

Performance Appraisal and Job Satisfaction among Employees of Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC): An Empirical Study

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Abstract:

Performance appraisal is intended to align individual effort with organisational goals, but employee responses depend on the fairness, transparency, participation and developmental value of the process. This study examines the relationship between performance appraisal practices and job satisfaction among employees of the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC). A cross-sectional descriptive and explanatory design was used. The final analytical sample comprised 350 employees drawn from operational, technical, administrative and supervisory categories across four selected UPSRTC regions through proportionate stratified sampling. A structured five-point Likert questionnaire measured goal clarity, procedural fairness, feedback quality, employee participation, career and reward linkage, and overall job satisfaction. Reliability coefficients ranged from .78 to .88. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, one-way analysis of variance and multiple regression were applied. Overall appraisal quality was positively associated with job satisfaction ($r = .62$, $p < .001$), and the appraisal dimensions jointly accounted for 47% of the variance. Procedural fairness was the strongest statistical predictor, followed by feedback quality, career and reward linkage, and employee participation. Goal clarity did not retain an independent association after the remaining dimensions were controlled. Job satisfaction differed across employee categories, with the statistically significant post hoc difference concentrated between operational and supervisory/managerial employees. The findings indicate that appraisal in a public transport undertaking should function as a continuous performance-development mechanism rather than an annual compliance exercise. Transparent standards, evidence-based ratings, timely feedback, employee voice, reviewer training and credible developmental follow-up are recommended.

Keywords: performance appraisal; job satisfaction; organisational justice; employee feedback; public transport; UPSRTC.

1. Introduction

Public transport organisations depend on the coordinated performance of drivers, conductors, depot personnel, mechanics, supervisors, clerical staff and managers. Their work is performed under visible service pressures: schedules must be maintained, passenger safety must be protected, vehicles must

remain roadworthy, revenue must be accounted for and public complaints must be addressed. In such a setting, employee performance is not a purely individual matter. It is shaped by route conditions, equipment availability, staffing levels, managerial support and the quality of administrative systems. Performance appraisal therefore becomes a critical human resource mechanism because it communicates what the organisation values, how work is judged and whether employees believe that contribution is recognised fairly.

Performance appraisal may be defined as the formal assessment of an employee's work contribution against established expectations. Contemporary scholarship distinguishes appraisal from the wider concept of performance management. Appraisal usually refers to periodic assessment and feedback, whereas performance management includes goal setting, coaching, development, review and follow-up throughout the performance cycle (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). The distinction is important because an appraisal form completed once a year may satisfy administrative requirements without improving performance or employee attitudes. Employees are more likely to accept an appraisal when standards are understandable, the reviewer has sufficient knowledge of their work, the discussion is respectful, evidence is considered and the outcome is connected with meaningful development.

Job satisfaction refers to the evaluative and affective response that employees hold toward their jobs and work experiences (Locke, 1976; Spector, 1997). It reflects satisfaction with the work itself, supervision, recognition, advancement, co-workers, organisational policies and working conditions. Job satisfaction is especially relevant in transport services because the consequences of dissatisfaction can extend beyond withdrawal attitudes. Low morale may weaken service orientation, cooperation, attendance, attentiveness and willingness to undertake difficult duties. Although job satisfaction does not mechanically produce high performance in every situation, meta-analytic evidence shows a meaningful positive association between satisfaction and performance (Judge et al., 2001). Thus, the quality of performance appraisal may affect both the employee experience and organisational functioning.

UPSRTC is a large state public transport undertaking serving urban, inter-city and rural mobility needs across Uttar Pradesh (Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation, n.d.). Its workforce is heterogeneous in role, qualification, location and exposure to passengers. This diversity makes the legitimacy of performance assessment important. A system perceived as subjective or disconnected from actual job conditions can create defensiveness, whereas a fair and developmental system can strengthen trust in supervision and satisfaction with the organisation.

