

WHY PEER APPRAISAL TECHNIQUE IN EDUCATION RESEARCH METHODS? A USEFUL ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

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ABSTRACT

For any institution or organization to excel and make a significant impact in the environment where it exists, there is a need for an appraisal exercise for teachers/employers to ascertain the success or failure of the system. Appraisal techniques allow individuals who may be students, colleagues, or employees to assess one another based on the feedback given by his/her colleagues. This provides useful information to the staff to know their level of growth on the job, and for students to know the interpersonal relationship with their classmates, all considered to be very important assessment input in the determination of the success and sustenance of an organization. The present study used two (2) techniques (Sociometric and the Guess-who techniques) commonly used in schools and organizations to determine the level of academic success and to attain what is worthwhile (that is, positive change in character and learning) for the appraisal of staff and students. Without appraisal techniques, the objectives of teaching will be defeated due to a poor feedback system in the course of the learning process. The study conducted on why peer appraisal technique? : A useful personality assessment technique in institutions and organizational effectiveness. The aim was to monitor and improve teachers' and students' performance in the classroom setting, including employers of labour. The study concludes that appraising colleagues will promote mutual relationships, build trust and provide feedback among institutions and organisations. This is what society needs to move forward in harmony and embrace sustained progress, growth, and development in its entirety.

Keywords: Peer Appraisal Personality, Assessment Techniques, and Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

In the workplace and school environment, allowing employees or learners to do teamwork can be more rewarding especially when they are allowed to actively play a role in the work or learning process of which they are a part. This underscores the need for peer appraisal/assessment. Peer assessment refers to an assessment involving a student who is assessed by his or her

classmate, playmate, age level, etc. It helps to generate information about the social and personal behaviors of each student in a class, as well as about peer-to-peer friendship and leadership. Peer appraisal is a very credible way to allow for the engagement of all students in the class in providing feedback to their peers and, indirectly to themselves. Allowing students to be assessors promotes a high sense of motivation and understanding and shifts the role and status of students from passive learners to active learners. Peer assessment helps students develop their judgment, critical abilities, and self-awareness. They learn to be more responsible while striving to figure out their points of strength and weakness. As a part of the appraisal process, an employee/student is assessed based on the feedback given by his/her colleagues or people within his/her close working environment. This feedback is anonymous. Moreno (1951) informed that a typical peer appraisal does not take feedback from superiors, rather it is handled by colleagues who are part of the same team, who can assess their skills more clearly than their superiors would do because they work closely together. Its design is called for when there is a need to monitor and improve job performance. Peer appraisal provides a type of feedback system used in the performance appraisal process. There are many ways to do peer appraisal. It could either be peer ranking where people rate their colleagues or co-workers on key performance metrics or it could be peer nomination where the best worker is chosen based on the same metrics. In general, the continuous building of relationships and teams based on mutual trust among colleagues which often leads to constructive feedback for further improvement in skills and understanding among different departments of the organisation can be hallmarks of any peer appraisal system.

Peer appraisal Techniques and its Justification in the 21st century

- i. Employees/teachers can assess the skills of their co-workers/students much more clearly than management because of the interpersonal relationship that exists between them.
- ii. It helps in team-building. People understand that the opinions of their colleagues are important and one must build relationships.
- iii. Since people trust their colleagues, they consider the feedback given by them to be constructive. It makes the process of skill improvement public and accountable.
- iv. It allows employers or students to strive for a more advanced and deeper understanding of the skills or subject matter.
- v. It encourages a wider approach to learning by enabling the students to learn as passive learners to active learners and assessors.

- vi. It helps to promote the critical thinking ability of the learner.
- vii. It helps to bring the hidden talent of the employee/students to the notice of the employer/teacher.
- viii. This assessment justifiably confers much of what is needed to survive, improve, and get sustained in the 21st century in terms of interpersonal and soft skills; team and adaptation to the team, mutual trust, and relationship, constructive feedback, communication, empathy, critical thinking, problem-solving among others.
- ix. The 21st century is characterized by advancements in technology and one major challenge of peer review in the past has been its manual approach to assessment. The advent of digital transformation will likely impart on the peer appraisal of the 21st century.

