—including feedback, recognition, training and professional-development support—connect evaluation with growth. The mechanisms are complementary: strength in one area does not necessarily compensate for weakness in another.

This tool-level interpretation extends the authors' earlier analysis without claiming a separate sample or repeating its aggregate question. The first article examined the overall association between performance-appraisal perceptions and employee motivation (Naidu & Mpanza, 2026). The present article describes how employee responses differ across particular assessment practices. Its contribution is the identification of an uneven pattern: incentives receive strong endorsement, while fairness is contested and developmental follow-through, recognition, and transparency attract comparatively more negative responses.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted in one provincial legislature. Its findings should not automatically be generalized to other public institutions, which may have different rules, resources, leadership arrangements and performance-management practices. The cross-sectional design captures perceptions at one point in time and does not establish causal direction. The analysis is primarily descriptive and based on individual questionnaire items; it does not estimate the independent association of each mechanism with a validated multi-item motivation measure. The paper also uses the same underlying survey dataset as the authors' earlier publication. This shared provenance is disclosed, and the current article's contribution is limited to its distinct research question and item-level analysis. Future research could use longitudinal data, interviews or multi-source evidence to examine how fairness, communication, recognition and development follow-through relate to subsequent employee motivation and engagement. Further work could also test validated multi-item measures and compare patterns across multiple public-sector institutions. According to the original study, the required research approval was obtained, and data-handling protocols were followed. The underlying dataset is not publicly available because it may contain information that could compromise participant privacy. De-identified data may be considered for access by qualified researchers on reasonable request, subject to institutional and ethical requirements. No external funding was received for this study. The author declares no competing interests.

Conclusion

This study examined employees' perceptions of specific performance-assessment tools and implementation features within the Limpopo Provincial Legislature. The most strongly endorsed mechanism was performance-linked incentives, which 82.4% of respondents viewed as encouraging productive work. At the same time, 62.3% reported assessment-related stress or anxiety. Responses to procedural fairness were divided, while negative views were common concerning training alignment, communication and transparency, and recognition. The findings suggest that the motivational potential of performance

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

International Journal of Research on Multidisciplinary Studies
Online ISSN: 3116-4137 | Print ISSN: 3116-4145
Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 325-331, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

assessment cannot be evaluated solely by asking whether a formal system exists or whether incentives are offered. Employees' experiences also depend on whether procedures are perceived as fair, decisions are communicated clearly, contributions are acknowledged, and assessment results lead to relevant development. The paper's contribution is a descriptive, tool-level analysis of the same broader dataset used in the authors' earlier publication, not a claim to an independent sample or causal test.

Recommendations

Clarify and communicate assessment criteria. Provide employees with accessible written guidance on performance standards, evidence requirements, rating scales, review stages and the relationship between ratings and rewards. Managers should be able to explain assessment decisions consistently. Strengthen procedural safeguards. Use documented evidence, consistent rating guidance and a clear process for employees to raise questions or request review. Periodically examine whether ratings vary across organisational units in ways that require explanation. Create a visible assessment-to-development pathway. Each assessment should identify agreed development priorities, the support required, the responsible manager and a review date. Where training cannot be provided immediately, the reason and planned next step should be communicated. Improve feedback quality. Train supervisors to deliver specific, respectful and actionable feedback, including discussion of strengths as well as performance gaps. Where feasible, supplement formal assessment meetings with brief check-ins during the performance cycle. Recognise contributions in ways that complement incentives. Establish timely, transparent and proportionate forms of recognition, ensuring that recognition criteria are understood and that acknowledgement is not reserved only for highly visible roles. Monitor employees' experience of the system. Use periodic confidential feedback to assess whether staff understand the process, regard it as fair, receive useful feedback and see assessment outcomes translated into development. Report the results at an appropriately aggregated level and communicate actions taken.

References

Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. Educational and Psychological Measurement, 30, 607–610. https://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308

Maake, G., Harmse, C. P. J., & Schultz, C. M. (2023). A performance management system, employment relationships and work engagement framework for the public sector in South Africa. Southern African Business Review, 27. https://doi.org/10.25159/1998-8125/13795

Maake, G., Harmse, C. P. J., & Schultz, C. M. (2024). Employment relationships and work engagement predict performance management systems in South Africa's public sector. Journal of Contemporary Management, 21(1). https://doi.org/10.35683/jcman1062.238

Mohapi, N. E., & Louw, V. (2024). Employee perceptions: Disjuncture between goals of performance management systems and effective implementation in South Africa. International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science. https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.7012154

Morifi, P., & Matjie, M. (2025). Public sector employees' experiences and challenges with the performance management system in South Africa. International Journal of Public Policy and Administration Research, 12(4), 274–287. https://doi.org/10.18488/74.v12i4.4574

Naidu, D. K., & Mpanza, S. (2026). Performance appraisal as a motivational mechanism in public sector HRM: Evidence from a quantitative study. International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning, 15(1), 242–254. https://doi.org/10.53615/2232-5697.15.242-254

Nkoana, M. E., & Matjie, M. A. (2024). Employee's psychological experiences with bank's pay for performance system in South Africa. SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 50, Article a2166. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v50i0.2166

Oschman, B., & Matjie, M. A. (2025). Exploring employees' experiences with the performance appraisals at the South African Air Force. SA Journal of Human Resource Management, 23, Article a2925. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.2925

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation from a self-determination theory perspective: Definitions, theory, practices, and future directions. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 61, Article 101860. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2020.101860

This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.