The relationship between performance appraisal and employee outcomes has been examined in private firms, banking, hospitality and public administration. Evidence from state-owned transportation in India also indicates that performance appraisal and other human resource practices are associated with job satisfaction and performance (Batta et al., 2023). Nevertheless, there is limited published evidence focusing specifically on UPSRTC and on the separate contribution of appraisal fairness, feedback, participation, clarity and career linkage. The present study addresses this gap by examining how these appraisal dimensions relate to job satisfaction among operational, technical, administrative and supervisory employees. It also explores whether job satisfaction differs across employee categories and tenure groups.

The study has three objectives: to assess perceptions of appraisal and job satisfaction, test relationships between appraisal dimensions and satisfaction, and identify the strongest predictors. It assumes that employees accept appraisal outcomes more readily when both the process and interpersonal treatment

are fair. Even where monetary rewards are rule-bound, managers can improve clarity, feedback, employee voice and developmental support.

2. Review of Literature and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Performance Appraisal as an Administrative and Developmental System

Performance appraisal serves several purposes, including performance documentation, promotion and transfer decisions, identification of training needs, employee development and communication of expectations. These purposes can conflict. When employees believe that the discussion is designed mainly to justify a predetermined rating, they may conceal problems and avoid candid dialogue. When the system emphasises learning and future improvement, the same discussion can encourage reflection and problem solving. DeNisi and Murphy (2017) observed that appraisal research has progressively moved from rating scales and rater errors toward employee reactions, rating purposes, multiple sources and the broader performance-management context. This shift recognises that even technically sound ratings will have limited value when employees do not regard the process as credible.

Employee reactions are therefore central indicators of appraisal effectiveness. Keeping and Levy (2000) demonstrated that appraisal reactions include satisfaction with the appraisal session, satisfaction with the system, perceived utility and perceived accuracy. Kuvaas (2006) further found that appraisal satisfaction is associated with employee outcomes, particularly where the process supports intrinsic motivation. Longitudinal evidence also suggests that satisfaction with appraisal can influence later overall job satisfaction after other work variables are considered (Blau, 1999). These findings support the view that appraisal is not merely a measurement event; it is a social and motivational experience.

In public transport undertakings, appraisal complexity is increased by occupational diversity. A driver's performance involves safety, schedule adherence, fuel efficiency, vehicle care and passenger conduct. A conductor's work includes ticketing accuracy, revenue protection, passenger assistance and documentation. Technical staff are assessed through maintenance quality, breakdown response, preventive work and resource utilisation, while administrative staff are evaluated through timeliness, accuracy, compliance and coordination. A single generic form may therefore produce low acceptance unless job-specific criteria are clearly defined.

2.2 Procedural Fairness and Job Satisfaction

Equity theory proposes that employees compare their contributions and outcomes with those of relevant others and experience dissatisfaction when exchanges appear inequitable (Adams, 1965). Organisational justice research extends this logic by distinguishing distributive justice, procedural justice, interpersonal justice and informational justice. Meta-analytic evidence shows that these justice dimensions are related to job satisfaction, commitment, trust and performance (Colquitt et al., 2001). A recent synthesis similarly identifies justice as an important managerial resource for strengthening satisfaction and other positive outcomes (Adamovic, 2023).

Within appraisal, procedural fairness concerns the consistency of criteria, opportunity to present relevant information, use of accurate evidence, absence of bias and availability of review or appeal. Interpersonal and informational fairness concern respectful treatment and adequate explanation. Employees may accept an unfavourable rating when they believe that the process was impartial and the reasons were honestly explained. Conversely, even a favourable rating can fail to build trust if employees suspect favouritism or manipulation. Poon (2004) found that perceived political manipulation of appraisal was

associated with lower job satisfaction and stronger turnover intention. Public-sector evidence also shows that high-quality appraisal experiences are associated with better employee attitudes than mixed or poor experiences (Brown et al., 2010). Accordingly, H1 proposes that perceived procedural fairness in performance appraisal is positively and significantly associated with employee job satisfaction.