Advantages of peer appraisal techniques

There are many advantages of using peer appraisal techniques of personality, they are as noted below:

- i. Peer appraisal/assessment allows the students to take responsibility and get involved in the learning process, which makes the process more tangible to students.
- ii. If appropriately used in group work, it enhances the group members' work and skills to be adequately utilised.
- iii. Third, such assessment focuses on developing the diverse skills of students which is a sincere need of the 21st century.
- iv. Fourth, it provides feedback to both teachers and parents, this may help in the counseling of the students in terms of their career aspirations/choices.
- v. The students are forced to be serious-minded since they are aware that their efforts are going to be evaluated by their peers.
- vi. It allows the students to explore fresh strategies and tips that can contribute to their overall performance in the workplace.

Disadvantages of peer appraisal techniques

The main disadvantages of this method are;

- i. Given how scores are calculated, students sometimes underestimate the impact that the score they give can have on their peers, resulting in scores that excessively harm or benefit their peers' grades.

- ii. If not properly presented, students are allowed to give the same score to all the team members. This might lead to grade inflation as students know that they can easily coordinate to get an equal score.
- iii. Clash of interest: Due to the nature of the assessment techniques (teamwork), individuals differ significantly in their opinion, interest, attitude, and approach to situations. This may result in a clash of interests among the groups.
- iv. In a situation where the team is larger, this means that more hands are needed with more brainpower. As such, confusion in roles, positions, and task design may result. This can affect members' opportunities to receive positive feedback.
- v. Another disadvantage of peer feedback is the lack of feedback training. Feedback comes with the idea that suggests that if a peer who does not engage in frequent feedback reports opinions, it can impact the professional performance and stake of the team.
- vi. There does not appear to be a consensus on how to optimally match students during the peer feedback process because of review differences in varying abilities (Huisman, Saab, Driel, Broke, 2017).

Types of peer appraisal techniques

Two major types of peer appraisal techniques are employed in this text, namely; sociometric technique and guess-who-technique. They are fully explained below:

Sociometric Technique of Personality Assessment

The sociometric Technique was developed by psychotherapists Jacob L. Moreno and Helen Hall Jennings in their research studies on the relationship between social structures and the psychological well-being of individuals. It is a test that deals with the nature of social relations, lines of communication, and the patterns of friendship, attraction, and rejection that exist at a given time among members of a particular group. In other words, sociometric techniques deal with the quantitative measure of social relationships, such as social acceptance (i.e., how much an individual is liked by peers) and social status (i.e., an individual's social standing in comparison to peers). In the context of the school setting, most students like staying in isolation, some students always like to stay together, some are more liked by all students, some are not always accepted by others, and so forth. These social relationships existing among them are sometimes striking and can reveal so much about their total development (Henderson & Buising, 2000). It is, therefore, necessary for the teacher to evaluate these social relationships that exist

among the pupils or students. Thus, the socio-metric technique is a method of evaluating the social acceptance of individual students. In the sociometric techniques, two techniques are involved viz: Nomination Technique and the Social acceptance Technique. Onunkwo (2002) observed that in the nomination technique, the student is asked to select and name his/her peers in terms of some criterion suggested by the teacher while in the social acceptance technique, levels of social relationships are started and the student is asked to express his/her sociometric choice. For example, the teacher may ask students to list any of their peers with whom he/she wants to do an activity.

It is grounded on individual students' choices of friendship for some group situations or activities. In this technique, one can know which student would be congenial for a working group or companions for certain work (Weimann, 1983). For instance, in the school setting, where a teacher gives his/her students a class or group assignment, among the students, the teacher may want to find out the social relations that exist among the students such as:

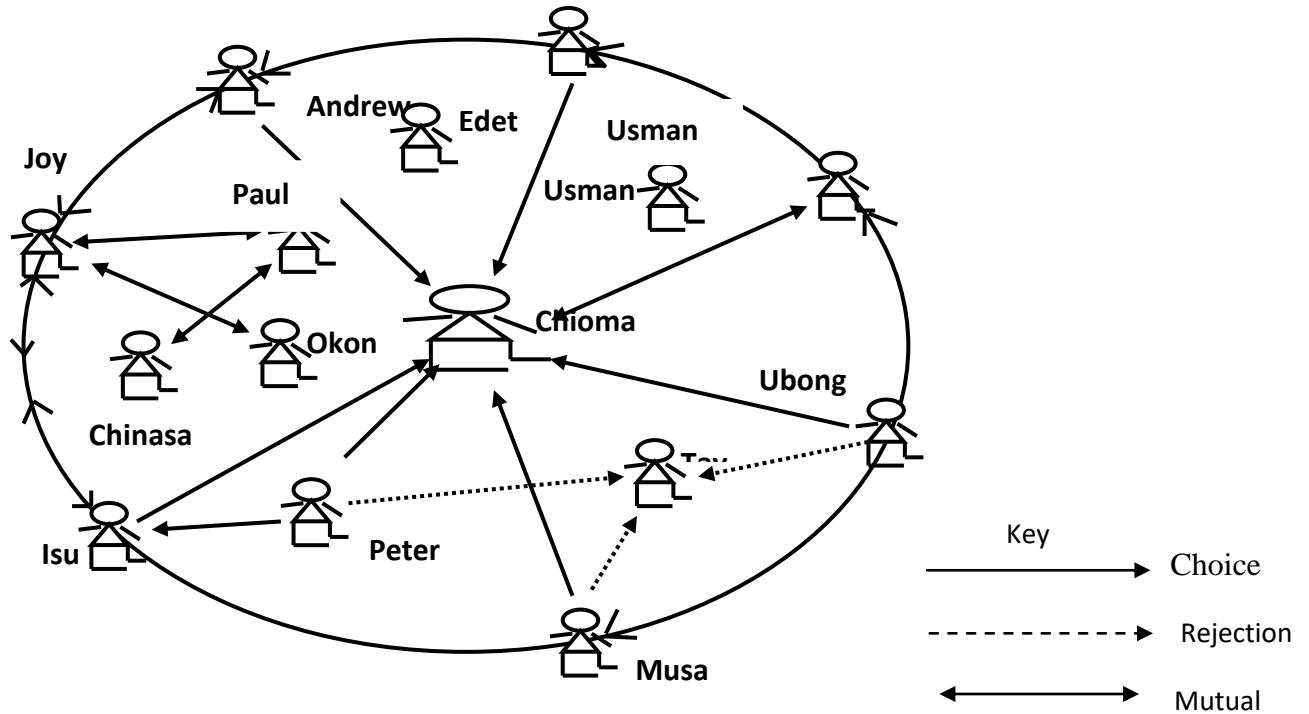
- i. Who do the students (s) wish to be his/her group member?
- ii. Who will the student (s) not prefer to work with?
- iii. Who in the group will the student (s) want to lead the group?
- iv. Okoi whom would you like to go home with? etc.

Suffice it to say that, the choice of students indicates what types of relationships are in the classroom.

Qualities or features of a socio-metric test are as follows:

- i. It gives a simple and concise graphical presentation of data about the group.
- ii. It presents the structure of social relationships that exist among members of the group.
- iii. It shows the pattern of friendship pattern among group members.
- iv. It indicates the line of attraction and rejection among group members.
- v. It has always been a time reference.
- vi. It indicates the person most chosen as the leader and the person not chosen at all or the isolated.

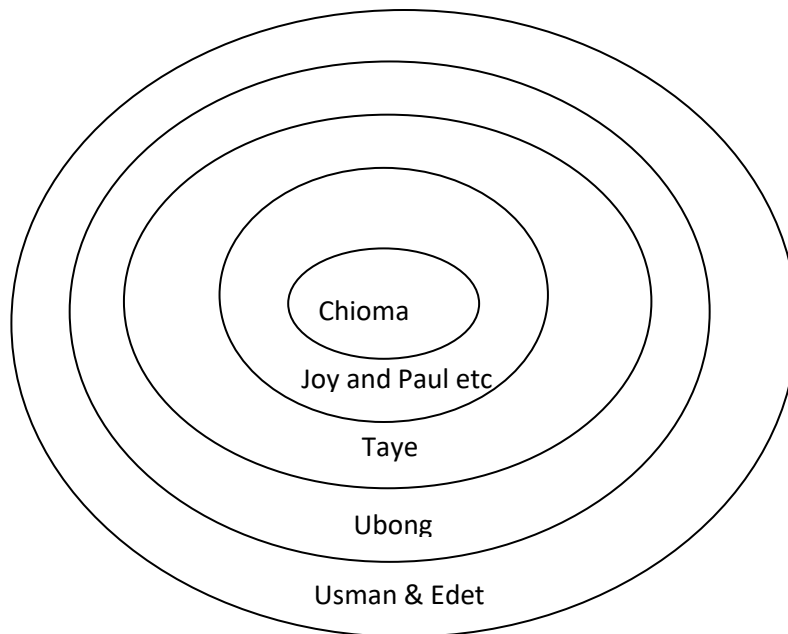
Figure 1: Diagram of Socio-metric technique in relationship to classroom experience



Target Sociogram

This is a circular representation of the choice of the students (concentric circle). The most popular students occupy the most interior circle followed by the next popular down to the least popular students (reject or neglected), hence popularity decreases by a word.