2.3 Goal Clarity, Feedback Quality and Employee Participation

Goal clarity reduces uncertainty by telling employees what level of performance is expected and what evidence will be considered. Clear standards are particularly important when outputs are affected by route congestion, vehicle condition, staffing or emergency duties. Standards that ignore such contextual constraints may appear unrealistic. Clarity is expected to improve job satisfaction because it reduces ambiguity and enables employees to direct effort toward recognised priorities.

Feedback quality refers to the timeliness, specificity, usefulness and interpersonal manner of performance information. Feedback is effective when it identifies both strengths and correctable gaps, refers to observable work behaviour and results in an agreed improvement plan. Jawahar (2006) reported that satisfaction with appraisal feedback has important attitudinal and behavioural consequences. Levy and Williams (2004) also emphasised that the social context, including the supervisor-subordinate relationship and the appraisal climate, influences employee reactions. In a public transport setting, feedback should be close enough to the event to be meaningful. A delayed annual discussion may not help an employee correct safety, customer-service or documentation problems that occurred months earlier.

Employee participation provides voice in goal setting, self-appraisal and discussion of circumstances affecting performance. Voice does not require that the employee determine the rating; rather, it ensures that relevant evidence and explanations can be presented. Participation can strengthen perceived ownership and reduce the impression that appraisal is imposed unilaterally. It also improves information quality because supervisors may not observe every route, workshop or shift condition. Accordingly, H2 proposes that goal clarity is positively associated with job satisfaction; H3 proposes that feedback quality is positively associated with job satisfaction; and H4 proposes that employee participation in appraisal is positively associated with job satisfaction.

2.4 Career and Reward Linkage

Employees also evaluate whether appraisal has consequences. A system that repeatedly identifies development needs without offering training, recognition or career guidance may be viewed as symbolic. Kampkötter (2017) found that performance appraisal is associated with job satisfaction, with stronger effects where appraisal is linked to monetary outcomes and development. However, reward linkage must remain credible. When increments or promotions are tightly rule-bound, managers should avoid creating expectations that the appraisal cannot fulfil. Instead, the appraisal can be connected with training nominations, skill certification, mentoring, commendation, preferred developmental assignments and transparent consideration for advancement.

Evidence from India's state-owned transportation sector confirms that performance appraisal operates within a wider bundle of compensation, career planning and training practices (Batta et al., 2023). UPSRTC-specific research on employee welfare has also reported dissatisfaction among some women employees with retirement and leave-related provisions, indicating that employee attitudes are shaped by whether organisational systems are experienced as supportive and equitable (Dharan & Jain, 2024).

Accordingly, H5 proposes that perceived linkage of appraisal with career development and rewards is positively associated with job satisfaction. The overall hypothesis, H6, proposes that perceived appraisal quality is positively associated with job satisfaction.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional descriptive and explanatory survey design. The target population consisted of regular and contractual employees working in selected UPSRTC regions. To represent the occupational structure of the corporation, employees were classified into four strata: operational staff, including drivers and conductors; technical and workshop staff; clerical and administrative staff; and supervisory or managerial staff. Four regions representing different operational settings were selected, and questionnaires were distributed proportionately across the strata. Of 400 questionnaires distributed, 365 were returned. Fifteen responses with substantial missing data were excluded, producing a final analytical sample of 350 and an effective response rate of 87.5%.

The instrument contained three sections. Section A captured demographic and employment characteristics. Section B measured five appraisal dimensions: goal and criterion clarity, procedural fairness, feedback quality, employee participation, and career and reward linkage. Section C measured overall job satisfaction. Items were rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The appraisal items were conceptually adapted from established appraisal-reaction and organisational-justice literature, while the job-satisfaction items reflected satisfaction with work, supervision, recognition, development and organisational support (Keeping & Levy, 2000; Spector, 1997). Content validity was reviewed by two human resource academics and two transport-administration practitioners. A pilot administration with 30 employees was used to refine the wording and sequence of the questionnaire.

Internal consistency was assessed through Cronbach's alpha, with .70 treated as the minimum acceptable level. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise respondent characteristics and construct scores. Pearson correlation assessed bivariate relationships, one-way analysis of variance examined employee-category and tenure-group differences, and multiple linear regression estimated the independent statistical association of the five appraisal dimensions with job satisfaction. Multicollinearity was assessed through variance inflation factors, and residual diagnostics were reviewed for linearity, normality and homoscedasticity. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 5% level. Because the design was cross-sectional, the regression coefficients were interpreted as associations rather than causal effects.

4. Results

4.1 Profile of Respondents

The sample included employees from different functions and career stages. Operational staff formed the largest group because drivers and conductors constitute the core service-delivery workforce. Most respondents were male, reflecting the occupational composition of road transport services, although women were represented across administrative, operational and supervisory roles. More than half of the respondents had over ten years of service, making the sample suitable for evaluating appraisal experiences across multiple career stages.

Table 1. Demographic and Employment Profile of Respondents (N = 350)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	283	80.9
	Female	67	19.1
Employee category	Operational	163	46.6
	Technical/workshop	76	21.7
	Clerical/administrative	70	20.0
	Supervisory/managerial	41	11.7
Employment status	Regular	271	77.4
	Contractual	79	22.6
Length of service	Up to 5 years	72	20.6
	6-10 years	90	25.7
	11-20 years	121	34.6
	Above 20 years	67	19.1

4.2 Reliability and Descriptive Statistics

All constructs exceeded the conventional reliability threshold. Procedural fairness received the lowest mean among appraisal dimensions, indicating concern regarding consistency, bias control and explanation of ratings. Goal clarity obtained the highest appraisal mean, suggesting that many employees understood the broad expectations of their roles. Job satisfaction was moderate rather than high. The pattern implies that employees may know what is expected but remain uncertain about whether the evaluation process and its outcomes are applied consistently.

Table 2. Reliability and Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	Mean	SD
Goal clarity	4	.80	3.48	0.71
Procedural fairness	5	.84	3.05	0.78
Feedback quality	4	.82	3.18	0.76
Employee participation	4	.78	3.09	0.74
Career and reward linkage	4	.81	3.11	0.80

Construct	Items	Cronbach's α	Mean	SD
Overall appraisal quality	21	.91	3.22	0.68
Job satisfaction	6	.88	3.34	0.71

Note. Scale range = 1 to 5; higher scores indicate more favourable perceptions.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Overall appraisal quality was strongly and positively correlated with job satisfaction ($r = .62$, $p < .001$), supporting H6. Each individual appraisal dimension was also positively related to job satisfaction. Procedural fairness had the strongest bivariate relationship ($r = .58$), followed by feedback quality ($r = .53$) and career and reward linkage ($r = .50$). The intercorrelations among appraisal dimensions were moderate, indicating that the dimensions were related but not identical.

Table 3. Correlations among Study Variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Goal clarity	1					
2. Procedural fairness	.46**	1				
3. Feedback quality	.42**	.55**	1			
4. Employee participation	.39**	.48**	.50**	1		
5. Career/reward linkage	.35**	.49**	.47**	.44**	1	
6. Job satisfaction	.39**	.58**	.53**	.44**	.50**	1

Note. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

4.4 Regression Analysis

The regression model was statistically significant, $F(5, 344) = 61.01$, $p < .001$, and accounted for 47% of the reported variance in job satisfaction (adjusted $R^2 = .46$). Procedural fairness showed the strongest independent association ($\beta = .29$, $p < .001$), supporting H1. Feedback quality ($\beta = .21$, $p = .001$), career and reward linkage ($\beta = .18$, $p = .004$), and employee participation ($\beta = .14$, $p = .018$) were also significant, supporting H3, H4 and H5. Goal clarity showed a positive but non-significant independent association ($\beta = .09$, $p = .091$); therefore, H2 was not supported in the multivariable model. Variance inflation factors ranged from 1.38 to 1.74, indicating no serious multicollinearity.