Figure 3: Pictorial presentation of a target sociogram



From the diagram, it can be discerned that:

- (i) Chioma is a star.
- (ii) Joy, Paul, Chinansa, Okon, etc. formed a clique or gang.
- (iii) Taye is a neglectee.
- (iv) Ubong is a rejectee.
- (v) Usman and Ede are isolated.

In the context of the classroom setting, the information will help the teachers, counselors, or school administrators in selecting group leaders or class leaders. It also helps teachers identify students with learning challenges as well as the Cliques (gangs) that should be disbanded in order not to form gangs or cliques that will eventually destabilize academic activities in the school.

Uses or merits of sociometric techniques

1. The sociometric technique is used by teachers to ascertain the nature and degree of interaction in terms of the social relationship existing among a class or an assessed group.
2. It gives a clear picture of the acceptance of a pupil by his peer groups.
3. It is useful for parents to know about the liking and disliking degrees of their child in his friend's circle.
4. It helps detect leadership roles among students. This is determined by identifying those who are liked by many others and who can be better leaders of the group. By working with guidance can be provided.
5. It helps guide isolated students, as the teacher will use sociometric to improve their interpersonal relationships and adjustment with other members of the group.
6. It enables teachers to classify the students into different friendship groups based on their preferences and choices.
7. It is useful in suggesting the students develop the capacity for cooperation and work together for certain good activities.
8. It is useful in identifying those who are isolated, the one who is not preferred by any other individual. This will help in proffering guidance and counselling services to their parents.
9. It is a simple, economical, and natural method of observational and data collection.
10. Socio-metric methods are used whenever human actions like choosing, influencing, dominating, and communicating in group situations are involved.

Drawbacks (limitations) of sociometric techniques

Irrespective of the outstanding uses or merit of the socio-metrics non-testing instrument, it has been subjected to several criticisms as jotted down below:

1. Information provided is limited by the nature of sociometric questions and the number of choices used.
2. There is no concrete revelation by the student on why he/she goes on preferring or rejects some friends of the group.
3. The sociometric data and results have failed the test of proffering possible ways to improve interpersonal relationships in the group.
4. They are highly subjective as most students can choose their friends based on sentiments.
5. It disappoints the isolated sometimes which is not desirable in the context of Psychology and Educational Measurement and Evaluation.
6. The investigators or counsellors find it difficult to think of socio-metric measurements of individuals.
7. The technique is an old practice that may not be suitable in this era of globalisation.
8. Some certain traits or qualities are very difficult to be measured and if they are measured through this technique or other tools, the measurement may not be accurate and free from subjectivity.

Application of the sociometric Techniques in the classroom context

In the context of the classroom environment, it is acutely important for teachers to be mindful of how to adopt socio-metric techniques. The following steps are recommended:

Step one: In the classroom, especially where the class is large, divide the group into smaller subgroups consisting of five to ten members in each group.

Step two: Assign numbers to each group or sub-group, for proper identification.

Step three: Ask each member to write the name or the number of students with whom he/she may like most to work, play, sit, etc.

Step four: Record appropriately the information you wish to ascertain from the exercise. Do not be dramatic about the exercise. The possible information to record may include:

- a. Whom the student (s) wish to sit next to you in the class or an examination hall?

b. To whom would the student (s) prefer to work in the science laboratory or sit to read in the library?

c. Whom would the student (s) prefer to be his/her class monitor? Etc.

Suffice to also note that, while interpreting the socio-gram, concentrate on one member at a time. Also, the point of greatest concentration and constellation of arrow marks indicates the highest number of choices and preferences. Such a member can be easily picked up as the leader. Again, close relations, neighbours, and members having common interests choose each other. This should be kept in view while picking up the leader. Finally, a student who is not chosen by any other member of the group is called the isolate. According to Falchikov and Goldfinch (2000), a member of the group may become isolated due to many factors such as the following:

- i. He is a new member of the group.
- ii. He is shy and withdrawn in nature.
- iii. He hardly feels free to make friends.
- iv. He/she may be a handicapped (deformed) individual.
- v. He may belong to a very poor socio-economic background or an upper socio-economic level.