Table 4. Multiple Regression Predicting Job Satisfaction

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	0.72	0.18	—	4.00	< .001
Goal clarity	0.09	0.05	.09	1.70	.091
Procedural fairness	0.27	0.06	.29	4.67	< .001
Feedback quality	0.20	0.06	.21	3.36	.001
Employee participation	0.13	0.05	.14	2.38	.018
Career/reward linkage	0.16	0.05	.18	2.93	.004

Note. $R^2 = .47$; adjusted $R^2 = .46$; $F(5, 344) = 61.01$, $p < .001$.

4.5 Group Differences

Job satisfaction differed significantly across employee categories, $F(3, 346) = 4.86$, $p = .003$. Supervisory and managerial employees reported the highest mean satisfaction ($M = 3.61$), followed by clerical and administrative employees ($M = 3.48$), technical employees ($M = 3.35$), and operational employees ($M = 3.20$). Post hoc comparisons indicated that the statistically significant difference was concentrated between operational and supervisory/managerial employees. Differences by length of service were not statistically significant, $F(3, 346) = 1.72$, $p = .163$. The pattern suggests that occupational context and control over work may be more closely related to satisfaction than tenure alone.

Table 5. Job Satisfaction by Employee Category

Employee category	n	Mean job satisfaction
Operational	163	3.20
Technical/workshop	76	3.35
Clerical/administrative	70	3.48
Supervisory/managerial	41	3.61

Note. Overall ANOVA: $F(3, 346) = 4.86$, $p = .003$. The significant post hoc difference was between operational and supervisory/managerial employees.

5. Discussion

The study indicates that employee perceptions of performance appraisal are closely connected with job satisfaction. The strong correlation between overall appraisal quality and job satisfaction is consistent with longitudinal and cross-sectional evidence showing that appraisal reactions extend into broader work

attitudes (Blau, 1999; Kampkötter, 2017; Kuvaas, 2006). The finding is also aligned with evidence from India's state-owned transportation sector, where performance appraisal forms part of an interdependent system of human resource practices influencing satisfaction and performance (Batta et al., 2023). For UPSRTC, the practical meaning is that appraisal should not be treated as an isolated personnel record. The way it is designed and discussed shapes how employees evaluate supervision, recognition and organisational support.

Procedural fairness was the strongest predictor. This result supports organisational justice theory and confirms that employees care about how decisions are reached, not only about the final rating. Public transport jobs often involve conditions beyond the employee's direct control. Traffic congestion can affect punctuality, vehicle condition can influence fuel consumption, staffing shortages can increase workload, and passenger behaviour can complicate service delivery. An appraisal that uses output figures without considering these conditions may be interpreted as unfair. Fairness therefore requires job-specific standards, reliable data, consistent application, an opportunity to explain contextual factors and a review mechanism for disputed ratings.

Feedback quality was the second strongest predictor. Employees appear to value appraisal when the reviewer explains the basis of the assessment and converts evaluation into guidance. This is consistent with research treating appraisal as a social interaction rather than a one-way administrative judgement (Jawahar, 2006; Levy & Williams, 2004). In UPSRTC, regular feedback may be more useful than a single annual interview because many performance issues are immediate. Safety observations, passenger complaints, ticketing discrepancies, maintenance errors and documentation delays should be discussed promptly. Periodic short reviews can reduce surprise at the annual rating and make the process more developmental.

Career and reward linkage also showed a significant association. Employees are unlikely to sustain confidence in appraisal when good performance has no visible consequence and identified development needs receive no follow-up. The linkage need not be limited to pay. Public organisations can use non-monetary recognition, training access, skill certification, commendations, transparent promotion consideration and developmental assignments. The key is consistency between the message of the appraisal and subsequent organisational action. Where rules restrict discretion, managers should communicate those limits honestly so that appraisal does not create expectations that cannot be met.

Employee participation showed an independent association with job satisfaction. Voice is particularly relevant in geographically dispersed operations where supervisors may not observe all working conditions. Self-appraisal, employee comments and a structured discussion allow the record to include route difficulty, breakdowns, emergency assignments and resource constraints. Participation also signals dignity and respect. It should not, however, become an unstructured negotiation over every rating. The organisation should define what evidence can be considered, how disagreements are recorded and who reviews appeals.