GUESS-WHO TECHNIQUE

Historical perspective of Guess who' technique

As early as 1928 and 1929, American psychologists Hugh Hartshorne and Mark A. May 1928 to 1929 studied the theory of Ethics Positions in terms of the nature of the character of individuals. The study reported some surprising inconsistencies between moral values and moral actions. These researchers developed thirty-three measures of deceit cheating, lying, and stealing—and administered these tests to hundreds of children. Although some of the children behaved immorally more consistently than others, in many cases the situation, and not the personality characteristics of the children, determined who would yield to temptation. Furthermore, when Hartshorne and May extended their studies by searching for other aspects of the children's moral values, knowledge, and judgments (interpersonal relationship). Huges and Mark (1930) developed the Guss-Who -Techniques of personality assessment by using 10-to 13-year-old children in situations that allowed them to lie, steal, or cheat; to spend money on themselves or other children, and to yield to or resist distractions.

Description of Guess - who technique

Guess-who technique is a method of personality rating device commonly referred to as the “Peer Appraisal Technique” in which students in a class or playgroup are presented with a series of behavioural descriptions e.g, the most intelligent student in the class, most respectful student, most quiet student, most shy student, most talkative in the class, most arrogant student, etc, are asked to guess-who fit in each description. Sadler and Good (2006) informed that the method requires the examiner to pose short word pictures depicting a variety of personality types to the examinee who is then directed to recognise the classmates whose personalities seem to correspond most closely to those descriptions. Put in another way, in the ‘Guess who’ technique, brief descriptions of the various interpersonal relationships of students are provided and they are asked to guess who in the class matches the description. In the 'guess who technique' some statements in terms of some 'descriptions' like " who is always beating others in class " or “who is always concerned about your class work” are constructed and each individual is asked to list all the members of his/her group who fit such a description, mentioning the same individual as many times as necessary (Weimann, 1983). Each score is a point for each favorable or unfavorable description applied to him/her, and the total score is the total of all such points. It is crystal clear that the “Guess-Who Technique” allows students to name their classmates who best fit each of a series of behavioral descriptions (peer judgment or peer ratings). The number of nominations students receive on each characteristic indicates their reputation in the peer group. It should be noted that the number of times each student was chosen for each character will be tallied and presented in a frequency table as presented below.

Table 1: Guess-who Technique

Student	Intelligent	Respectful	Quiet	Shy	Talkative	Arrogant	Total
Haruna	-	10	14	-	-	-	24
Using	-	-	-	-	14	10	27
Tunde	13	11	9	-	-	-	33
Udoh	7	-	11	12	-	-	30
Audu	-	-	-	-	10	8	18

From the information, the teacher can determine the student's personality disposition, in terms of the stated characteristics. For instance, the information can help the teacher determine; the most intelligent student, very respectful, and quiet student in the class. One can confidently say that Audu is talkative and very arrogant. Tunde is a very intelligent, respectful, and quiet student in class. This information can be used by the teacher in assigning class responsibilities such as; class prefect, head boy, or group leader among the students. These are students that will metamorphose into adult leaders in various areas of their profession, therefore, the need for this assessment cannot be overemphasized.

SUMMARY

To effectively assess an employee's or student's performance, peer review is needed as a technique for the appraisal especially when structured teams are in place. Although it is better to have this process in place when a team has already been working together for some time and the employees have had enough time to understand each other's strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes, existing employees, who have been exposed to traditional appraisal processes over the years, may have problems related to the feedback that comes from a peer appraisal process. To reduce such issues, it is better to involve employees in developing and implementing the peer appraisal process. Peer appraisal is most useful when it is used for employee training and development purposes. During the process, facilitators and coordinators play an important role in ensuring that feedback is constructive and that once given, it is used by the recipient. Peer review is most effective in close-knit team environments where people support each other and are committed to organizational goals, a virtue that is in direct need for the survival of work teams in the 21st century.

CONCLUSION

Achieving success in a classroom necessarily demands peer appraisal of individuals who are connected to the achievement of such success. Most often, the level of attainment of individual team players may not rise reasonably with the assessment being carried out by teachers/superiors or managers of the organization. To effectively assess an employee's or student's performance, peer appraisal is an effective way to bring improvement that is bound to engender progress,

growth, and development in the organization. Continuous building of trust, relationships, constructive feedback, and team through peer appraisal will no doubt translate to a sustained harmonious relationship in the classroom, progress, and development among individuals and organizations in society. Peer appraisal otherwise known as self-assessment can be a quick and effective approach to enhance the learning of students. This is because, teaching students how to assess their own work, and the work of their peers, can foster student understanding of their learning and provides opportunities for critical analysis of their own efforts encouraging them to become more autonomous learners. When students are taught how to become effective self-assessors, they become empowered to take charge of their own learning a necessary skill for lifelong learning.

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