Goal clarity was positively correlated with job satisfaction but became non-significant in the regression model. This suggests that clarity alone is insufficient. Employees may understand targets and still feel dissatisfied if the process is biased, feedback is weak or performance has no developmental consequence. In other words, clear targets are a necessary foundation, but fairness and credible implementation determine whether the system is accepted. The lower satisfaction among operational employees reinforces this interpretation. Drivers and conductors experience higher public contact, irregular schedules and direct operational pressures, while having less control over many performance

conditions. Their appraisal criteria therefore require careful contextualisation and stronger access to feedback.

The findings show that appraisal quality is a bundle of mutually reinforcing practices. Public-sector employees with poor appraisal experiences report less favourable outcomes than those with high-quality experiences (Brown et al., 2010). UPSRTC should therefore avoid changing only the form. Redesign will have limited impact unless supervisors are trained, data are trustworthy, discussions are respectful and follow-up is visible.

6. Managerial Implications

First, UPSRTC should establish role-specific performance scorecards. Common values such as integrity, discipline and service orientation may apply across the corporation, but operational, technical and administrative roles require different indicators. Driver assessment may combine safety, avoidable incidents, vehicle care, attendance and verified service conduct. Conductor assessment may include ticketing accuracy, revenue compliance, passenger service and documentation. Technical assessment should emphasise preventive maintenance quality, repeat defects, repair turnaround and safety compliance. Indicators should be weighted and accompanied by definitions and data sources.

Second, the corporation should standardise procedural safeguards. Employees should receive the criteria before the appraisal period, have access to relevant performance records, complete a brief self-review and receive written reasons for ratings. A time-bound review mechanism should be available where the employee identifies factual error or inconsistency. Calibration meetings across depots can reduce rating inflation, excessive severity and local favouritism.

Third, supervisors require training in evidence-based evaluation and feedback conversation. Training should address observation, documentation, unconscious bias, respectful communication, handling disagreement and preparation of development plans. Reviewer quality should itself be monitored through completion timeliness, employee feedback, appeal patterns and the usefulness of development actions.

Fourth, appraisal should be integrated with learning and recognition. Each review should end with achievable development actions, such as safety training, customer-handling support, technical certification or mentoring. Recognition may include appreciation letters and priority for relevant development opportunities. Brief post-cycle surveys can identify depots where fairness, clarity or usefulness requires attention.

7. Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research

The study concludes that perceived performance appraisal quality is significantly associated with job satisfaction among UPSRTC employees. The relationship appears to arise less from the existence of an annual rating and more from the quality of the process surrounding that rating. Fair procedures, useful feedback, employee voice and credible developmental consequences were the most important elements. Goal clarity remained relevant at the bivariate level but did not independently predict satisfaction after the other dimensions were considered, indicating that understandable standards must be accompanied by fair implementation.

The study contributes to the limited literature on human resource management in Indian public transport organisations by separating appraisal quality into actionable dimensions. It also highlights employee-category differences. Operational employees reported lower satisfaction than supervisory and

managerial employees, suggesting the need for appraisal systems that recognise difficult working conditions and provide more frequent supervisory dialogue. A developmental and evidence-based appraisal system may support employee morale while strengthening service reliability, safety and accountability.

Several limitations should be considered. The cross-sectional design does not establish causality, and self-reported data may be influenced by common-method bias or recent appraisal experiences. The selected regions may not represent every UPSRTC location, and the analysis does not include pay satisfaction, leadership style, workload, union climate or work-life balance. Future research should use broader multi-region and longitudinal samples, combine survey responses with administrative performance indicators and examine appraisal experiences over time. Comparative studies across state road transport corporations may clarify how institutional rules, financial conditions and regional work cultures influence appraisal acceptance. Qualitative interviews with drivers, conductors, technical employees and supervisors could also identify role-specific sources of perceived unfairness that standardised questionnaires may not capture.

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